

Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

Forming a Framework and Language Portfolio SIG

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The main body of this paper is made up of abstracts by speakers at the JALT2008 forum that led to the forming of the Framework and Language Portfolio SIG. The background and aims of the SIG precede a brief description of the principle framework and language portfolio used. Abstracts by the speakers concerning the application and possibilities of the pedagogic tools follow. These abstracts highlight the possible ways forward for curriculum design, assessment, and educational reforms in Japan. The paper concludes with a brief note on the future directions of the SIG.



本論文はJALT2008におけるフォーラムでの発表をまとめたものである。フォーラムでの議論に基づき「フレームワークと言語ポートフォリオ研究部会(SIG)」が設立された。論文の冒頭では研究部会の設立に至った背景とその目的、及び理念とするフレームワークとそこで用いられている言語ポートフォリオについて簡単に述べる。その後でこれらの教育の道具としての適用可能性について、それぞれの発表者が発表した内容を要約し、日本におけるカリキュラム・デザイン、評価、教育改革への提言を行う。論文の最後では研究部会の将来の方向性について述べる。

Abbreviations

CEFR: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages self-assessment grid summarizes, using *can do* statements, language proficiency at six levels in relation to five skills.

ELP: The European Language Portfolio is a document aimed to help language learners to keep track of their language learning and record their language learning achievements and experiences.

SIG: Special Interest Group.

In recent years there has been a lively discussion in Japan about language learning curriculums and frameworks, especially the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The JALT2007 Bilingualism Forum discussion noted the interest in the CEFR and ELP in Japan but also that there has been little effort to discuss it openly. In forming the SIG at the JALT2008 forum, members sought a solution to this problem by gathering interested individuals to garner ideas, discuss developments, and coordinate efforts.

The CEFR and ELP can be used in curriculum planning, assessment, and other related language-teaching matters, ranging from elementary school to university level. There are also other similar frameworks such as the Canadian Language Benchmarks. This SIG wants to discuss these frameworks and their relevance for the curriculum in Japan, while carrying out projects and communicating the results. There will be an emphasis on developing materials to support educators who would like to use these pedagogic tools.

The forum started with some of the participants explaining how they have been using the tools in Japan: 1. Bernd Jacob described the promotion and use of the CEFR to integrate language classes and tests by the Goethe Institut. 2. Noriko Nagai described how Ibaraki University has been using the CEFR for its Integrated English Program curriculum since 2004. 3. Naoyuki Naganuma described the development of *can do* scales to complement the ELP self-assessment checklists in Japanese university English language classes. 4. Kazumi Sakai described the use of the CEFR and ELP to create cohesion and transparency from elementary to tertiary level at Keio. 5. Fergus O'Dwyer described the use of a language portfolio in general university English classes.

After the speakers' presentations, the forum continued with the moderators explaining what the SIG plans to do – most importantly, establish project teams working toward a seminar in March 2009, and maintain discussion groups. A brief discussion followed where it was pointed out that there are other frameworks (e.g. Canadian Language Benchmarks) and the group's focus should be wide and include these also. Although there was less time than planned, all present split

into project teams to discuss action plans working toward March 2009 seminar.

CEFR and ELP

In the early 1990s a group of European language course providers worked together to find solutions to the following well-known problem: How can we communicate and how can we understand what kind and what degree of language knowledge is certified through a particular examination result, diploma, or certificate? They were looking on the one hand for an answer in a common reference system and, on the other, for ways that examinations, diplomas, and so on could be described transparently (Centre of Language Teaching and Research, 2002). Language proficiency descriptions have been developed since 1991, leading to the publication of the CEFR in 2001 (see Appendix 1). This self-assessment grid summarizes language proficiency at six levels (A1 and A2: Basic User; B1 and B2: Independent User; C1 and C2: Proficient User) in relation to five skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing. The CEFR has taken the world of language testing by storm, inspiring a thoroughgoing reform of language curricula for schools in countries such as Finland, Sweden, and the Czech Republic. It provides us with an extensive, coherent, and transparent scheme for describing communicative language competences (Little, 2007). The CEFR is the basis for an action-oriented curriculum implemented through the reflective learning tool of the ELP. The effective implementation of the ELP and CEFR makes it clear to stakeholders the how, what, and why of the language learning curriculum, aiming to foster the autonomous lifelong learning of languages.

Language Portfolios, including *Goal-setting and Self-assessment Checklists* (see Figure 1) that break the descriptors of the CEFR down to a group of *can do* statements for each skill and level used for self-assessment and formulating specific language goals, were tested and published alongside the CEFR. A first printed version, the Swiss ELP, was set up for the pilot project phase. On the basis of the detailed feedback from teachers and learners, substantial improvements to the Language Portfolio (LP) could be made. By June 2007, more than 90 ELPs had been validated by the Council of Europe (COE). The ELP introduces a reflective learning cycle of self-evaluating, setting goals and objectives, planning for a language task, self-monitoring, return to self-evaluating, and restart of the cycle. It is designed to be robust enough to fit any language, teaching style, and curriculum. It is now used widely in Europe and further afield. It has three components: a language passport, in which learners summarize their linguistic identity and assess their own language competence according to the CEFR; a language biography, where intermediate learning goals are set and progress is reviewed; and a dossier, which collects samples of work and evidence of achievements in language learning.

Goal-setting and Self-assessment Checklist
Language: _____ **Skill: Spoken interaction** やりとり

This is a checklist of SPOKEN INTERACTION skills drawn from the illustrative scales in the Common European Framework. Use this checklist (a) to set personal learning goals and (b) to record your progress in achieving these goals. Decide what evaluative criteria you want to use in the three right hand columns, and enter dates to record your progress. For example:

I can do this *reasonably well **well ***very well
 I can do this *with a lot of help **with a little help ***on my own

Evaluative Criteria: * _____ ** _____ *** _____

Level A2	Next goal	*	**	***
I can handle short social exchanges and make myself understood if people help me				
I can participate in short conversations in routine contexts on topics of interest				
I can make and respond to invitations, suggestions, apologies and requests for permission				
I can say what I like or dislike, agree or disagree with people, and make comparisons				
I can express what I feel in simple terms, and express thanks				
I can discuss what to do, where to go, make arrangements to meet (e.g., in the evening, at the weekend)				
I can ask and answer simple questions about familiar topics and routine activities (e.g., weather, hobbies, social life, music, sport)				
I can ask and answer simple questions about things that have happened (e.g. yesterday, last year)				
I can handle simple telephone calls (e.g. say who is calling, ask to speak to someone, give my number, take a simple message)				

Note that the checklists do not pretend to be exhaustive. For each proficiency level other tasks or activities can be specified (you can add your own in the blank spaces at the end of each section). It is not necessary to be able to perform all the tasks or activities in order to achieve the level in question. If, for example, you can already perform about 80% of the items on the list for A2 Spoken Interaction, you have already achieved that level in terms of the self-assessment grid in the language passport.

Figure 1. Goal-setting and self-assessment checklists for level A2 of spoken interaction

Bernd Jacob of the Goethe-Institut (GI) opened the forum speaking in German (with translation in the SIG’s lingua franca, English) in order to underline the goal of promoting plurilingualism.

The CEFR, ELP, and the Goethe-Institut, by Bernd Jacob

The Goethe-Institut (GI) was the first institution that created a test for every level of the CEFR. All language classes offered by GI are related to a level of the CEFR, and the names of the textbooks and the classes themselves are directly taken from the levels (e.g. A1.1). The *can do* statements are listed for each lesson of the textbook. The ELP is used to reflect on each lesson in terms of the relevant *can do* statement. The whole system has proven to be very transparent for learners and teachers. GI has found that the CEFR and the ELP are tools for autonomous learning. They offer transparency, coherence, flexibility, and efficiency in language learning.

The GI is responsible for the implementation of the CEFR in Germany, Europe, and worldwide. It organized the translation of the CEFR from English into German, and helps with the implementation of the CEFR in the US and Japan. GI, along with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), were financially responsible for the translation of the CEFR into Japanese.

The GI is involved with discussions and research about the implementation of the CEFR in the USA through the *CEFR in the USA* working group. A group of US-based practitioners, administrators, and members of professional

language organizations met at the GI in New York City in September 2006 to share their experiences and to discuss critically their work to adapt insights and considerations put forth in the CEFR to the instruction and learning of foreign languages in US educational contexts at all levels. Engagement with the CEFR, along with reference to other frameworks and guidelines will facilitate discussions about matters such as: transparency and coherence in language learning; use of language portfolios for instruction and (self-) assessment; a single framework for all aspects of language teaching and learning: planning, instruction, and assessment; and potential integration of the CEFR and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guideline scales. The SIG can become a part of such dialogue in some way and look forward to continuing support from GI.

The CEFR can be used to integrate language curriculums, and facilitates the work of language learners to advance toward quantifiable and realistic goals. The following abstract exemplifies the use of the CEFR in a Japanese university context.

Using the CEFR for the development of the Integrated English Program curriculum at Ibaraki University, by Noriko Nagai

The Integrated English Program (IEP) is a prerequisite for graduation by all freshmen (approximately 1,700) at Ibaraki University. Before initiating this program, there were not clear or coherent goals for the English language curriculum. Teachers did not know about other teachers' classes, and

students of different proficiency levels were mixed in one class.

Paying special attention to developing a coherent and cohesive English curriculum, the program was reformed in 2001. The self-assessment grid of the CEFR was modified, with the permission of the COE, to create the IEP reference levels. The following three factors were considered:

1. Students' learning history: Most incoming students have studied English for at least 6 years in a grammar-focused translation method.
2. Learning environments: English is a foreign language in Japan and there are hardly any situations or occasions where students can use English outside of the classroom.
3. Learning hours: Our students take a 90-minute class twice a week, and are required to work autonomously for at least 60 minutes a week in a language lab or at home. The IEP lasts 15 weeks and this makes up only 60 learning hours which is, for example, approximately only one-third of the learning hours expected to attain level B1 (also called Threshold level) from level A2 (also called Waystage level) (van Ek and Trim, 1998a & 1998b).

The IEP offers two types of courses: four skill-based courses and English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The EAP courses function as a bridge between General Education English courses and English courses offered by different departments in Ibaraki University such as the College of Humanities. The skill-based courses aim to develop listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills. There are

five levels of the four skill-based courses, Level 1 through Level 5, which are designed to correspond roughly to A1 to B2 in the CEFR (Nagai & Fukuda, 2004). The B1 level was split into two levels due to learning hours and learning environment considerations noted above. The same syllabus and textbooks are used in each class in the same level of instruction. Textbooks and teaching materials are selected for different skills in each level. For instance, Level 4 (roughly B1) uses a commercial textbook as a main course book, graded readers for reading, and authentic reading materials for the survey of presentation tasks. A level coordinator in each level manages and assists other teachers in the same level. The coordinator decides on textbooks and prepares teaching materials, quizzes, and tests. They also help other teachers with any teaching problems.

The IEP reference levels are sufficient to provide an overview of objectives of each skill in each different level. However, the descriptors are not concrete enough for students to monitor their stage of learning in a given level. Clear objectives of each skill at each level are described by *can do* lists developed by the IEP Working Group in 2007 (Ano et al., 2007). The *can do* lists are original, but were developed with reference to current CEFR materials. In developing a *can do* list, the working group first determined what domain of language activities should be focused upon in a given level, and then specified several activities and tasks to be performed in different skills of each level. Here below is an example *can do* list for level L5, developed by Robert Betts and used in the academic year of 2006-2007.

Please place a checkmark (✓) in the appropriate box in the blank spaces below the statements, write any additional skills you have that are not listed in the form.

Speaking - Interaction		Check	
		Yes	No
1	I can take part in discussions about issues common to my classmates.		
2	I can use a number of "discussion strategies" when taking part in discussions.		
3	I can express my opinion in discussions with my classmates.		
4	I can reply to questions about topics common to my classmates.		

Figure 2. Level 5 *can do* lists for spoken interaction of the IEP

Can do lists make explicit what students are expected to be able to do at the end of the semester, and let teachers know exactly what they need to teach, making it easier for them to prepare for the courses. Learners can reflect and check if they are attaining the objectives of the course.

However there are some difficulties in adapting CEFR to the existing English program. Not all instructors in the program know about CEFR or are willing to learn about it. Some instructors feel offended by being told specifically what they are expected to teach. It is also not easy to modify the *can do* statements to fit the existing program while remaining in accordance with the CEFR level descriptions.

Overall, I believe *can do* lists based on CEFR have great potential for classroom instruction, autonomous learning, self assessment, and curriculum design. In addition it is important to share the philosophy of CEFR and ELP and use them to clarify English language education in Japan.

Development of an academic *can do* scale to complement the ELP self-assessment checklists, by Naoyuki Naganuma

Can do statements are becoming important as indications of learners' current English ability. They are now also used in many language tests (e.g., TOEFL iBT as competency descriptors, the new TOEIC as score descriptors) to enable the learner to see their ability through detailed statements, in a way which cannot be directly understood from test scores.

However, there are still few attempts by teachers or organizations to use *can do* scales in their language classrooms or language programs. I have been involved in the attempt to construct an English academic *can do* scale for the English language curriculum at Seisen University, and its application to the language program of the English Learning Center at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, which could be used to supplement the self-assessment checklists provided by the ELP.

The Seisen Academic *can do* scale (Naganuma & Miyajima, 2006) was originally developed for the English curriculum reform at Seisen University. The *can do* statements describe the skills which are commonly taught in each class and what learners are expected to achieve at a given level. The purpose is to measure the learners' academic English ability in class rather than daily communicative English abilities outside class, as it is believed that training in sub-skills which support communicative language activities also needs to be focused to make a bridge between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1980). Twenty *can do* statements across

four skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) are used. Four levels of graded performance are provided for learners to self-assess the accomplishment of learning tasks (see Figure 3).

I can give a presentation on a familiar topic with visual materials.

1. I will have difficulty even with my notes.
2. I can present if I look at my notes.
3. I can present without any notes if it is a pair or group presentation.
4. I can present on my own without any notes.

Have you ever done the above activity?

- a. yes b. no

Would you like to do the above activity?

- a. Yes, definitely b. Maybe yes c. Not interested

Figure 3. A spoken production Seisen Academic *can do* scale

These performance grades can also function as goals for learners in different language levels and show steps in the process of learning. Performance grade 3 (*I can present without any notes, if it is a pair or group presentation*) can be a general goal for most of the learners while grade 4 (*I can present on my own without any notes*) serves as a goal for high achievers. Even for lower-proficiency learners, it is important to set an attainable goal and confirm what they can partially do to give self-efficacy. Grade 2 describes scaffolding they may need to achieve the goal stated in the *can do* statement. An experience and needs survey is also included in the *can do* questionnaire which has been conducted with an English placement/proficiency test at the beginning and at the end of the first year, and at the end of the second year since 2006.

The survey results show that *can do* scores obtained from the four-point scale above reflect English level of students measured by objective test scores. They will improve when a class is skill-focused but may not change when a class just follows a textbook. They are useful when a teacher or an administrator wants to know the initial skill balance of the learners and how they build confidence in their ability through the class. Evaluation tasks based on *can do* statements should be developed to confirm whether learners have achieved the abilities described in a framework. These tasks clearly inform students of what they are expected to achieve at their given level and will improve tuition and curriculum quality.

Such curriculum innovation can motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning by facilitating self-evaluation and the setting of clear language learning goals.

Using the CEFR and ELP from elementary to tertiary level at Keio, by Kazumi Sakai

Keio operates one elementary school, three junior high schools, five senior high schools, and ten university departments. They are independent from each other, like similar systems within EU countries, yet it is felt that they should have a common framework of reference for language education, in order to enable educational consensus, continuity, and transparency. It is important to foster learners' plurilingual ability, something very much emphasized by the CEFR. With change in Japanese society including an increasing number of immigrants from Southeast Asia and South America, it is important to promote mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance among

the future leaders of Japan, to build an inclusive, harmonious society. With this and the importance of languages and cultures in mind, Keio began to teach languages other than English at junior high schools several years ago (Chinese since 2001, French, German, Italian, and Spanish since 2008). Languages other than English were already taught at high schools (since the 1940s).

The Keio Research Centre for Foreign Language Education, reorganised and renamed in October 2003, for the purpose of promoting research on language education from elementary to tertiary level, is now conducting research called the "Action Oriented Plurilingual Learning Project." It is jointly financed by the MEXT and Keio itself from April 2006 to March 2011. One of the main research topics is continuity and transparency of language learning throughout all levels of the school system (something that is unfortunately not yet fully supported and realized at Keio). A transparent and continuous language teaching and learning policy is necessary for Keio to guarantee a smooth and efficient transfer of students from one level to another. The policy is modelled after that of the COE and the CEFR is central to the strategy. The essential tool for realising the policy of CEFR is the ELP.

Through a study of the ELP, Keio recognised the importance of fostering autonomous learners of language by raising learners' awareness of their own achievement, learning skills, and strategies. Keio received a licence to make copies of "European Language Portfolio – Junior version: Revised edition" (The National Centre for Languages, 2006) and distributed them to learners at all levels. Keio studied not only the former ELP but also

the Swiss ELP version, especially its *can do* statements. They were translated into Japanese and included in a questionnaire given to more than 3,600 learners at our schools and departments to check if the Japanese expressions were adequate, the descriptors suitable, and to what extent learners were able to judge their own language learning competencies. At the same time, the results of learners' self-evaluation were compared to the results of the Computerized Assessment System for English Communication (CASEC) test, a standard test for evaluating English proficiency that some learners took. Even though the research was very limited, one could find a fairly high degree of correlation between the learners' subjective judgements and the objective results of the CASEC test. Based on the feedback from learners, we translated the ELP into Japanese. The Japanese version is now ready to distribute for piloting with learners. Keio's researchers are positive about the possibilities of an integrated language education policy emerging from the use of the ELP and CEFR.

This project and use of the tools can stimulate language education reforms in Japan. The final abstract describes how an LP was piloted in April 2008 with the ultimate aim of making it available for university language education in Japan.

Using the ELP in Japanese university general English classes, by Fergus O'Dwyer

The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS) ELP was used with modifications incorporating Japanese translations alongside the English explanations of the format and functions. The LP

supplemented a task-based curriculum in General English university classes. Taking the form of handout materials inserted into an A4 pocket file, the LP aimed to increase learner autonomy and to make the learning process more transparent.

The course started with activities to highlight the learners' level in relation to the CEFR. Self-assessment led to the setting of language goals for the year (to progress to the next level of the CEFR for speaking). An intermediate goal was agreed upon, after discussion with the instructor, by the learner group for each stage of the curriculum by relating to a *can do* statement from the *Goal-setting and Self-assessment Checklists* (e.g., the goal for a learning stage which culminated in a short presentation was related to the spoken interaction "I can give a short presentation" statement). After each learning stage the LP encouraged reflection about the learning effort, how well goals were achieved, and what has been learned as a result. The process of goal-setting sometimes appears to be a form-filling exercise, but I feel it is useful as it is connected to the language learning tasks of the course and encourages metalinguistic reflection. In addition to setting and reflecting upon goals, learners were encouraged to occasionally reflect on personal awareness (e.g. What are my strengths and shortcomings as a language learner?), and situational awareness (e.g. How might I improve my participation in my group?) The instructor justified the benefits of reflection before undertaking the activities. Specific and concrete instructor feedback on reflection (e.g. how the points to improve noted for group participation can be applied in following textbook stage) and progress toward goals

(generalizations on how learners carried out specific task and points to be improved) was also found to be important. While use of the L2 is important, reflection in the L1 alongside English was not discouraged, as reflection in this way can achieve a higher level of sophistication, and is more natural, and the learners' ability to reflect develops more effectively (Kohonen, 2007).

In general, it was found that learners quickly understood and adapted to the workings of the CEFR and ELP if they were presented in an easily understood manner. Taking the time to learn how to learn leads to learner autonomy and increased motivation. It is unrealistic to expect learners to suddenly make the switch to being an autonomous learner of languages, but the use of an LP can bring learners incrementally toward this desired situation. The goal-setting process can be applied to any situation and language so it is useful throughout life, including aspects of life outside of language learning.

The time needed for instructors to become acquainted with the workings of the ELP should not be underestimated. There are many resources available online (see <www.geocities.jp/dlinklist/ENG/CefrSIG.html> for collated links for the CEFR and the ELP) but the support of likeminded instructors in a supportive network like the SIG should be very helpful.

Presenting the CEFR grid in English with a Japanese explanation facilitated immediacy and greater understanding. Furthermore the incorporated Japanese translation of the format and functions of the ELP facilitated pedagogical efficiency. The instructor could not access a Japanese translation of the checklists; something that would benefit

lower-proficiency learners and improve general pedagogy (particularly in goal-setting and also in self-assessment, if learners were unsure of their level, in that they could refer to the checklists to confirm their tentative self-assessment). One immediate benefit of the forum was that individuals present had used and translated similar checklists. These translations can be incorporated into the template ELP which a project team of the SIG plans to develop for use in Japanese university language classes by April 2009. A teacher's handbook (initially in English with Japanese translation) which explains the working of the ELP is essential to the action plan of this project team. Immediately following the forum some members travelled to Europe to meet with academics there to garner advice and materials. Other ELPs for higher education were also examined before creating a master LP with a teacher's handbook. Translations were then drafted. This LP template was prepared by April 2009; for details and to download, visit <<http://forums.jalt.org/index.php/topic,456.0.html>>

The way forward

In addition to generating discussion, the SIG aims gathered in March 2009 will support work toward a seminar in July 2009. This will involve workshops, case studies, and project teams working on action plans. The working titles of these project teams include "Language Portfolio template," "Framework materials resources/syllabus guides," "Teacher training," and "Establishing the use of frameworks in Japan." (It is very hard to be sure how and how many people are currently using these tools in Japan.) In time, it is hoped that the SIG collection of materials to aid implementation of the

pedagogic tools will grow through project team activities. The pool of experience within the SIG can contribute and offer insights into the reform of language education in Japan. The use of the CEFR outlined above and in other institutions, most notably as the basis for all 28 language curriculums in the Osaka University of Foreign studies, outline curriculum choices that many institutions may choose to pursue. The Keio research outlined a vision for future reforms that can integrate all levels of formal language education.

Adapting framework and language portfolio usage to the psycholinguistic level of the learner (e.g. learners' age, proficiency level, linguistic and cultural background, prior exposure to an L2 and English, and attitude toward English) and specific curriculums need to be considered before implementation. Japan certainly offers unique challenges but the aim of the CEFR and the ELP (to be used for all languages in all situations) should not be forgotten. The viewpoint offered by the *CEFR in the USA* working group (create a single framework for all aspects of language teaching and learning incorporating the CEFR and other frameworks) is an exciting possibility. This is a far from simple exercise but it is one theme, among several others, that could be extrapolated in discussions initiated by the SIG. It is not realistic to expect widespread reform of language curriculums in the near future but, as the use of the CEFR increases in Japan, the adoption of tools like the ELP will become easier. This SIG hopes to provide information and resources for learners, educators, and decision makers who are interested in adopting these tools. The way forward offers exciting challenges.

Fergus O'Dwyer has taught in various EFL situations in Japan since 2000 and now lectures at Momoyama Gakuin Daigaku/St. Andrew's University and Osaka Kyouiku Daigaku High School. His current interests include the European Language Portfolio and the pedagogy of introducing World English in the classroom. <fodwyerj@gmail.com>

Alexander Imig has been teaching German as a second language since 1991, with previous positions in Berlin and Prague. He was a lecturer at Aichi Prefectural University from 2001 to 2007 and has been an associate professor at Chukyo University in Nagoya since April 2008. His fields of study include rhetoric and curriculum development, especially in multilingual circumstances. <imigalexander@hotmail.com>

The **Goethe-Institut** is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution with 147 institutes worldwide, including 14 in Germany, and 3 in Japan (Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo). The network of Goethe Instituts, Goethe Centres, cultural societies, reading rooms, and exam and language centres have played a central role in the cultural and educational policies of Germany for over 50 years.

Noriko Nagai received her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Michigan. She taught linguistics and Japanese at Duke University in the U.S.A. for 9 years and now teaches linguistics and English at Ibaraki University. She was Assistant Director of the Center for University Education of Ibaraki University from 2002 to 2005 and reformed the English curriculum with reference to CEFR at that time. Her research area is cognitive pragmatics. She is currently also involved in a research project for English curriculum design

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Kazumi Sakai has taught German as a foreign language at several universities in Tokyo since 1989. He has been teaching at Keio since 1997 (as a full professor from 2000) and since October 2007 he has been Director of the Keio Research Centre for Foreign Language Education. As a teacher trainer, he has been working for the Japanese Society for German Studies for many years. His research interests include phonetic problems of Japanese learners of German, CALL, and language policies.

Adaptation

The abstract by Fergus O'Dwyer and other elements of this paper are adapted from an article that first appeared in the March 2009 "Task-based teaching in Japan" special issue of the JALT publication *The Language Teacher*.

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Appendix 1

The Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR)

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak 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 area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech 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 speech 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 dialect.	I can understand extended speech 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 spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided, I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words 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 attitudes 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 language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.