

## WORKSHEET A

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| <b>Title</b> <b>Assessment traditions and the relation between assessment and rating</b>   |  |
| <b>Objective(s)</b> To think about the different types of evaluation and rating according to different assessment traditions.<br>To think about the impact of the CEFR on the cultures of learning and assessment  |  |
| <b>Keywords</b> Learning/teaching/assessment process – assessment tradition – rating – scaling – competence levels   |  |
| <b>Ref to the Guide</b><br>Introduction<br>IV  | <b>Ref to the CEFR</b><br>3.9, 9.1<br>Ch. 6 overview |
| <b>Task A</b>  |  |
| <b>Step 1 ( † )</b>  |  |
| Think about the following elements and take notes in the form of keywords:   |  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>What are the assessment traditions in your country? And those peculiar to your institution?</li><li>Have you had the chance of observing other assessment traditions? Write a list of the concrete assessment aspects you observed.</li><li>Write a list of their characteristics, for example: model-centred and not task-centred (often written); importance of memorisation; relation between language and assessment tradition of a country; place of grading ; differentiation between weaker and stronger learners, etc.</li></ol> |  |
| <b>Step 2 ( † † † )</b>  |  |
| Compare your notes and discuss similarities and differences.<br>In your opinion, what is the weight of assessment traditions on the professional practice of teachers? How could we reconcile that with the proposals of the CEFR?   |  |
| <b>Task B ( † † † )</b>  |  |
| <b>Step 1</b>  |  |
| Read the introduction of Chapter 9 of the CEFR (9.1) and discuss the constraints related to assessment, the limits imposed by institutions and contexts and how to cope with them. Mention concrete examples from your own experience.   |  |
| <b>Step 2</b>  |  |
| Read section 3.9 of the CEFR and think about the relation between levels of competence and result levels. Consider the course of action that the CEFR suggests in order to establish a relation between the levels attained at examinations and the levels of competence.<br>Have you ever acted like that?<br>Then consider the section about the relation between evaluation and rating and discuss how you act in your own context. Explain with which aspects you are more or less satisfied as well as the reasons why.   |  |
| <b>Task C ( † † † )</b>  |  |
| The materials below might be used to complete the reflection about the new perspective   |  |



proposed by the CEFR for assessment:

In most European countries, public examinations and the marking schemes they employ traditionally embody a norm-referenced approach, which is based on the belief that ability, and thus achievement, is distributed in societies with the statistical regularity of the bell-shaped curve. In other words, in every age group there will be a small number of very good learners, a rather larger number of good learners, a lot of average learners, some weak learners and a few very weak learners. According to this philosophy some learners always fail. But if (as in the ELP) we describe language learning objectives in behavioural terms – what learners should be able to do with their language skills -, it follows that assessment should be a matter of determining the extent to which learners have mastered the behaviour in question; and this approach may allow even the weakest learners to succeed – or meet the criterion – to a limited extent.

The chief difference between these two approaches to assessment has to do with their attitude to failure. The norm-referenced approach easily encourages a negative attitude. If the ideal distribution of performances in a norm-referenced test is a bell-shaped curve, the taint of failure attaches not only to those who do not achieve a pass mark, but to all those who fall below the mid-point in the distribution of marks – those, in other words, who are below average. The impact at this ethos of failure can have on learner motivation has often been discussed in the relevant literature. By contrast, the criterion-referenced approach encourages a generally positive attitude to learners: provided they meet the criterion they are deemed proficient, even though in some cases proficiency may be less than perfect.

*The European Language Portfolio: a guide for teachers and teacher trainers*<sup>1</sup>, p. 54

From this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence. Furthermore, once it is recognised that language learning is a lifelong task, the development of a young person's motivation, skill and confidence in facing new language experience out of school comes to be of central importance. The responsibilities of educational authorities, qualifying examining bodies and teachers cannot simply be confined to the attainment of a given level of proficiency in a particular language at a particular moment in time, important though that undoubtedly is.

CEFR, 1.3, p. 5

In your opinion, which are the most innovative aspects of the CEFR and the ELP for evaluation, and what impact might that have on the language teaching/learning process?

Prepare a summary with the key ideas discussed and of their impact – actual or potential – on your own assessment tradition. Share the summary in the plenary.

<sup>1</sup> David Little, Radka Perclová. *PEL : guide à l'attention des enseignants et des formateurs d'enseignants*, online edition [http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/ELPgguide\\_teacherstrainers.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/ELPgguide_teacherstrainers.pdf)