The EMBED Project: Integrating the CEFR in academic writing and speaking

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Faculty of Arts
University of Groningen

(on behalf of the EMBED Project team)
Overview

› Background
› CEFR in Faculty of Arts
› EMBED project
› Future developments
Language teaching in Faculty of Arts

1. Departments of Language and Culture:
   - Majors / Minors in language departments
   - Minors in inter-/multi-disciplinary programmes (e.g. International Relations and International Organization, Communication and Information Sciences)

2. Language Centre:
   - Language teaching other faculties (e.g. Law, Economics and Business, Medicine)
   - Staff training
   - External provision (commercial, individuals, companies)
CEFR in Faculty of Arts

- Proficiency outcomes at end of BA for all language skills expressed according to CEFR since 2001
- Teaching innovation project to integrate CEFR at course level from 2006 to 2009
- Use of CEFR-related tools
  - Dialang, (European) Language Portfolio, WebCEF, CEFCult
- Pedagogical objectives
  - Making students familiar with principles and levels of framework
  - Making them aware of own levels of proficiency
  - Setting personal learning objectives
EMBED Project: Using the CEFR for EAP

› Objectives:
  ➢ Standardization of assessment (consistency/transparency)
  ➢ Among teachers, across disciplines (International Relations and Organizations, Law, English Language and Culture)
  ➢ Use of technology to support standardization

› Domain:
  ➢ Academic writing in English (essays/reports)

› Reference:
  ➢ Council of Europe Manual 2009

› Team:
  ➢ Kevin Haines, Petra Jansma, Wander Lowie, Estelle Meima, Nicole Schmidt, Sake Jager
Project procedures

› Meetings project team
  - Screening of 120 Law essays for ‘flat’ samples, later samples other courses
  - Selection of c. 10 samples for assessment by panels
  - Regular meetings to discuss outcomes panel assessment
  - Publications and other dissemination activities

› Assessment panels
  - Local panel: 5 experienced English teacher/assessors
  - Local consultant
  - External panel: assessors at universities from our network of partner universities in Belgium (Leuven), Finland (Helsinki) & Italy (Padua)
Assessments procedures

› Familiarization (CEFTrain):
  ➢ Introductory activities with scales
  ➢ Training area (tasks and samples)

› Standardization (Blackboard):
  ➢ Use of procedures described in A Manual
  ➢ Delivery through project Blackboard site
EMBED Project: Results

› Overall agreement among panelists, but some discrepancies
› Flat samples with same scores for Range, Coherence, Accuracy and Argumentation are hard to find
› Challenges for assessment:
  ➢ Finding flat samples
  ➢ Multidimensional nature of proficiency
  ➢ Within-learner inconsistency (“instable system”)
  ➢ How to capture this variability in overall grade?
› Detailed discussion in following articles:
EMBED Example (sample 6)

WRITING; RANGE (– applied to sample #6)

B2 Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, using some complex sentence forms to do so. *Language lacks, however, expressiveness and idiomaticity and use of more complex forms is still stereotypic.*

C1 Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say. *The flexibility in style and tone is somewhat limited.*
Sample 6, fragment

According to the Declaration of the human rights, has every person the right on these universal rights. This means that states should protect people from abuses of the human rights. However, in many states the government does not protect these rights; moreover, the government violates them. Even though almost every state has signed the Universal Declaration. The discussion when there is a right to intervene is difficult; however, the United Nations (UN) should have the right to intervene in states which seriously abuses human rights, not only because the purpose of the UN is to protect the international security, but also because of the importance of the human rights.
## Sample 6: Range

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample 6</th>
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<th>Argument</th>
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Sample 6: Accuracy

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Sample 6: Argument

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## EMBED Project: Results

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Dissemination

› Sharing and transparency are key aspects of CEFR standardization
› Dutch CEFR site www.erk.nl set up to facilitate access to information on and samples of CEFR
› EMBED results integrated (no HE samples on this site previously)
› ERK website (sample 6)
Evaluation

> EMBED useful for:
- Bringing out the multidimensional nature and variability of language proficiency
- Enhancing transparency of assessment
- Producing localized samples for standardization
- Bringing CEFR-based assessment to the university level (LC and Acad lang depts, across disciplines)
- Establishing role of technology in this context
- Sharing experiences with others
Future directions

› Application of EMBED procedures to oral production and oral interaction tasks
› Online collaborative tasks (Skype, videoconferencing)
› WebCEF as assessment tool for panels
› Blackboard Interactive Rubrics
› Extension to other languages
› Finding more colleagues for external validation
› Incorporating student portfolios (Footprint)
› Setting up new projects in this area
Thank you for your attention

On behalf of the Embed Project team:
Sake Jager
Petra Jansma
Estelle Meima
Nicole Schmidt
Kevin Haines
Wander Lowie