A Common Framework of Reference for Languages in Canada

A *Common Framework of Reference for Languages in Canada* (CFRLC) is a project aiming at the development of common standards in language teaching, learning, and assessment across the country. CASLT is a leader in promoting this endeavour and works with multiple stakeholders towards the development and implementation of such a common framework in Canada. This project is based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), which has been developed within the Council of Europe and implemented across Europe and elsewhere in the world. The CFRLC adopts the same approach, principles, methods, and tools for language teaching, learning, and assessment that the CEFR employs, in order to facilitate international and national educational and occupational mobility.

What Is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages?

Adopts Action-oriented Approach & Principles:
- communication (emphasis on language activities)
- contextualisation (focus on language use in formal and informal situations)
- positive teaching, learning, and assessment ('can do' instead of 'cannot do')
- clarity and transparency (description of clear language learning outcomes)
- learner autonomy
- life-long learning

Employs Six Levels of Proficiency:
- A – Basic User
  A1   (Breakthrough or Beginner)
  A2   (Waystage or Elementary)
- B – Independent User

  B1   (Threshold or Intermediate)
  B2   (Vantage or Upper Intermediate)
- C – Proficient User

  C1   (Effective Operational or Advanced)
  C2   (Mastery or Proficiency)

There can also be sub-levels within the six levels.

Includes Three Dimensions:
- language activities
  * reception (listening & reading)
  * production (spoken & written)
  * interaction (spoken & written)
  * mediation (translating & interpreting)
- domains in which language activities happen
  * public (variety of purposes)
  * personal (home life, family & friends)
  * educational
  * professional
- competencies on which learners draw when communicating

Uses the European Language Portfolio (ELP) as a Language Education Tool:
The ELP is an adaptable document following the CEFR vision of language teaching, learning, and assessment. It is designed as a tool for all age group learners (within or outside schools) to track, plan, and self-assess their language learning and intercultural experiences in different contexts. It has the following components:

- *Language Passport*
- *Language Biography*
- *Dossier*

For more info, go to: **www.coe.int/portfolio**.

Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
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Uses 'can do' descriptors to define the user's proficiency at each level, such as…

* *I can answer simple questions about myself.*
* *I can fill in forms.*
* *I can understand the main points in a short magazine story.*
* *I can give or seek opinions when I speak with my friends.*
* *I can understand long and technical instructions.*
* *I can follow a TV drama or sitcom in a standard dialect.*

Who Can Use the CEFR?

The CEFR addresses all age groups and all target languages. It can be used by different language users and stakeholders in the field of language education, whether it is for learning, teaching, or assessment of a second/foreign language:

- students
- teachers & teacher trainers
- parents
- educational authorities & consultants
- public servants & policy makers
- business sector
- public at large

What Are the Benefits of the CEFR?

- offers a transparent, coherent, and comprehensive educational framework
- focuses on contextualised language use and communication
- makes learners actively engage in their learning process
- encourages learner autonomy
- values language skills acquired both within and outside school
- fosters positive life-long learning
- sets and describes clear standards to be attained at successive stages of language learning
- makes it possible to attain similar teaching, learning, and assessment standards across languages
- evaluates outcomes in an internationally comparable manner

- allows for recognition of language qualifications both nationally (inter-provincially) and internationally
- facilitates educational and occupational mobility
- provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, policies, etc.
- promotes national and international collaboration and exchange among governmental and non-governmental institutions and actors engaged in the field of language education

How Was the CEFR Developed?

The CEFR was developed through a process of scientific research and rigorous review, involving over 300 teachers, 500 classrooms, and 2,800 language learners [the Swiss National Science Research Council Project, (1993-1996)]. It is now a framework that enhances the communication among professionals working in the field of modern languages not only in Europe, but across the world – it thus contributes to removing the social, economic, and academic barriers stemming from different educational systems.

Where Can I Find More Information on the CEFR?

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment* has been translated in 38 languages. Its English version is available in full text on the Council of Europe's website, at: **www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_en.pdf**.

Publications

- *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*, Cambridge University Press (ISBN Hardback 0521803136 Paperback: 0521005310); *Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues: apprendre, enseigner, évaluer*, Éditions Didier (ISBN 227805075-3).
- All publications and supporting material on the CEFR can be found in the Publications section of the CEFR page of the Council of Europe, at **www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp**.