

JALT CEFR&LP SIG



Newsletter No. 22 – September 2018

Dear members of CEFR & LP SIG,

This summer was really a hot one and we hope that all CEFR&LP SIG members could enjoy the summer break! Mid-September means it is time to prepare for the new fall semester and for JALT International Conference in Shizuoka.

This newsletter will feature two recent publications. First of all, learn about the development and distinguishing features of the new CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR/ CV, February 2018) with two contributions from our members Alexander Imig and Yukie Saito (our nominee for Best of JALT 2017!). The second important announcement is the TALE publication in May 2018. Both resources are available online.

In the fall, we are planning two SIG events, please note in your calendar October 20th and December 8th, at Takanawa Campus of Tokai University (Shinagawa). They are in the Kanto area again. In 2019, we are planning more regional events. Therefore, we are seeking the cooperation of our members to make this happen.

We wish you a good start in the fall semester!

Best regards

Gabriela Schmidt

Your coordinator with all officers

This edition of CEFR&LP SIG NL #22 presents:

1. **Report on PanSIG 2018 and Preview on Pan SIG 2019**
2. **JALT International Conference in Shizuoka CEFR&LP SIG**
3. **Featured Articles on CEFR Companion Volume**
 - 3.1 Bremen Symposium Alexander Imig
 - 3.2 Companion Volume in Strasbourg by Yukie Saito
4. **Reports, News, Previews**
 - 4.1 Cercles 2018 report
 - 4.2 TALE
 - 4.3 Coming up
 - 4.4 CEFR&LP SIG events

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The next NL #23 is scheduled for end of October 2018!

1. Reports on PanSIG 2018 and preview on PanSIG 2019

On May 19th and 20th, 2018 **Pan SIG 2018** took place in Tokyo at **Toyo Gakuen University** (Hongo Campus). The CEFR & LP SIG took part with officers involved in the organizing committee as well as hosting a SIG table and of course the SIG Forum with our member and officer Rebecca Schmidt as a special guest. This year, the CEFR & LP SIG sponsored **Mark DeBoer** as our **featured speaker** at **Pan SIG**, giving a talk on CLIL and why the CEFR is useful for assessment.

Next years' PanSIG 2019 (<http://pansig.org/>) will take place in Kobe at Konan University on May 18th and 19th. This would be a great opportunity to get involved in the SIG, in JALT and connect with the FLT community. The CEFR&LP SIG will be active in PanSIG 2019, a grassroots experience you should not miss! If you are interested, please feel free to contact me or our officers at JALT International Conference or by e-mail.

Get involved at PanSIG as a volunteer: reviewing process submissions, working with the organizing team, presenting at the SIG Forum, being at the SIG table, reviewing publications.

Wanted: Theme for CEFR&LP SIG Forum for PanSIG 2019 !!!
 Please submit your suggestions by December 10th, 2018!

2. JALT International Conference

JALT International 2018 will be held in Shizuoka on November 23rd to 26th, 2018.

Sunday, November 25th (Shizuoka) 11:35 - 12:20 AGM , 12:30 - 14:00 Forum

AGM

CEFR & LP SIG Annual General Meeting

Presenters: Schmidt, Maria Gabriela - Nihon University CHS; Nagai, Noriko - Ibaraki University; Naganuma, Naoyuki - Tokai University; Birch, Gregory - Seisen Jogakuin College; Imig, Alexander - Chukyo University
is scheduled for:

- **Day:** Sunday, November 25th
- **Time:** 11:35 AM - 12:20 PM (45 minutes)
- **Room:** 905
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Short Summary: All members of CEFR&LP SIG and those interested in becoming a member are kindly invited to take part in the annual AGM. All SIG officers will submit a report on their activities in 2018. One special topic to discuss and decide on will be the revision of the SIG's constitution.

SIG-Forum

CEFR-Informed Teacher Training and Development

Presenters: Schmidt, Maria Gabriela – Nihon University CHS; Nagai, Noriko - Ibaraki University; Naoyuki, Naganuma - Tokai University; Birch, Greg - Seisen Jogakuin College; Imig, Alexander - Chukyo University
is scheduled for:

- **Day:** Sunday, November 25th
- **Time:** 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM (90 minutes)
- **Room:** 1003

Short Summary: Although it is not discussed extensively in the CEFR, it is well recognized that teacher training and development is essential once the CEFR is to be incorporated in language teaching and assessment and implemented in the local context. This forum will discuss CEFR-informed resources to support teacher training and development with reference to the new CEFR Companion Volume (2017), ECML's EPOSTL and CEF-ESTIM and Equals' EPG. Other materials and several case studies are also discussed.

Best of JALT nominated by CEFR&LP SIG: Yukie Saito

Our member Yukie Saito was nominated as Best of JALT for CEFR&LP SIG for her contribution to the edited volume EPS 6 (2017) "Developing a portfolio for English as a tool for global communication". We are looking forward to the ceremony at JALT on November 24th, 2018.

Congratulations Yukie!

SPECIAL FEATURE

3. The road to the CEFR Companion Volume

3.1 Report about the 6th Bremen Symposium (24th-25th February 2017 by Alexander Imig (Chukyo University)

While it seems to be a bit outdated to write about a conference which took place approximately one and half years ago, this is certainly not the case, as this report (hopefully) reveals. The biennial Bremen Symposium has developed into an important event for Applied Linguistics in Europe and the topic for that year was: "The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – How to deal with its gaps?" The featured speaker was Brian North, introducing the main features of the CEFR Companion Volume, which was scheduled to be published later that year and CEFR&LP SIG had two presentations in different workshops at that Symposium.

3.1.1 Brian North on Mediation and the CEFR at 6th Bremen Symposium 2017 by Alexander Imig (Chukyo University)

The Keynote speech of Brian North, “**Mediation and the CEFR: Descriptors for an undervalued concept**”, gave insights into one of the central features of the new CEFR Companion Volume. “Mediation” was also a concept in the original version of the CEFR, which is by the way of course still valid. The new CEFR Companion Volume (published in April 2018) is meant to be a supplement (therefore “Companion Volume”) to the original CEFR (2001). In the CEFR, “Mediation” was described as part of “Communicative language activities and strategies” (CEFR 2001:57), as a language activity, together with reception, production and interaction. This is still true for the new Companion Volume, but from 2018, mediation is a language activity with a scaled set of descriptors. While Brian North was not giving details of the descriptors, he explained the range of the concept in the Companion Volume. Mediation is now more than translating between languages. It is a mode of processing texts, concepts or communication between different people. Another important aspect of Brian North’s speech was the development of the new scales. He was not only covering the concept of mediation, rather he was giving examples from different aspects of the new Companion Volume (including sign language). For the sake of brevity, this review concentrates on the development of the Mediation scales, which is covered in the Text, “Developing Illustrative Descriptors of Aspects of Mediation for the CEFR” (North 2016, see ULRs), which Brian North was also referring to. The whole process followed a mixed-methods approach, where qualitative and quantitative methods were combined, and it can be divided into three phases (see: Developing 2016, Section 5). In these three phases, the new descriptors were discussed in workshops, arranged with 137 institutions (phase one and two). Phase three was an online survey in English and French, which was carried out with different networks. The whole process made sure that the mediation scales are suitable for a wide context beyond learning and teaching.

3.1.2 CEFR&LP SIG related presentations at 6th Bremen Symposium 2017 by Alexander Imig (Chukyo University)

The CEFR & LP SIG was also an active participant at the Bremen conference, contributing two presentations in different sections. It was a challenge to integrate the range of research from the first kaken project on developing a textbook for academic English on the level B1/B+ to the second on critical, constructive assessment of CEFR-informed language teaching to the ongoing project on developing a toolkit for teachers.

The first presentation was part of a workshop about material development with the title “**Connections to the MAGICC of academic writing – Platforms for Transcontinental Material distribution**”. The MAGICC project was an EU-funded project (via the “lifelong learning” funding scheme) about the development of academic (language) skills, which was carried out by various European universities. The goal of our presentation was an attempt to discuss international material development on the basis of European and Japanese research. Introducing the notion of platforms, which was of course related to the development of the new CEFR & LP homepage, we argued that a website is not only a platform to disseminate research, but also suited for material development. The URL of the Homepage, which is still a work in progress is: <https://cefrjapan.net>

The second presentation, “The CEFR as an immigrant in the globalised world - Considerations from an Asian perspective”, was not only an introduction to the edited volume “Critical, Constructive Assessment of CEFR-informed Language Teaching in Japan and Beyond” (English Profile Studies 6, 2017), but also a contribution from an Asian perspective in section “Conceptual considerations on the CEFR”.

The whole conference was not only an opportunity for the discussion of the CEFR in Europe and Asia, especially in Japan, but also an impressive manifestation of the fact that research on the CEFR is still an important issue in Japan and Europe.

See the short reports on Bremen by Morten Hunke in CEFR&LP SIG NL #17 (September 2017).

Announcement:

7th Bremen Symposium on language learning and teaching at universities

RETHINKING THE LANGUAGE LEARNER Paradigms – Methods - Disciplines

Thursday February 28 to Saturday March 2, 2019 at University of Bremen

Deadline for Submission October 26th, 2018

<https://www.fremdsprachenzentrum-bremen.de/2110.0.html?&L=1>

3.2 Report about the Launching Conference on “Building Inclusive Societies through Enriching Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education” (At the Council of Europe in Strasburg on May16-17 in 2018)

by Yukie Saito (Waseda University)

The Launching Conference on “**Building Inclusive Societies through Enriching Plurilingual and Pluricultural Education**” was held at the Council of Europe in Strasburg on May16-17 in 2018. The objective of the conference was to launch the CEFR Companion Volume (CEFR/ CV) with new descriptors, which is a complement to the existing “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment”. About 150 policy makers, curriculum developers, representatives from language education institutions and associates, teacher educators and practitioners, and researchers from a variety of countries gathered to learn the background of developing the CEFR/ CV, discuss implications, opportunities, and challenges for language learning, teaching and assessment, and consider how the CEFR/ CV can be successfully implemented. On the first day of the conference, Günther Schneider talked about the background of developing the CEFR/ CV in his keynote. He stated the importance of clarifying the purpose of the CEFR and emphasizing the richness of the CEFR, reflecting on the current status quo of too much focus on using the CEFR and its descriptors for assessment purposes only. The presentation, “**Completing the CEFR descriptive scheme: the CEFR Company Volume**” by Brian North, Anthony Green, and Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti, followed. In the CEFR/ CV, the key concept is “Mediation”, which emphasizes co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement

between the individual and social level in language learning. Regarding “Mediation”, Enrica Piccardo, Daniela Fasoglio, and Vincent Folny made a presentation titled as “**Mediation: A paradigm shift in language education**”. Following that, the results of pilot studies related to the CEFR/ CV were presented.

Brian North made a summary talk of the background of developing the CEFR/ CV, new descriptors, and revised descriptors from the CEFR 2001. He emphasized the importance of reinforcing all aspects of the CEFR, focusing more on learning and teaching, reflecting on the current trend that too much focus has been laid on assessment. He also addressed the shift from learning and teaching four skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing to learning and teaching four modes of reception, production, interaction, and mediation because communication is an integral part of tasks where participants engage in the four modes or a combination of two or more of these. The CEFR presents the language user and learner as a ‘social agent’, acting in the social world and exerting agency in the learning process. From that perspective, North also underlined the importance of a language user and learner as a social agent who engages in negotiation of meaning in interaction and in co-construction of meaning in mediation while mobilizing plurilingual and pluricultural competences. The significance of a paradigm shift in language education in the 21st century was also addressed. What he mentioned as examples of the paradigm shift in education are from grammar to use, from language as code to language as action/ collaboration, from four skills to integrated mode of communication, from producing and receiving to constructing meaning, from a unidimensional view to multidimensional views, from a native speaker as a model to a proficient speaker, from multilingualism to plurilingualism, and from elitist education to inclusive education. In the CEFR/ CV, new scales for online interaction, mediation, plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and signing competence were added. Regarding changes of descriptors, Anthony Green presented his findings of analyzing changes from the CEFR 2001 to the CEFR/ CV. According to him, descriptors at the Pre-A1 level were added and new descriptors from A1, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C1, and C2 were also added, 15 descriptors were adapted, and 13 references to “native speakers” were eliminated, the latter implies focus more on phonological intelligibility rather than native speakers as a learners’ model.

In the afternoon on the first day, the participants were divided into four groups, a group of policy makers and curriculum developers, a group of language education institutions and associations, a group of teacher educators and practitioners, and a group of researchers, and they took part in Workshop 1 and discussed implications, opportunities, and challenges of the CEFR/ CV and measures to deal with the challenges reflecting the presentations in the morning and afternoon sessions. In Workshop 2, as representatives of the groups from Workshop 1, they were assigned to four different groups and shared what they discussed in each group and considered practical implementations of the CEFR/ CV in terms of curriculum alignment, meditation, action orientation, and plurilingual and pluricultural education. Following Workshop 2, they went back to the original groups of Workshop 1 and discussed recommendations for users of the CEFR/ CV and created a draft action plan for a case study to implement the CEFR/ CV. Personally, I participated in Workshop 1 and 3 as a teacher educator and in a group of curriculum alignment in Workshop 2. Though whether we can incorporate concepts and contents of the CEFR/ CV or not and to what degrees we can incorporate may be different depending on each participant from different countries, working together to discuss the possibility of better language education reflecting the CEFR/ CV was meaningful and significant.

Even in Japan, the degree to which we can incorporate concepts and contents of the CEFR/ CV will vary as there are a variety of learning and teaching contexts. At the individual level, I would like to see the possibility of analyzing and adapting/ adopting new descriptors related to mediation and online and writing interaction, which are relevant in modern language education along with the rapid pace of globalization and the development of information technology. New descriptors about literature such as reading as a leisure activity in the CEFR/ CV might be incorporated in activities of extensive reading. Implementing and incorporating the CEFR/ CV may not be challenging at individual levels; however, it might be challenging at social levels. For instance, a new Course of Study for senior high schools, which will be implemented in 2022, was announced in 2018 (MEXT) and it reflects five modes from the CEFR (2001): listening, reading, spoken interactions, spoken production, and writing. In addition, as one of the educational reform plans, externally available four-skill English tests will be introduced (MEXT, 2017). The National Center for University Entrance Examinations (2018) accredited 8 four-skill English tests and for the selection process of them, the CEFR 2001 was used as a reference. From 2020, the levels of the CEFR will be used in applications of entrance examinations along with results of each test. The original CEFR was issued in 2001 and since then, more than 17 years have passed. As time goes by, especially as information technology evolves in the 21st century, changes in language learning and teaching are inevitable. Additions and revisions presented in the CEFR/ CV are what were awaited; thus, to review the additions and revisions in the CEFR/ CV and reflect on them will be necessary, taking into consideration the social level in Japan in the future.

URLs (Accessed September 5, 2018)

Council of Europe (2016). *Developing Illustrative Descriptors of Aspects of Mediation for the CEFR*.

Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/developing-illustrative-descriptors-of-aspects-of-mediation-for-the-co/1680713e2c>

Council of Europe (2018). *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors*.

Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989>

MEXT. (2017). 大学入学者選抜改革について [Reforms of Selecting University Entrants].

Retrieved from http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/29/07/1388131.htm

MEXT. (2018). 高等学校学習指導要領 [The Course of Study for senior high schools guidelines]. Retrieved from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/1384661.htm

National Center for University Entrance Examinations. (2018). 「大学入試英語成績提供システム」の参加要件確認結果について [About the result of the requirements of participation in “the system of providing results of university entrance English examinations”] Retrieved from <http://www.dnc.ac.jp/news/20180326-02.html>

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4. More reports and news

4.1 CERCLES 2018 Poznan

The proposal of our research group on “Teacher development: Resources and devices to promote reflective attitudes toward their profession” was accepted and we had the opportunity to hold a workshop at XV CercleS 2018 (www.cercles2018.put.poznan.pl) in Poznan Poland, presenting our research and our SIG for the first time at a CercleS International Conference. CercleS (www.cercles.org) is a highly renowned organization holding international conferences every two years for the Language Centers in Europe of Higher Education, and publishing the *Language Learning in Higher Education Journal*.

We presented the results of our third kaken research project, introducing the situation of foreign language teaching in Japan related to the CEFR and the purpose of our SIG. The first part of the hands-on workshop focused on how to analyze the can do-descriptors and to modify them for the participants’ own class objectives. The second part dealt with how to create tasks for assessment using the modified descriptors. The hands-on approach of the workshop was very much welcomed and the discussion and feedback were very positive. See some selected answers from the feedback:

- (1) “I understood it already but I think the way you colored the texts in the chart was very helpful to make it more accessible to students.”
- (2) “I’ve got a detailed information and an algorithm of how this can be done.”
- (3) “I think it was very interesting to see a presentation prepared by you who live and work in and come from Japan.”

It was really a very special opportunity to share our research, thoughts and exchange opinions on using the CEFR in various contexts. The CEFR in Europe is something normal, but the amount of research and the discussion happening in Japan on the CEFR is very special and should be disseminated more in various international contexts.

The next CercleS conference will be in Brno (Czech Republic) on September 10-13, 2020.

4.2 TALE project

TALE project reads as “Teachers’ Assessment Literacy Enhancement” project.

<http://taleproject.eu/>

In May 2018, “Handbook of Assessment for Language Teachers” was issued by the TALE project:

Tsagari, D., Vogt, K., Froelich, V., Csépes, I., Fekete, A., Green A., Hamp-Lyons, L., Sifakis, N. and Kordia, S. (2018). *Handbook of Assessment for Language Teachers*. Nicosia, Cyprus. ISBN 978-9925-7399-0-5

It is downloadable from: <http://taleproject.eu/mod/page/view.php?id=1200>

4.3 News and Previews

Conferences coming up

British Council
New Directions 2018

22-23 October 2018, Grand Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The conference for English Language Assessment specialists in connection with academia, policy and practice; showcasing innovative approaches and research locally, regionally and internationally.

<https://www.britishcouncil.my/new-directions>

JALT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2018

Diversity and Inclusion

44th Annual International Conference on Language Teaching and Learning &
Educational Materials Exhibition

November 23th to 26th, 2018

Shizuoka Convention & Arts Center (Granship) Shizuoka City, Shizuoka, Japan

Registration for presenters until October 1st, 2018

Early Bird registration until October 23rd, 2018

<https://jalt.org/conference>

7th Bremen Symposium on language learning and teaching at universities

RETHINKING THE LANGUAGE LEARNER

Paradigms – Methods - Disciplines

Thursday February 28 to Saturday March 2, 2019

at University of Bremen

Deadline for Submission October 26th, 2018

<https://www.fremdsprachenzentrum-bremen.de/2110.0.html?&L=1>

PanSIG 2019 (<http://pansig.org/>)
CFP – deadline December 22nd, 2018

4.4 The next events of CEFR & LP SIG events are

October 20th, 2018 **Assessment for Learning - Symposium
& Assessment and CEFR**

A joint event of AfL (Assessment for Learning) and JALT CEFR&LP SIG

Date & Time: October 20th, 2018, 13:00-17:30

Place: Tokai University, Takanawa campus, Bldg.1, 2nd floor, Room 12
<https://www.u-tokai.ac.jp/about/campus/takanawa/> (Japanese)
<https://www.u-tokai.ac.jp/english/campus/campuses/takanawa.html> (English)

Theme: Assessment for Learning (AfL), CLIL, CEFR

Featured Speaker

Dr. Dmitri Leontjev, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Contact:

Mark deBoer <clil.assess [X] gmail.com> or <g.schmidt [X] cefrjapan.net>

December 8th, 2018 **CEFR & LP SIG Conference**

The CEFR: Recent Developments and Perspectives on Japan

In 2018, the CEFR Companion Volume and the TALE Handbook were published. In Japan, the CEFR will continue to play an important role in foreign language teaching, as seen in the changes to curriculum and assessment (particularly university admissions) proposed by the Ministry of Education. What do teachers have to know about the CEFR to be prepared for these developments?

Presentations, Workshops, Discussion

Call for Presentation - deadline: November 26th, 2018
<g.schmidt [X] cefrjapan.net>

Location: Takanawa Campus (Shinagawa), Tokai University

JALT CEFR&LP SIG Newsletter #22, September 2018

The next newsletter #23 is planned to be published at the end of October 2018.
If you have any reports or news to be included, please contact one of the officers!
