



Assessing speaking performance

How the new CEFR can help
Kirsten Waechter

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Speaking competence

Talored Trainings



Linguistic
(vocabulary,
grammar)



Phonological
(sounds,
intonation)



Sociolinguistic
(appropriate,
pluricultural)



Pragmatic
(flexibility, fluency,
coherence)



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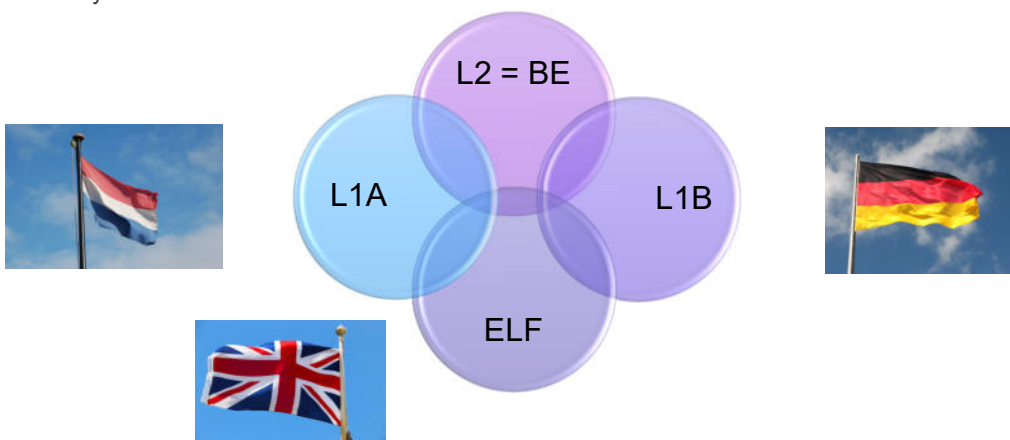
Reasoning behind

- Language cannot be separated from communication and culture
- Purpose, usage and functionality of language
- New fields of interaction for speaking and writing
- Strategies on mediation (between languages)
- Pronunciation? Phonology!
- Pluricultural competence

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Effective communication

Communication between speakers of different L1s requires more than grammar and vocabulary



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Conventional exam approach

- Speaking not often tested
- Native speaker model still prevailing
 - British English – received pronunciation
 - US English – white English
- And who does the testing?
 - Needs to be done by a person
 - Computerised testing of limited value



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Speaking assessment: what matters?

- natural flow of speech and ideas
- can they get their message across
- avoid misunderstandings
- clarity, ease of expression
- pronunciation and being understood
- intelligibility, appropriateness, idiomaticity (B2 and up), correctness (B2 and up)
- levels of empathy and fluency

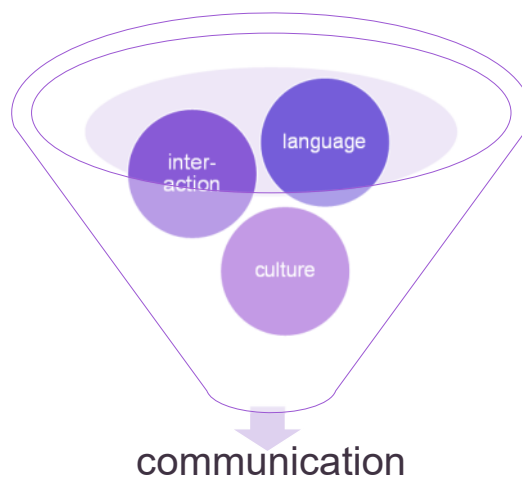
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What matters

- grammar
- vocabulary
- fluency
- pronunciation (intonation)
- clarity (word order)
- ability to describe things
- no communication breakdown
- interaction: dialogue
- active listening
- checking for understanding
- appropriacy (politeness, formality)
- turntaking

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The communication mix

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What does the CEFR describe?

Production


- Describing experience
- Giving information
- Putting a case
- Public announcements
- Addressing audiences


NATIONAAL CONGRES ENGELS


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Production: sample

 Introducing a speaker and his topic

 Before you listen: which features could you assess in this excerpt?

 Now listen and check: what would make sense?

 What would be your assessment?



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Factors of impact

- Signposting/addressing the audience (explaining what she is going to talk about)
- Presenting an argument (rhetoric question, repeating, challenges, enumeration, examples, impact, future vision)
- Mediation/making an announcement: explaining what the speaker will talk about, turn-taking (handing over to speaker)
- Phonology: intonation, using the voice, emphasising important points, easy to follow, pausing
- Use of vocabulary and grammar: accuracy, fluency, coherence

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Production: descriptors

B2	Can develop an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
	Can develop a clear argument, expanding and supporting his/her points of view at some length with subsidiary points and relevant examples.
	Can construct a chain of reasoned argument.
	Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time.
	Can give simple reasons to justify a viewpoint on a familiar topic.
	Can express opinions on subjects relating to everyday life, using simple expressions.
	Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions.
	Can say whether or not he/she approves of what someone has done and give reasons to justify this opinion.

Putting a case



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Production: descriptors

C1	Can deliver announcements fluently, almost effortlessly, using stress and intonation to convey finer shades of meaning precisely.
B2	Can deliver announcements on most general topics with a degree of clarity, fluency and spontaneity which causes no strain or inconvenience to the listener.
B1	Can deliver short, rehearsed announcements on a topic pertinent to everyday occurrences in his/her field which, despite possibly very foreign stress and intonation, are nevertheless clearly intelligible.

Public announcement



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Production: descriptors

B2	Can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
	Can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression.
	Can give a clear, prepared presentation, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can take a series of follow up questions with a degree of fluency and spontaneity which poses no strain for either him/herself or the audience.
	Can give a prepared presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field, outlining similarities and differences (e.g. between products, countries/regions, plans).
	Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision.
	Can take follow up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the speech was rapid.

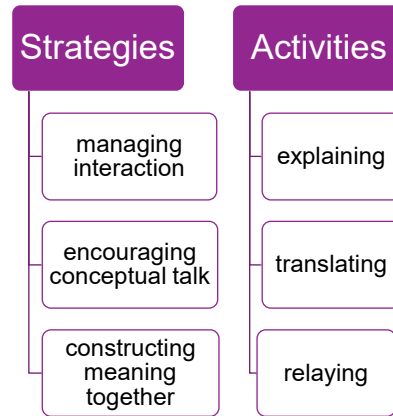
Addressing audiences



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Mediation

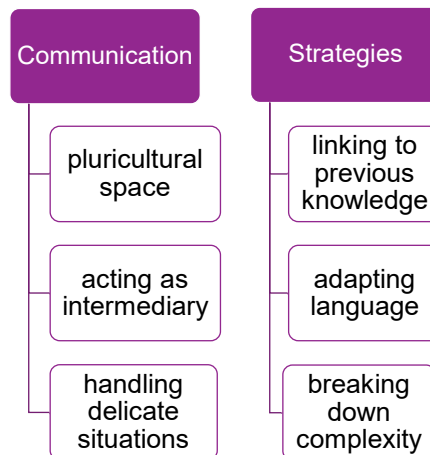
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Mediation

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Mediation


- Already practised in schools
- L1 no longer a taboo, but:
 - How to use L1 sensibly?
- Activities of mediation
(text, concept, communication)
- Strategies of mediation
(explaining concepts and simplifying texts)

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Mediation strategies

- Strategies to explain a new concept
 - Linking to previous knowledge
 - Adapting language
 - Breaking down complicated information
- Strategies to simplify a text
 - Amplifying a dense text
 - Streamlining a text
- Which of these did the speaker apply?


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Mediation: new concepts

- Linking back to previous knowledge
 - posing questions to encourage people to activate prior knowledge
 - providing examples and definitions
- Breaking down complicated information
 - breaking a process into a series of steps
 - presenting separately the main points in a chain of argument
- These are two strategies the speaker applies when explaining the impact of digitalisation on the finance world

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What are the descriptors?

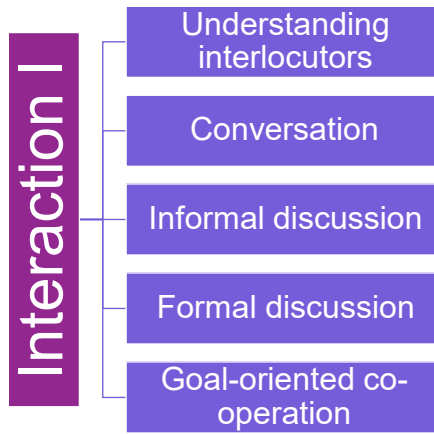
B2	Can clearly explain the connections between the goals of the session and the personal or professional interests and experiences of the participant(s).	Can make a complicated issue easier to understand by presenting the components of the argument separately.
	Can formulate questions and give feedback to encourage people to make connections to previous knowledge and experiences. Can explain a new concept or procedure by comparing and contrasting it to one that people are already familiar with.	Can make a complicated process easier to understand by breaking it down into a series of smaller steps.

Linking to previous knowledge

Breaking down complicated information

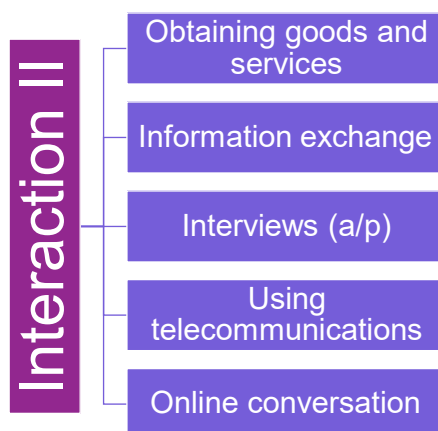
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What does
the CEFR
describe?



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What does
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Interaction



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Interaction: sample



Agreeing and disagreeing



Before you listen: which features could you assess in this excerpt?



Now listen and check: what would make sense?



What would be your assessment?



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Factors of impact

- phonology: intonation, using the voice, emphasising important points, easy to follow, pausing
- use of vocabulary and grammar: accuracy
- fluency, coherence
- avoiding communication breakdown: using German words, explaining the word
- understanding an interlocutor: relating back to what the previous speaker said, helping out the other speaker
- formal discussion: understanding points in detail, contributing own points/opinions in own field of expertise

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Interaction: descriptors

B2	Can use circumlocution and paraphrase to cover gaps in vocabulary and structure.	Linking to previous knowledge
	Can address most communication problems by using circumlocutions, or by avoiding difficult expressions.	
B1	Can define the features of something concrete for which he/she can't remember the word.	Linking to previous knowledge
	Can convey meaning by qualifying a word meaning something similar (e.g. a truck for people = bus).	
	Can use a simple word meaning something similar to the concept he/she wants to convey and invites 'correction'. Can foreignise a mother tongue word and ask for confirmation.	
B2	Can understand in detail what is said to him/her in the standard spoken language even in a noisy environment.	Breaking down complicated information
B1	Can follow clearly articulated speech directed at him/her in everyday conversation, though will sometimes have to ask for repetition of particular words and phrases.	

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Interaction: descriptors

B2	<p>Can keep up with an animated discussion, identifying accurately arguments supporting and opposing points of view.</p> <p>Can use appropriate technical terminology, when discussing his/her area of specialisation with other specialists.</p> <p>Can express his/her ideas and opinions with precision, present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.</p>
	<p>Can participate actively in routine and non-routine formal discussion.</p> <p>Can follow the discussion on matters related to his/her field; understand in detail the points given prominence by the speaker.</p> <p>Can contribute, account for and sustain his/her opinion, evaluate alternative proposals and make and respond to hypotheses.</p>
	<p>Can follow much of what is said that is related to his/her field, provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly.</p> <p>Can put over a point of view clearly, but has difficulty engaging in debate.</p>

Formal discussion

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Interaction: descriptors

B2	<p>Can keep up with an animated discussion between speakers of the target language.</p> <p>Can express his/her ideas and opinions with precision, present and respond to complex lines of argument convincingly.</p>
	<p>Can take an active part in informal discussion in familiar contexts, commenting, putting point of view clearly, evaluating alternative proposals and making and responding to hypotheses.</p> <p>Can with some effort catch much of what is said around him/her in discussion, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several speakers of the target language who do not modify their speech in any way.</p> <p>Can account for and sustain his/her opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments.</p>
	<p>Can follow much of what is said around him/her on general topics provided interlocutors avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly.</p> <p>Can express his/her thoughts about abstract or cultural topics such as music, films.</p> <p>Can explain why something is a problem.</p> <p>Can give brief comments on the views of others.</p>

Informal discussion

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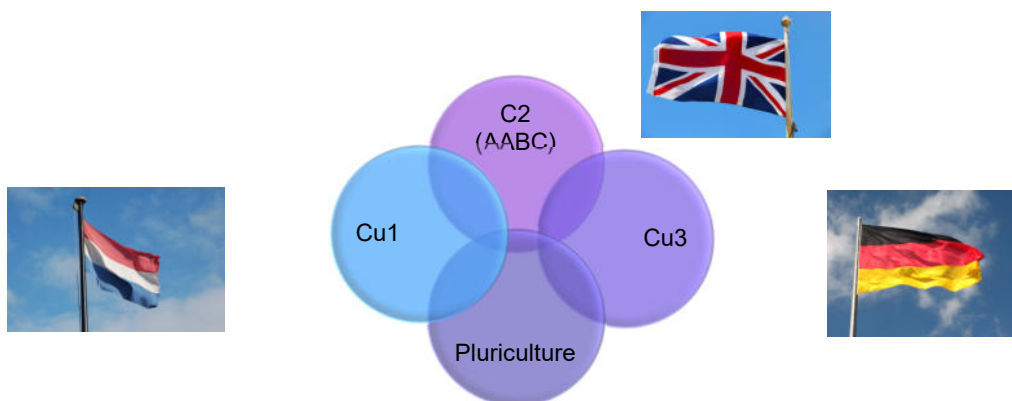
More factors of impact

- mediation: relaying a text: paraphrasing (regulations)
- production: presenting an argument, using signalling language
- creating a supportive discussion culture: showing sensitivity to other people's opinion

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Where does culture come in?

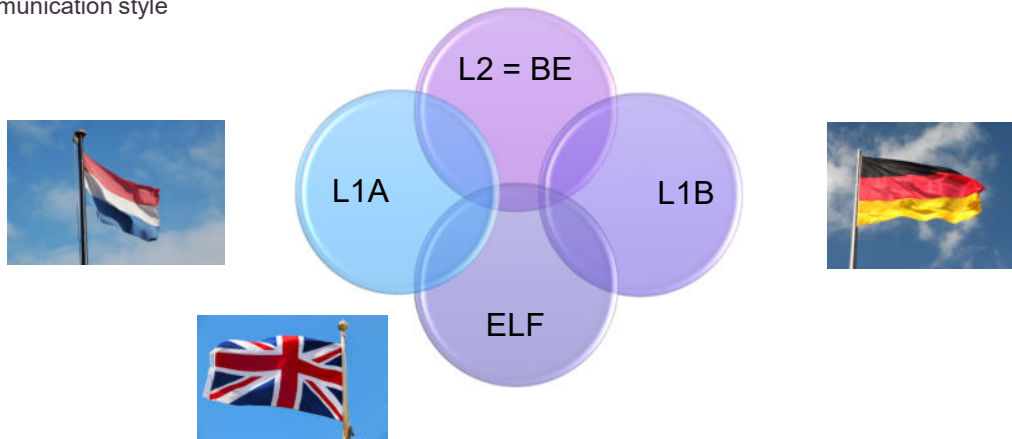
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Effective communication

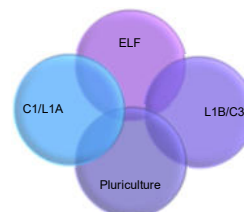
Communication between speakers of different L1s is impacted by the speaker's culture and communication style



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Pluricultural competence

- Acting as a **mediator** (key function) in difficult situations
- **Moderating/mediating communication** between people from different cultures successfully
- **Anticipating** possible problems and misunderstandings and **developing** solution strategies
- Does not only apply to different cultures, but also to different languages



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CEFR: new descriptors

B1

Can support communication across cultures by initiating conversation, showing interest and empathy by asking and answering simple questions, and expressing agreement and understanding.

Can act in a supportive manner in intercultural encounters, recognising the feelings and different world views of other members of the group.

Can support an intercultural exchange using a limited repertoire to introduce people from different cultural backgrounds and to ask and answer questions, showing awareness that some questions may be perceived differently in the cultures concerned.

Can help to develop a shared communication culture, by exchanging information in a simple way about values and attitudes to language and culture.

C1

Can act as mediator in intercultural encounters, contributing to a shared communication culture by managing ambiguity offering advice and support, and heading off misunderstandings.

Can anticipate how people might misunderstand what has been said or written and help to maintain positive interaction by commenting on and interpreting different cultural perspectives on the issue concerned.

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In the end

- Spoken communication must be purposeful and effective. And so must be assessment.
- Mediation and interaction, i.e. the success of communication, must be assessed by you – the teacher, the language expert.
- Bank on it. Machines cannot do that.

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Intelligibility is the key



info@tailored-trainings.de