



Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs de langues secondes

Action-Oriented Approach Toolkit

Aligning Learning, Teaching, and Assessment



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Action-Oriented Approach Toolkit: Aligning Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

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Introduction

Introduction

Since the Council of Europe released the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (CEFR) in 2001 and Vandergrift (2006) recommended that the Canadian government adopt the framework to increase functional bilingualism, the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) has played an essential role in promoting the use of the CEFR across Canada. This has included publishing numerous resources on the CEFR, including the *Action-Oriented Approach Handbook* (Hunter et al., 2019).

In 2020, the *CEFR Companion Volume* (Council of Europe, 2020a), herein referred to as the CEFR 2020, was published. The CEFR 2020 updates and extends the original CEFR and expands upon key concepts mentioned but not elaborated upon in 2001, namely the action-oriented approach, mediation, and plurilingualism. With the release of the CEFR 2020 and the development of the CEFR from the grassroots level over the past 20 years, there is a need for updated resources to support language teachers in implementing the CEFR in the Canadian context. Building upon the success of past CASLT resources on the CEFR and as a complementary resource to the *Action-Oriented Approach Handbook* (Hunter et al., 2019), CASLT presents the *Action-Oriented Approach Toolkit: Aligning Learning, Teaching, and Assessment* (herein referred to as the *AOA Toolkit*).

The AOA Toolkit: Aligning Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

The *AOA Toolkit* unites theory and practice to help language teachers integrate the CEFR into their classrooms. This resource provides language teachers with an overview of the CEFR's key concepts (including the action-oriented approach [AOA])

and sample tasks for four CEFR levels — A1 and A2 (basic user) and B1 and B2 (independent user). These action-oriented tasks provide context for the learning scenario and outline what learners must accomplish by the end of the module. In essence, they provide a target for *where learners are going*.

Working with and listening to teachers and other stakeholders in second-language education from across the country and the world, it became apparent that there is a need to move beyond providing sample tasks to illustrate how to implement the CEFR in language classrooms. Teachers want examples of fully developed scenarios that provide the action-oriented task and a selection of classroom-ready, adaptable subtasks they can use to help learners develop the competencies needed. With this in mind, the *AOA Toolkit* offers a fully developed, ready-to-use/modify scenario at the A2 level. In addition, we included an extensive explanation of how this scenario was developed to clarify the alignment between learning, teaching, and assessment and the interdependence between these concepts.

While the tasks and scenarios in the *AOA Toolkit* are designed for French as a second language (FSL) classrooms, they are also intended to inspire language teachers who teach in other second/additional language contexts. Since the CEFR is not language-specific, the descriptors used to create the practical content and the general overview of the CEFR apply to any second/additional language.

Organization of the AOA Toolkit

The *AOA Toolkit* is organized into the following parts:

Part 1

This section provides a general overview of the CEFR and the action-oriented approach, assessment, supporting diverse learning needs, and planning an action-oriented pathway. It is more theory-based and intended to provide the background knowledge needed to understand the practical application in Parts 2 and 3.

Part 2

This section provides examples of four action-oriented tasks:

- (A1) Adopting a Family Pet
- (A2) Hosting a Viewing Party (Francophone Music Event)
- (B1) A Trip of a Lifetime
- (B2) Launching a Book Club

The A2 task (Hosting a Viewing Party) is developed into a fully fleshed-out scenario consisting of the task and possible subtasks. This scenario is conceptualized through a “scenario web” (Hunter, 2024) design, with subtasks organized into logical groupings. Remember that the CEFR is flexible, open, and dynamic (Council of Europe, 2001). The scenario presented is not meant to be prescriptive, fixed, or linear. It is intended to inspire language teachers as they implement the CEFR and the action-oriented approach in their classrooms. The subtasks offer an initial assortment of possibilities to help learners achieve the task. They are not provided in a particular order nor intended to be exhaustive.

Part 3

In this section, the A2 scenario is dissected to offer language teachers insight into how the A2 task was developed, how the assessment tools were built, and how the subtasks were created and organized. There is also an extended discussion of the power of the CEFR descriptors and their role in aligning learning, teaching, and assessment.

The CEFR's Descriptive Scheme

The overall approach of the CEFR is summarized as follows:

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in language

activities involving **language processes** to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences. (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)

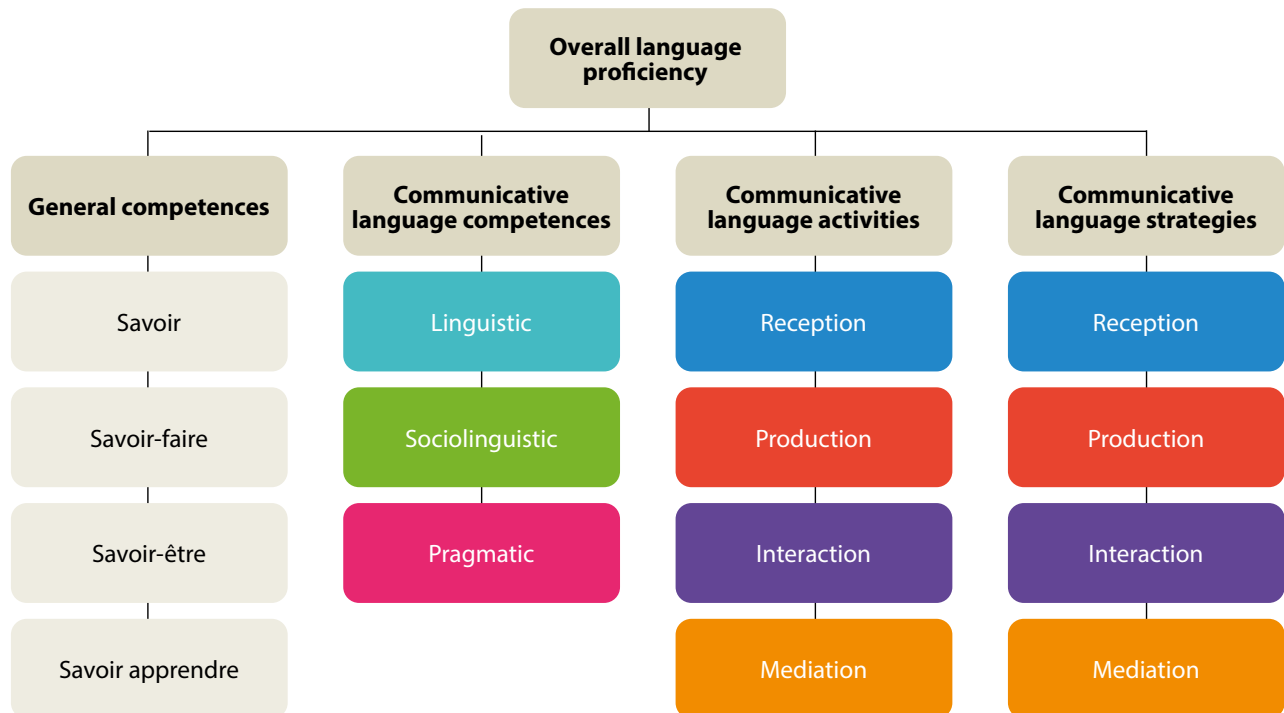
To help visualize the approach described above, the descriptive scheme is presented in the CEFR as a diagram (see [Figure 1](#)). It is worth noting the use of colours in the CEFR

descriptive scheme. To make the CEFR more user-friendly, the communicative language competences and activities/strategies are assigned a colour. Throughout the CEFR 2020, the corresponding scales are identified by their colour. For example, “pragmatic competence” is coded in pink. The scales that organize the descriptors for “pragmatic competence” are also coded in pink throughout the publication.

The action-oriented approach translates the CEFR’s descriptive scheme into practice (Council of Europe, 2020a).

Figure 1. Visualization of the CEFR's Descriptive Scheme

Note. From the CEFR 2020 (Council of Europe, 2020a, p. 32).



Main Function of Descriptors

The descriptors, which have been empirically validated in large-scale projects, help to align curriculum, teaching, and assessment. They bring transparency to language education and help clarify how users/learners progress through CEFR levels. Descriptors can be used for many purposes, such as in needs analysis, “signposting” of curriculum aims, module and lesson planning, informing learners about objectives, personal goal setting, documenting achievement, and self-assessment (Piccardo & North, 2019).

Learners also use descriptors. For example, descriptors help learners identify learning goals and monitor their progress.



The Council of Europe has recently added a functionality on the CEFR website that allows for descriptors to be searched and filtered in an Excel document. To access the document, visit the [CEFR website²](#) and click on “CEFR Descriptors (Searchable)” in the table on the right.

CEFR Self-Assessment Grid

The CEFR 2020 includes an updated self assessment grid (see [Table 2](#)) that summarizes the CEFR descriptors for “communicative language activities” (reception, production, interaction, and mediation).

Table 2. CEFR Self-Assessment Grid

Note. From the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020a, pp. 177–181).

SELF-ASSESSMENT GRID (EXPANDED WITH ONLINE INTERACTION AND MEDIATION)

Reception	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
Oral comprehension	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak/sign slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard language on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended talk and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard language.	I can understand extended talk even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of oral language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast natural speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
Reading comprehension	I can understand familiar names, words/signs and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material, such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables, and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular stances or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written/signed language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts, such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.

2 Council of Europe. (2024) *Common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR)*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/home>

Table 3. Inclusive Practices/Strategies With Concrete Examples for the A2 Scenario Presented in Part 2

Practices/Strategies	Examples From the A2 Scenario Presented in Part 2
Embracing flexible and dynamic pedagogy	The CEFR has brought a paradigm shift to language education, moving away from more traditional approaches to teaching. The A2 scenario is designed to be flexible. The proposed task can be easily modified to suit different contexts if needed. The subtasks are an offering of lessons – they are not prescribed or presented linearly. They are intentionally flexible, so teachers can use them (or not!) as they see fit. Teachers can easily add or remove subtasks as needed. This allows teachers to be responsive to the needs of the learners. It also makes space for teaching and learning to be dynamic, that is to say, constantly changing based on the conditions and the context.
Encouraging a growth mindset	The action-oriented approach promotes a proficiency perspective guided by the “can-do” descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020a). The focus is on what learners can and will achieve as they progress through a level. In this scenario, the “can-do” descriptors are referenced throughout. By working through a scenario, learners are given multiple opportunities to develop their competences through subtasks, which help build confidence and encourage a growth mindset.
Ensuring content is authentic	Learners are provided with texts from authentic sources, such as articles from France TV, news clips from TV5Monde, popular French songs from artists from around the world, and websites and TV programming from various music and awards events. They also access online shopping sites and flyers using real grocery and party stores (which can be from anywhere in the world) and create invitations with current web applications.
Fostering meaningful and relevant experiences	The task and subtasks are designed to offer the learner meaningful and relevant experiences. Social gatherings and appreciation of the arts are important aspects of the social world. In this task, learners collaborate to plan a social event where all the steps are anchored in real life (e.g., extending invitations, buying food, preparing party games). Together, they co-construct the artifacts needed for the event. The task also centres on music, a popular theme for learners (think about Manie Musicale! ³). To make the experience relevant for learners, they can select the music event of their choice. This task could be made even more open by having learners choose the type of event they want to celebrate (e.g., sports draft, film festival, Olympic sporting event). While not explicitly stated, the task proposed is shaped to allow the party to occur in the classroom. Scenarios can also be co-constructed with learners so they are more responsive to their needs and interests.
Co-constructing meaning among learners	Throughout the scenario, the co-construction of meaning occurs through interaction. Sometimes, this interaction is between the teacher and learner(s) (e.g., the teacher using the slideshow [see Appendix 2.9] to teach about creating tickets and extending invitations), and sometimes it will be more collaborative (e.g., determining the budget with the group, choosing prizes together). In both scenarios, there is an interaction and constant movement between the individual and social dimensions (Council of Europe, 2020a).

3 Carboneau, M., & Fournier, M. (2018). *Manie Musicale*. Le Français avec Madame Fournier. <https://sites.google.com/site/lefrancaisavecmadamefournier/pour-s-amuser-fun-stuff/manie-musicale>

PART 2

This section of the AOA *Toolkit* provides practical applications of the action-oriented approach. Four sample tasks are provided at each of the following CEFR levels: A1, A2, B1, and B2. In addition to these sample tasks, the A2 task is fully fleshed out with subtask groupings, examples of subtasks, and multiple assessment tools. It is designed to show teachers what a full scenario can look like while being flexible enough to allow for choice and modifications. Teachers may choose to use some or all of the subtasks in each grouping and can modify or add subtasks and assessment tools as desired to meet the needs of their learners and the context in which they are teaching.

A1 — Sample Task: Adopting a Family Pet

You and your family are considering adopting a pet. You find an adorable pet online and can't wait to tell your family. Research more about the pet to ensure that it is a good fit for your family. Additionally, make a list of supplies you would need to purchase for the pet.

View the task to read more.
([Appendix 1](#))

A2 — Sample Task*: Hosting a Viewing Party (Francophone Music Event)

You are an active member of your community's French club. When you hear that the club is interested in hosting a viewing party for an upcoming Francophone music event

(e.g., The Félix Awards, Star Académie) at the local community centre, you are eager to join the planning committee.

The club will cover the cost of renting the community centre and expects 30 guests. Tickets will be sold to cover the costs of snacks, prizes, and decorations.

View the task to read more.
([Appendix 2](#))

* The A2 sample task has been fully fleshed out in [Appendix 2](#) with subtasks and assessment tools. This provides teachers with concrete examples of subtask groupings and subtask options and how they connect to CEFR descriptors and success criteria on different assessment tools.

B1 — Sample Task: A Trip of a Lifetime

To celebrate your recent academic accomplishment, you and your friends decide to plan a trip of a lifetime. Considering your love of languages, you want to choose a destination where French is one of many languages spoken within the country. You are also eager to learn about the country's different regions and its rich culture.

View the task to read more.
([Appendix 3](#))

B2 — Sample Task: Launching a Book Club

Your school is about to launch a long-awaited book club. As an executive member of the club, you want this book club to be a fun social event that continues throughout the year with

as many members as possible. For the first book club meeting, the club executive (4–6 people) will prepare a pitch to the other book club members that includes a book suggestion by each executive member. At this meeting, the other club members will give their feedback on the pitches and vote to determine which book will be selected.

View the task to read more.
([Appendix 4](#))

A2 — Full Scenario: Hosting a Viewing Party (Francophone Music Event)



See Part 1: Planning an Action-Oriented Pathway; [Action-Oriented Scenarios](#) to review this concept.

You are an active member of your community's French club. When you hear that the club is interested in hosting a viewing party for an upcoming Francophone music event (e.g., [The Félix Awards](#),⁹ [Star Académie](#)¹⁰) at the local community centre, you are eager to join the planning committee.

The club will cover the cost of renting the community centre and expects 30 guests. Tickets will be sold to cover the costs of snacks, prizes, and decorations.

View the task to read more.
([Appendix 2](#))

9 Association québécoise de l'industrie du disque, du spectacle et de la vidéo. (1979–present). *Gala des prix Félix* [Awards show]. <https://www.adisq.com/gala/>
10 Dion, J.-P., & Clermont, B. (Executive Producers). (2003–2012, 2021–2022). *Star Académie* [TV series]. Productions J/Productions Déferlantes. <https://www.qub.ca/tvaplus/tva/star-academie>

PART 3

Part 1 of this toolkit presents readers with an overview of the CEFR and the action-oriented approach, assessment, and strategies to support the diverse needs of learners. Part 2 provides sample action-oriented tasks for the A1, A2, B1, and B2 levels of the CEFR, and further expands the A2 task into a scenario (fleshed-out learning module) that encompasses both the task and classroom-ready possibilities for subtasks.

In this section, Part 3, the A2 scenario presented in Part 2 will be broken down to offer practical tips for language teachers to consider when building a scenario, and to highlight the alignment of learning, teaching, and assessment that occurs in an action-oriented approach. The intention here is to make a bridge between the theoretical content shared in Part 1 and the practical content shared in Part 2 in an explicit and transparent way to support language teachers in implementing an action-oriented approach within their own practice.



Action-Oriented Task: Action-oriented tasks are central to the CEFR’s methodological message. It emphasizes that learning should enable learners to accomplish real-life tasks by drawing on their competences and activating strategies that are most suitable for the situation (Council of Europe, 2020a). The task provides the purpose for action and frames the learning required so learners can accomplish the task.

Subtasks: Subtasks are scaffolded learning opportunities to support learners in developing and solidifying the competences and strategies needed to accomplish the task.

Scenario: A scenario is a comprehensive learning module encompassing the task and its associated subtasks. It spans multiple lessons during which learners work together in a collaborative environment, culminating in accomplishing the task.

A2 Scenario Web



A scenario web (Hunter, 2024) provides a visual representation of a given scenario, namely the task and the subtasks, which can be presented in groupings.

The A2 scenario of “Hosting a Viewing Party” includes the task and connected subtasks (see [Figure 9](#)). These subtasks are categorized into four groupings organized around CEFR descriptors. Teachers may choose to use some or all of these subtasks and can do so in any order. Teachers may modify the subtasks to better suit their needs and/or add additional subtasks or groupings to the scenario, as needed, to best support learners.

Figure 9. A2 Sample Task Scenario Web

Note. Scenario web for the A2 task, inspired by Hunter (2024).



Scenario: Hosting a Viewing Party

Figure 13 shows the grouping “Shopping for a Party” along with four suggestions for possible subtasks:

- Shopping for party decorations on a budget
- Learning about popular snacks in Canada and in other countries
- Comparing prices of snacks at two locations
- Shopping at a grocery store and online

There is an accompanying subtask plan for each of these four subtasks. Figure 14 shows the subtask plan for “Shopping for Party Decorations on a Budget.”

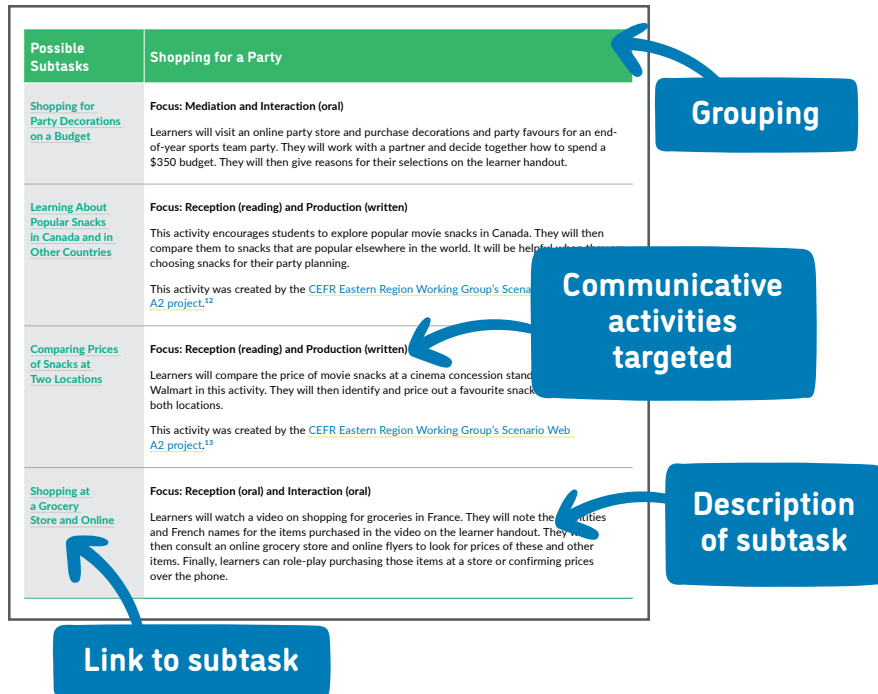
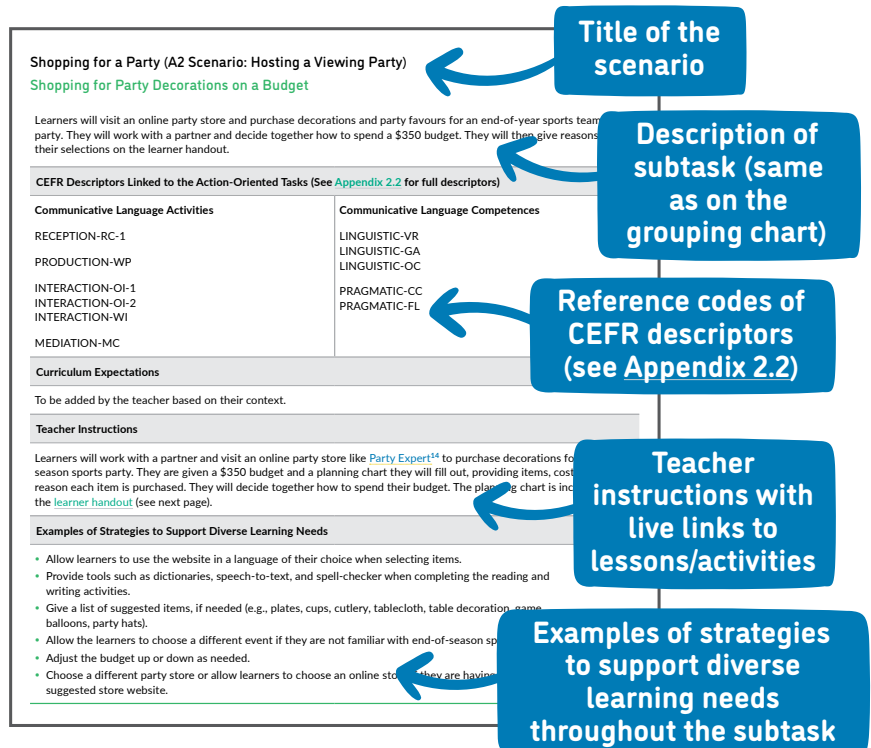


Figure 13. Grouping Chart for “Shopping for a Party”
 Note. Chart of possible subtasks for the “Shopping for a Party” grouping of the A2 scenario (see [Appendix 2.6](#)).

Figure 14. Subtask Plan for “Shopping for Party Decorations on a Budget”
 Note. This is an example of a subtask plan using the “Shopping for Party Decorations on a Budget” subtask from the A2 scenario (see [Appendix 2.6](#)).



Appendix 2.2: CEFR Descriptors

Reference Codes	CEFR Descriptors	Learner-Friendly “Can-Do” Statements
Reception Activities		
RECEPTION-OC-1	Can understand simple directions on how to get from X to Y, by foot or public transport. (Oral comprehension; Understanding announcements and instructions)	I can understand simple directions.
RECEPTION-OC-2	Can understand basic instructions on times, dates, and numbers, etc., and on routine tasks and assignments to be carried out. (Oral comprehension; Understanding announcements and instructions)	I can understand basic information, such as dates, times, and numbers.
RECEPTION-RC-1	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items. (Reading comprehension; Overall reading comprehension)	I can understand simple texts containing basic vocabulary (awards prediction chart).
Reception Strategies		
Identifying cues and inferring (see CEFR descriptors)		
Production Activities		
PRODUCTION-WP	Can give their impressions and opinions about topics of personal interest (e.g., lifestyles and culture, stories), using basic everyday vocabulary and expressions. (Written production; Reports and essays)	I can give my opinion on different topics using basic vocabulary (reasoning for awards predictions).
Production Strategies		
Planning, Compensating, Monitoring, and repair (see CEFR descriptors)		
Interaction Activities		
INTERACTION-OI-1	Can converse in simple language with peers, colleagues, or members of a host family, asking questions and understanding answers relating to most routine matters. (Oral interaction; Conversation)	I can ask everyday questions and understand answers.
INTERACTION-OI-2	Can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, and apologies. (Oral interaction; Conversation)	I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, and apologies.
INTERACTION-WI	Can formulate short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. (Written interaction; Notes, messages and forms)	I can write simple messages to express a need (ticket creation and invitation).
Interaction Strategies		
Turn-taking, Cooperating, Asking for clarification (see CEFR descriptors)		

Concert Descriptions and Invitations With an Analysis of a Song by Louane

In this TV5Monde activity, learners will complete a series of language activities related to a Louane music concert. The activities involve listening, reading, and speaking while interacting with the song and their peers.

CEFR Descriptors Linked to the Action-Oriented Tasks (See Appendix 2.2 for full descriptors)

Communicative Language Activities	Communicative Language Competences	Plurilingualism and Pluriculturalism
RECEPTION-RC-1	LINGUISTIC-VR	PLURI
PRODUCTION-WP	LINGUISTIC-GA	
INTERACTION-OI-1	LINGUISTIC-PC	
MEDIATION-MC	LINGUISTIC-OC	
	SOCIOLINGUISTIC-SA-1	
	SOCIOLINGUISTIC-SA-2	
	PRAGMATIC-CC	
	PRAGMATIC-FL	

Curriculum Expectations

To be added by the teacher based on their context.

Teacher Instructions

- In [this activity](#),⁶⁹ several different language activities are offered relating to music concerts and the song “Tourne” by Louane.
- Learners will imagine what their favourite artist or group’s concert looks like. They will discuss elements such as decor, lighting, stage effects, and costumes with a partner.
- Learners will listen to Louane’s song “Tourne” and examine the images of Louane singing in the music video.
- The teacher will give students the lyrics with errors (e.g., night instead of day) to read and correct.
- Learners will describe the images that could be projected at a Louane concert during the song “Tourne.”
- Learners will role-play inviting a friend to a Louane concert, telling them as much information about her as possible.
- The [learner version](#)⁷⁰ of the activity is also available for teachers to distribute.

Examples of Strategies to Support Diverse Learning Needs

- Review key concepts before starting the activity.
- Model a response before oral interactions begin.
- Allow learners to listen to the included lyrics activity with speech-to-text software to help them identify incorrect lyrics.
- Play the song multiple times or reduce the audio speed as required.
- Offer planning time before the oral interactions and extend time as needed.
- Allow learners to prepare notes/keywords to use during the oral interaction.
- Provide learners with time to research more information on Louane.
- Allow learners to use other languages during the planning and research portions.

For additional suggestions on integrating assessment *as learning* and assessment *for learning*, please refer to the [Assessment](#) section in Part 1 of this resource.

69 Pierré, M. (2016, December 21). *Louane : Tourne. Fiche enseignant*. Enseigner le Français, TV5Monde. https://enseigner.tv5monde.com/sites/enseigner/files/2020-11/field_media_document-5613-pdc-louane-tourne-a2-prof.pdf

70 Pierré, M. (2016, December 21). *Louane : Tourne. Fiche apprenant*. Enseigner le Français, TV5Monde. https://enseigner.tv5monde.com/sites/enseigner/files/2020-11/field_media_document-5615-pdc-louane-tourne-a2-app.pdf

Appendix 2.10: Teacher Observation Tools (A2 Scenario: Hosting a Viewing Party)

Teacher Observation Tool (One Learner)

Learner-Friendly Can-Do Statements	Date						Comments
I can understand simple directions.							
I can understand basic information such as dates, times, and numbers.							
I can understand simple texts containing basic vocabulary (awards prediction chart).							
I can give my opinion on different topics using basic vocabulary (reasoning for awards predictions).							
I can ask everyday questions and understand answers.							
I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, and apologies.							
I can write simple messages to express a need (ticket creation and invitation).							
I can collaborate with others, ask what they think, make suggestions, and understand responses.							
I have sufficient vocabulary to communicate necessary information.							
I can use simple grammar structures correctly so I am understood.							
I can pronounce words clearly enough to be understood.							
I can spell simple words correctly.							
I can greet others politely.							
I can make and appropriately respond to suggestions, invitations, and apologies.							
I can link words with simple connectors such as “and,” “but,” and “because.”							
I can express myself with enough fluency to participate in a simple conversation.							
I can offer appropriate greetings, farewells, apologies, and thank yous.							

Considering the longstanding presence of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) in Canada and the release of the *CEFR Companion Volume* (the updated version of the CEFR), how can educators build and expand their practice so that learners can benefit from this innovative vision of language education? The *Action-Oriented Approach Toolkit* brings together theory and practice to support language educators in aligning learning, teaching, and assessment by providing an overview of the CEFR; sample action-oriented tasks for the A1, A2, B1, and B2 levels; a fully developed A2 scenario with a selection of ready to use/modifiable subtasks; and an extensive explanation walking educators through the development of a scenario.



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