

Updating and extending the CEFR Descriptors:

Brian North



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Language Learning Worldwide

Descriptor Development (North 2000)

Intuitive Phase:

- Creating a pool of classified, edited descriptors

Qualitative Phase:

- Analysis of teachers discussing proficiency
- 32 teacher workshops sorting descriptors into categories

Quantitative Phase:

- Teacher assessment of their learners at end year assessment point on descriptor-checklists (circa 300 teachers, 2800 learners)
- Teacher assessment of videos of some of the same learners to further link the data set

Interpretative Phase:

- Setting "cut-points" between the common reference levels



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Validity Claim

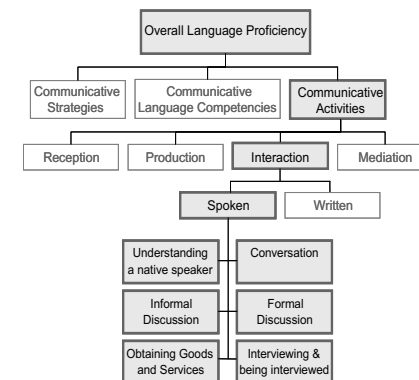
Developed scientifically:

- comprehensive documentation of existing descriptions
- relation to theory through descriptive scheme
- positive, independent criterion-descriptors
- checking teachers could use categories & descriptors
- data from real, end-of-year assessment
- four educational sectors in a multi-lingual environment
- three foreign languages (English, French, German)
- values replicated in follow-up studies:
Basel self-assessment 0.99; ALTE 0.97;
DIALANG: 0.92 / 0.96; Pearson 0.97

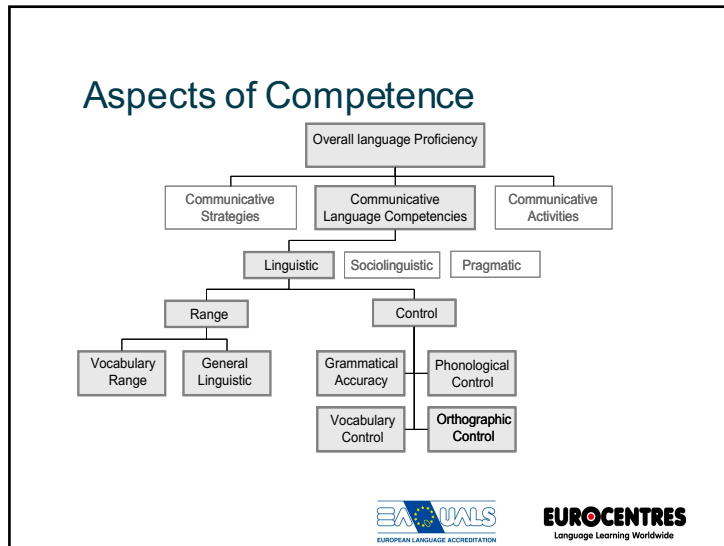


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Communicative Activities





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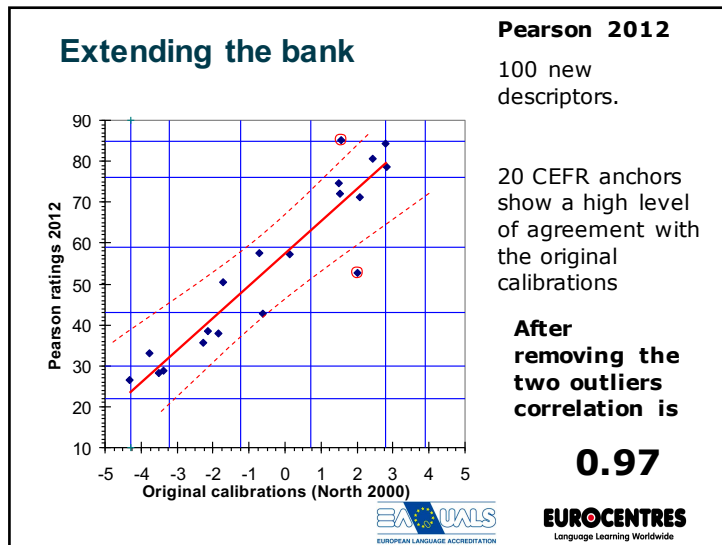
	Cut-off	Range on scale
Above C2	5.10	(no descriptors)
C2	3.90	1.20
C1	2.80	1.10
B2+	1.74	1.06
B2	0.72	1.02
B1+	-0.26	0.98
B1	-1.23	0.97
A2+	-2.21	0.98
A2	-3.23	1.02
A1	-4.29	1.06
Pre- A1	-5.39	1.10

	Cut-off	Range on scale
C2	3.90	1.20
C1	2.80	1.10
B2+	1.74	1.06
B2	0.72	1.02
B1+	-0.26	0.98
B1	-1.23	0.97
A2+	-2.21	0.98
A2	-3.23	1.02
A1	-4.29	1.06

- ### Follow up projects - Calibrated
- ALTE 'Can Dos' 1991
 - Finnish AMMKIA 2009 (?)
 - Swiss IEF/Lingualevel 2009
 - CEFR-J 2010
 - English Profile - C levels 2011
 - Pearson GSE 2012-4
- 




Updating and extending the 2001 scales

- Year 1: Updating CEFR 2001 scales (2013–14)
- Year 2: Extending with 27 new scales (2014–16)
- Consultation: Internal and external (2016–17)

Year 1: Updating the 2001 scales

Adapting validated descriptors:

- Addition of Pre-A1
- Enriching description at C levels
- Filling out the «plus levels»
- One entirely new scale: «Reading for Pleasure»

Authoring team (Eurocentres)

↓
Sounding board of experts

↓
Consultation group

Year 2: Developing new descriptor scales

Formulating & validating descriptors for new areas:

- Mediation
- Online interaction
- Reactions to Literature & art
- Plurilingual & pluricultural competences

Mediation in the CEFR 2001

- Language use is organized into **four modes instead of four skills**.
- "Communication is an integral part of tasks where participants engage in
 - **interaction**
 - **production**
 - **reception**
 - **mediation**
 or a combination of two or more of these" (CEFR, p.157)



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Mediation in the CEFR 2001

"In **mediating activities**, the language user is not concerned to express his/her own meanings, but simply **to act as an intermediary** between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly, normally (but not exclusively) speakers of different languages. ..."
(CEFR Section 4.4.4)



Mediation in the CEFR 2001

"Translation or interpretation, a paraphrase, summary or record, provides for a third party a (re)formulation of a source text to which this third party does not have direct access. **Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text**, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies." (CEFR, Section 2.1.3)



Mediation in the CEFR 2001

- = **Conveying received meaning**
- (re)processing an existing text
 - acting as an intermediary
 - in same language or across languages



Towards a richer 'model' of Mediation

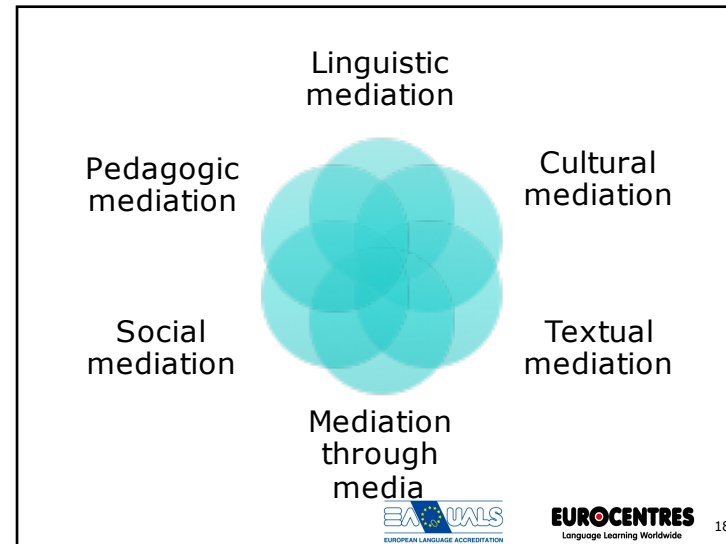
any procedure, arrangement or action designed to **reduce the distance between two** (or more) **poles of otherness**.
(Coste & Cavalli, 2015)

The mediator facilitates

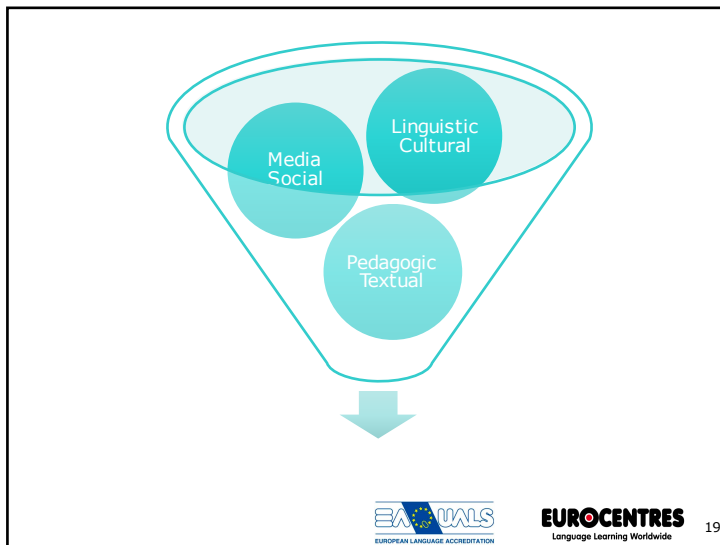
- access to knowledge, to the grasping of concepts
- reduction of affective blocks / tensions,
- building bridges towards the new, the other



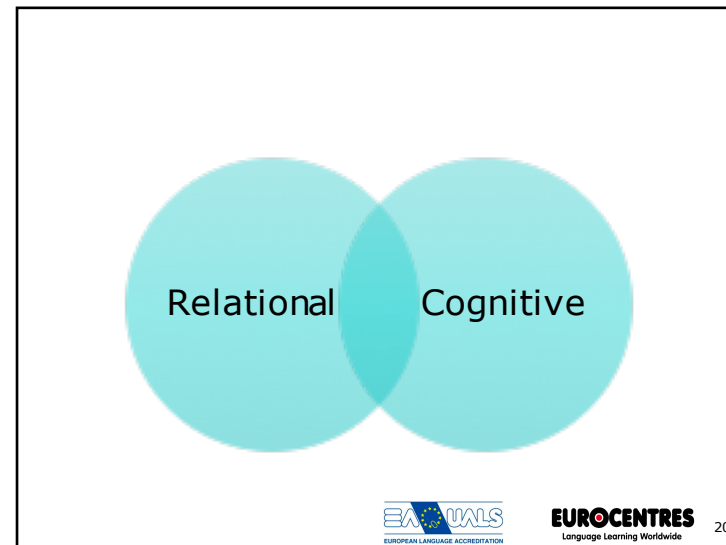
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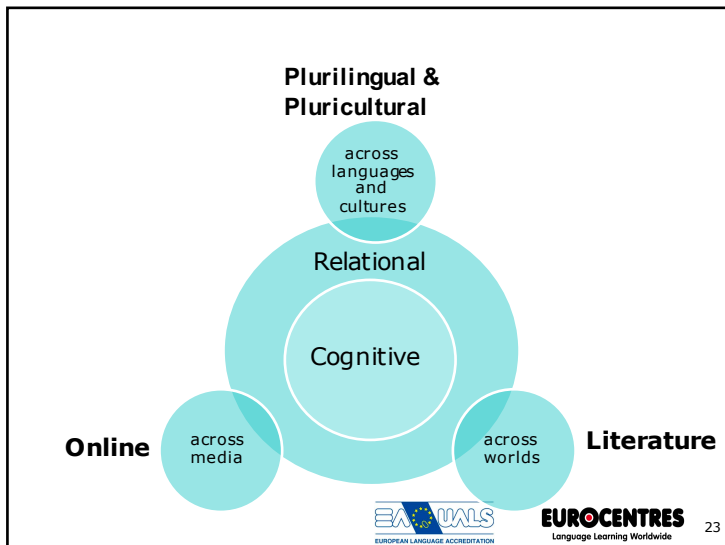
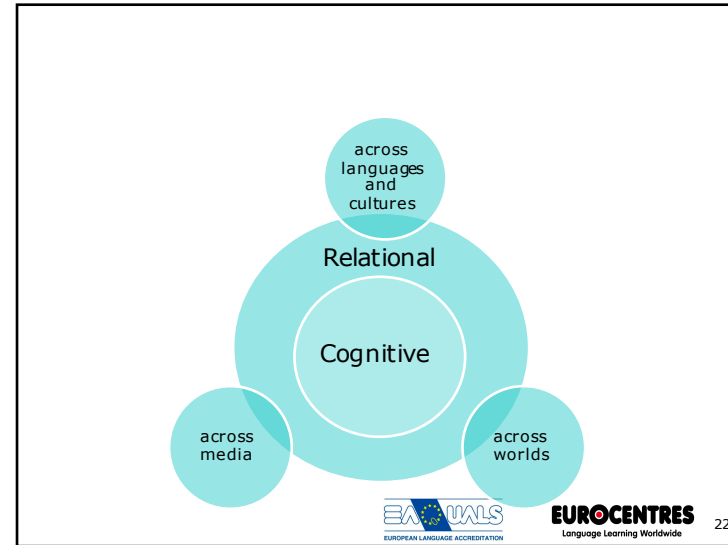
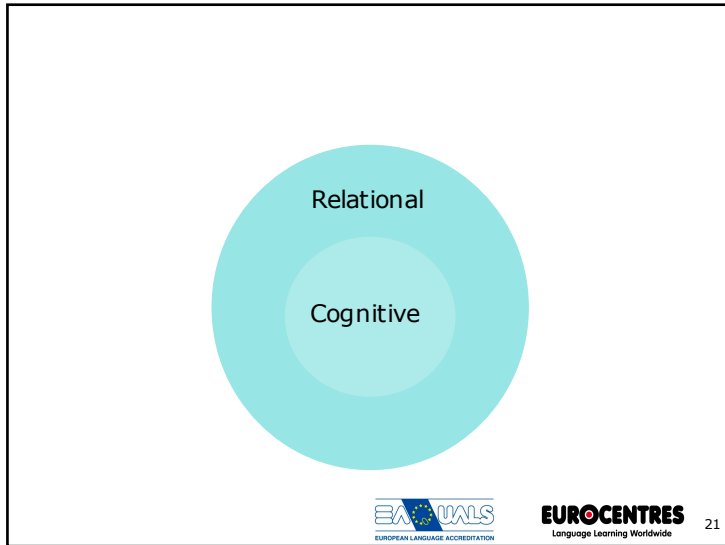
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- ### Categories
- Relational Mediation
 - Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning
 - Conveying received meaning
 - Mediation Strategies
- EAQUALS EUROPEAN LANGUAGE ACCREDITATION
- EUROCENTRES** Language Learning Worldwide

Categories

- Relational Mediation
- Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning
 - Conveying received meaning
- Mediation Strategies
- +
- Online interaction
- Reactions to literature & art
- Plurilingual & pluricultural competences



Categories

- Relational Mediation (5 scales)
- Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning (2 scales)
 - Conveying received meaning (9 scales)
- Mediation Strategies (5 scales)
- +
- Online interaction (2 scales)
- Reactions to literature & art (2 scales)
- Plurilingual & pluricultural (2 scales)



Categories

- Relational Mediation (5)
 - Establishing a positive atmosphere
 - Creating pluricultural space
 - Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers
 - Managing plenary and group interaction
 - Resolving delicate situations and disputes



Categories

- Cognitive Mediation (2)
 - Constructing meaning
 - Collaborating to construct meaning
 - Generating conceptual talk



Categories

- Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning
 - Collaborating to construct meaning
 - Generating conceptual talk
- *Relational Mediation*
 - *Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers*
 - *Managing plenary and group interaction*



Categories

- Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning (2)
 - Collaborating to construct meaning
 - Generating conceptual talk



Categories

- Cognitive Mediation
 - Conveying received meaning (9)
 - Relaying specific information - sp+wr
 - Explaining data (e.g. in graphs, diagrams, charts etc.) - sp + wr
 - Processing text - sp + wr
 - Interpreting - sp only
 - Translation - wr only
 - Spoken translation of written text (Sight translation)



Categories

- Mediation Strategies (5)
 - Linking to previous knowledge
 - Amplifying text
 - Streamlining text
 - Breaking down complicated information
 - Visually representing information
 - Adjusting language



Categories

- Relational Mediation
- Cognitive Mediation
 - Constructing meaning
 - Conveying received meaning
- Mediation Strategies
- ➔+ ▪ Online interaction
- Reactions to literature & art
- Plurilingual & pluricultural competences



Categories

- Online interaction
 - Online conversation and discussion
 - Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration



Categories

- Reactions to literature & art
 - Expressing a personal response to literature and art
 - Analysis and criticism of literature and art



Categories

- Plurilingual & pluricultural competences
 - Exploiting pluricultural repertoire
 - Plurilingual comprehension
 - Exploiting plurilingual repertoire



Categories

- Relational Mediation (5 scales)
- Cognitive Mediation
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- Mediation Strategies (5 scales)
- +
- Online interaction (2 scales)
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- Plurilingual & pluricultural (2 scales)



Descriptors

- Total =
- 27 descriptor scales
 - Circa 400 descriptors



Validation

Intuitive:

Collect, classify, edit, discuss, redraft

Qualitative: (Phase 1)

assigning to categories

- evaluating
- suggesting reformulations (shortening)

Quantitative (Rasch scaling)

- assigning to levels (Phase 2)
- Yes/No responses (Phase 3)



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Validation

Intuitive:

Team of 8

Qualitative: (Phase 1)

990 informants in 140 institutes

Quantitative (Rasch scaling)

- Phase 2: 1294 informants in 189 institutes
- Phase 3: 3503 usable responses



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Validation: Linked data matrix

- Descriptors appear on 2-4 (usually 3) different questionnaires (Phases 1, 2 & 3) = Responses linked into one data set
- Selected CEFR descriptors appear as "anchor items" in each phase
- Questionnaires distributed evenly, according to profiles of institutes

Validation

Intuitive:
Collect, classify, edit, discuss, redraft



Qualitative: (Phase 1)
990 informants in 140 institutes

- assigning to categories
- evaluating
- suggesting reformulations (shortening)

Quantitative (Rasch scaling)

- assigning to levels (Phase 2)
- Yes/No responses (Phase 3)

Category + Quality

WORKSHOP 1: RESPONSE SHEET – SET 11

Institution	Participant 1	Participant 2	(Participant 3)
CEBS-Austria	GRUBER Isabella	Götsi BOJANA	

Step 1: Tick in any column only (i.e. for a category, or for "Can't Decide" or "Drop this descriptor"), referring to the Descriptor Sheet. Pay attention to the 'Item numbers'! If you tick "Drop this descriptor," proceed to the next descriptor. Do not do Step 2 in this case. If you tick "Can't decide" you may still do Step 2 if you wish.
Step 2: Judge the quality of the descriptor. Tick Y/N (Yes or No) in the column each of the 3 criteria accordingly.
Step 3: (Optional): If you want to suggest changes to a descriptor, write these directly on the Descriptor Sheet, put your name on the sheet and return it to the coordinator.

Item no.	Step 1: Category (please tick ONE only)						Step 2: Quality (please tick)					
	Establishing Connections (to previous knowledge, to the wider context)	Restructuring Text (in appropriate discourse culture)	Amplifying Text (adding redundancy, exemplifying, illustrating, using metaphor)	Streamlining Text (condensing, reordering)	Adjusting Language (paraphrasing, simplifying, changing register)	Can't decide	Drop this descriptor	Clearly formulated	Pedagogically useful	Relevant to real life	Y	N
107												
126												
156												
157												
158												
159												
160												
171												
195												
206												
209												
215												
228												

Descriptor 230

Can, in a training situation, spontaneously and flexibly suggest an appropriate task to help participants reflect on their existing knowledge and competences in relation to the content.

Item ID	Item Label	GEN	STIM	PROsp	ESTAB	RESTR	AMPL	STREA	ADJUS
0911	ESTAB				20				
0916	ESTAB				9				
0917	ESTAB		1		13			1	
0920	ESTAB				12				

DROP	OKCoe	DRCoe	CLEAR	%	PED	%	REAL	%	Pairs	Serial
4	83	17	13	54	11	46	12	50	24	230
1	69	8	10	77	12	92	11	85	13	230
2	72	11	10	56	13	72	15	83	18	230
3	71	18	14	82	14	82	14	82	17	230
		14		65		69		72	72	

Collated data on categories

Linking Connections (to previous knowledge, to the wider context)

Collated data on categories

Linking Connections (to previous knowledge, to the wider context)

Descriptor coefficients:

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Descriptor 232

Can spontaneously pose a series of questions to encourage people to think about their prior knowledge of an abstract issue and to help them establish a link to what is going to be explained.

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Validation

Intuitive:
Collect, classify, edit, discuss, redraft

Qualitative: (Phase 1)
990 informants in 140 institutes

- assigning to categories
- evaluating
- suggesting reformulations (shortening)

Quantitative (Rasch scaling)

- assigning to levels (Phase 2)
- Yes/No responses (Phase 3)

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Phase 2: Assigning CEFR level

At what CEFR level do you think a person can do what is defined in the descriptor?

Pre-A1 A1 A2 A2+ B1 B1+ B2 B2+ C1 C2

Two types of analysis



Classical analysis:

- the mean and median levels rated
- the percentage that rated the intended broader level (50% criterion)
- **Rasch analysis** to link the ratings to the scale underlying CEFR levels:
 - Anchoring the steps on the scale.
 - Anchoring to calibrated CEFR descriptors
 - Doing both of the above simultaneously
 - Unanchored analysis, equated

Percentages at each band

	COLLAB01reason	COLLAB02queststuggest	COLLAB03expanding	COLLAB04contribute	COLLAB05central	COLLAB06explicitqs	COLLAB07challenge	COLLAB08eliciting	COLLAB09further	COLLAB10highlight	COLLAB11present	COLLAB12summarise
Pre A1	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
A1	4%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
A2	21%	8%	1%	0%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%
A2+	20%	15%	3%	0%	1%	3%	2%	2%	2%	0%	4%	0%
B1	29%	21%	9%	3%	18%	12%	5%	9%	11%	1%	11%	6%
B1+	12%	20%	10%	5%	20%	13%	5%	13%	13%	3%	25%	13%
B2	9%	24%	32%	19%	31%	27%	28%	20%	27%	12%	31%	40%
B2+	3%	7%	32%	26%	14%	21%	30%	24%	35%	13%	18%	22%
C1	0%	2%	13%	27%	11%	18%	24%	24%	9%	41%	8%	17%
C2	0%	0%	1%	19%	2%	5%	5%	8%	2%	31%	1%	2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Dark Green = approx 50%
Light + dark green = approx 80%

Descriptor 3

COLLAB3expanding

Can build on a partner's ideas, expanding and deepening them.

Two types of Analysis

- Classical analysis:
 - the mean and median levels rated;
 - the percentage that rated the intended level;
- ➔ Rasch analysis to link the ratings to the scale underlying CEFR levels:
 - a) Anchoring the steps on the scale.
 - b) Anchoring to calibrated CEFR descriptors
 - c) Doing both of the above
 - d) Equating unanchored analysis

Phase 2 Rasch Analysis

AIM	DESCRIPTOR LABEL	ANCH SCALE	ANCH ITEMS	ITEMS +SCALE	STD DEV	Result
B1	COLLAB01reason	A2	B1	B1	B1	B1
A2	COLLAB02questsuggest	A2+	B1+	B1+	B1+	
C1	COLLAB03expanding	B1+	B2	B2	B2	B2
B2	COLLAB04contribute	B2	B2+	B2+	B2+	B2+
B1	COLLAB05central	B1	B1+	B2	B2	
B2+	COLLAB06explicitqs	B1+	B2	B2	B2	B2
C1	COLLAB07challenge	B1+	B2	B2+	B2+	B2/B2+
B1	COLLAB08eliciting	B1+	B2	B2	B2+	
B2	COLLAB09further	B1+	B2	B2	B2	B2

Validation

Intuitive:

Collect, classify, edit, discuss, redraft

Qualitative: (Phase 1)

990 informants in 140 institutes

- assigning to categories
- evaluating
- suggesting reformulations (shortening)

Quantitative (Rasch scaling)

- assigning to levels (Phase 2)

➔ Yes/No responses (Phase 3)

Phase 3: Yes/No responses

- Main calibration exercise – wide circulation
- English & French

- 192 out of c400 items calibrated in Phase 2
- ➔ 62 of these included as anchors for Phase 3
 - Plus 12 CEFR anchors
 = 74 anchors in 365 items
- Presented again in 23 overlapping questionnaires

Phase 3: Yes/No responses

Could you, or the person concerned, do what is described in the descriptor?

- 0 Beyond my/his/her capabilities
- 1 Yes, under favourable circumstances
- 2 Yes, in normal circumstances
- 3 Yes, even in difficult circumstances
- 4 Clearly better than this

Replicating original CEFR descrip. research
 (Swiss project 1993-6: North & Schneider 1998;
 North 2000)



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Phase 3: Yes/No responses

- Global Rasch analysis
- Separate analyses for categories less central to construct:
 - Interpretation/translation
 - Online
 - Literature & art
 - Plurilingual/pluricultural
 (with the relevant anchors from Phase 2)



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Descriptor 3

COLLAB3expanding

Can build on a partner's ideas, expanding and deepening them.



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Descriptor 3

	Aim	Phase 3 Rasch	Phase 2 classical	Phase 3 Rasch	Decision	Logit	SEM	Serial	Descriptor
COLLAB03 expanding	C1	B2	B2	B2	???	1.25	.09	3	Can build on a partner's ideas, expanding and deepening them.



B2 Descriptors for COLLAB

- Can present his/her ideas in a group and pose questions that invite reactions from other group members' perspectives.
- Can formulate follow-up questions to a member of a group to clarify an issue that is implicit or poorly articulated.
- Can highlight inconsistencies in thinking, and challenge other's ideas in the process of trying to reach a consensus.
- ➔ Can further develop other people's ideas and opinions.
- Can, in collaborative discussion, consider two different sides of an issue and propose a solution or compromise.
- Can summarise the point reached at a particular stage in a discussion and propose next steps.



Follow ups

- Deleting c 30 good descriptors (because of repetition/redundancy)
- Follow up on Plurilingual/pluricultural (using Phase 2 methodology)
- Extending descriptors for Plurilingual/-cultural
- Developing a new Phonology scale
 - Intuitive: Team of 3 + 4 consultants
 - Qualitative: Phase 1: assigning to categories and evaluating
 - Qualitative: Phase 3 + Phase 2 combined



Documentation

- Document with descriptor scales, including the rationale for each new scale
- Report giving academic, CoE and CEFR context, account of development and validation, posing questions for consultative process
- Archive document with all descriptors considered, plus validation history
- Technical report for each validation phase



Extended consultative process

- Meeting June with experts from related Council of Europe projects
- Consultation and piloting until later 2017 (following the CEFR precedent)
- Revision for publication.

The exact form of presentation and publication will be one of the issues considered in the consultation process.



Thank you

Brian North

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