

The Concept of CEFR and Its Applicability in Japanese Education in China

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Abstract. Under the strategic background of the "Belt and Road" and "Double First-class" construction, the construction of Japanese major should be in the line with international standards, emphasizing the cultivation of high-quality and international foreign language talents. On the basis of combing the basic characteristics and concepts of CEFR, this study thinks about the possibility of applying CEFR concept in Japanese teaching reform, in order to provide reference for how to train compound Japanese professionals with international vision in the new era.

Keywords: CEFR, Japanese teaching reform, Japanese language proficiency

1. Introduction

CEFR (2001) was produced by the Language Policy Unit of the Council of Europe[1]. Now it has been translated into more than 40 languages including Chinese and Japanese, which has attracted the attention of foreign language educators in many countries and regions. After more than ten years of research and practice accumulation, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment: Companion volume was published by the Council of Europe in May 2020. As early as 2018, "General European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume with New Descriptors" released a version with slightly different subtitles. In the 2020 version, the 2018 version was called Pre-critical Version, and in September 2017, a version named Provisional Edition appeared. So, as far as I know, Companion Volume appeared in 2017, 2018 and 2020.

There are five projects based on the 2020 edition, Stage 1 was carried out during 2014-15, Stage 2 and Stage 5 were carried out during 2014-16, Stage 3 was carried out during 2015-16, Stage 4 was carried out during 2015-19, and was aggregated at the end of projects other than Stage 4. It was released as Provisional Edition in 2017 and released as Pre-critical Version in 2018 according to feedback. In 2020, including the development of sign language ability descriptor of Stage 4, some amendments were made in other places as the final version of Companion Volume[2]. There are several reasons why CEFR-CV 2020 came into being. First, it has been nearly 20 years since CEFR was published in 2001, so it is necessary to revise it according to the changes in the world. The other is that it is necessary to reflect the new insights brought about during this period. CEFR-CV 2020[3] lists modifications to sample descriptors, including media, bilingualism, bicultural competence and sign language

competence. CEFR-CV also seems to correspond to CEFR's hard-to-read voice, which hinders the popularity.

Table 1: List of new descriptive terms [4]

Language Abilities	New Ability Scale	New Descriptive Terms
Language Input	1(2.6%)	18(2.7%)
Language Output	1(2.6%)	8(1.2%)
Language Communicative Competence	2(5.3%)	18(2.7%)
Interactive Activities	3(7.9%)	57(8.7%)
Mediation	21(55.3%)	247(37.7%)
Abilities of Sign Language	7(18.4%)	253(38.6%)
Multicultural Competence and Multicultural Competence	3(7.9%)	55(8.4%)
Total	38(100%)	656(100%)

As shown in table 1, the extended version of CEFR compared with CEFR, CEFR-CV is arguably easier to read more friendly users. The purposes and main principles that are difficult to understand in the account are actually clearly explained. When it comes to intelligibility, the central concept of each language activity is manipulated, and the difficulty of descriptors is adjusted and listed in sections. The central concept is embodied in all descriptors, and it will be of great reference significance for us to adjust the difficulty when making new descriptors in the future.

2. About the characteristics and charm of CEFR

CEFR (2001) is a nine-chapter document published by the Language Policy Department of the Council of Europe, which aims to provide general foundations for improving the syllabus, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. of language education in Europe. This is a comprehensive document on language education, and it is expected that readers and users will use its content selectively according to their educational environment. As the production policy of CEFR, it is clearly stated that people engaged in language education "don't want to instruct what to do and how to do it". The guide for users repeatedly state that "when considering issues related to language education, show possible options, and show the framework for the sake of easy reflection". Standing on the position that the parties know the problems on the spot best. CEFR aims to improve communication in Europe, promote population movement, and then promote mutual understanding. It can be said that CEFR is a tool.

In CEFR (2001), the five concepts supporting language education are: 1) promoting "bilingualism" and allowing partial competence; 2) supporting learners' lifelong learning and autonomous learning; 3) establishing a common framework in Europe to avoid or eliminate learning interruptions and barriers when learners move; 4) being learner-centered rather than teacher-centered; and 5) being Action-oriented approach[5].

With regard to the characteristics of CEFR (2001), (1) transcending the commonness of language and schools, institutions and countries, (2) showing the transparency of target

content, (3) not from top to bottom, but suggesting the non-mandatory attitude of reference options, (4) as long as language educators who understand CEFR framework can use universal metalanguage, and (5) extending learners' self-discipline from the transparency of language learning and education;(6) the idea of multilingualism and multiculturalism, and (7) the things of the times (the cultivation of European citizens, the rule of law, the ambition of peace, etc.).

CEFR-CV (2020) emphasizes the following six points (1) learners are social actors. (2) Do not target native speakers. (3) Get rid of 4 skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) +3 elements (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) (4) The premise of language is dynamic, complex and changeable. (5) Network is more important than individual study. (6) Widely consider Mediation and apply it to education[6].

2.1 Update of the first edition of CEFR

At the call of Mr. Brian North, from 2014, about 1,000 institutions around the world cooperated to start the project for CEFR-CV development. It is reported that CEFR-CV was edited by Brian North, Tim Goodier, Erica Picca, etc. After CEFR was published, it responded to the questions and suggestions of language education institutions in 60 countries and regions. According to the feedback from researchers, teachers and students, CEFR-CV makes the existing scale more detailed and interprets each ability goal in more detail, so it has important reference significance. More than 190 seminars and seminars have been held, and the first edition of CEFR has been greatly improved and expanded in four years (2014 ~ 2018).

2.2 Bicultural Competence of CEFR-CV 2020

According to CEFR CV 2020, the concepts of bilingualism and biculturalism take CEFR 2001 as the starting point, and the bilingual viewpoint brings value to cultural and linguistic diversity at the individual level. In this regard, CEFR 2001 made the following discussion. Pluricultural approach emphasizes the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other people (which learnt at school or college, or by direct experience) up a communication comparison to which all knowledge and experience of language contexts Butes and in which languages interrelate and interact.

In addition, CEFR-CV 2020 points out that "languages and cultures of language and cultural competency descriptors in separate mental components are not kept in separate mental components" is an aspect of special concern when developing bilingual and bicultural competency descriptors. This shows that language knowledge and cultural knowledge are closely related in language use scenarios. Table 1 is the descriptor of bicultural competence in CEFR-CV 2020[7]. This is an extremely unique attempt, showing how the ability of re-culture develops. Incidentally, it is interesting that the action patterns determined by culture include not only gestures, but also the size of speech voice (in the case of sign language, the size of body movements). As relevant to this study, there are probably three recent studies that have been referenced in the development of multicultural competence descriptors.

3. The possibility of applying the concept of multilingual competence in Japanese education

As the most influential guiding document for language teaching in Europe, "European Framework" is not only the common basis for language education and evaluation in the European Union, but also widely recognized and adopted by various educational institutions, enterprises and government departments around the world. Its language proficiency scale has become an important reference for language proficiency grading in many countries and regions[8].

3.1 CEFR and Large-Scale Testing

Council of Europe has put forward a framework that teachers and learners can refer to, and used it in educational practice, taking into account the use of CEFR and ELP (European Language Portfolio) for learners' individual autonomous learning, while promoting self-assessment programs. The influence of CEFR on its development and implementation has also been brought into view by publicizing the related manuals of large-scale testing, verification testing and CEFR that can be gathered in huge businesses.

CEFR, as a set of standards for objectively and scientifically evaluating students' language ability, is widely associated with major international language tests, and is used as a reference standard for defining test scores, such as TOEFL, IELTS and TOEIC. According to the official introduction of Japanese Proficiency Test, in order to further unify the reference standards and facilitate the candidates, it was decided to make this adjustment. Starting from the exam in July 2025, the CEFR grade reference corresponding to the score will be added to the transcript[9].

3.2 Japanese teaching for different levels

The modes of Japanese education in China are divided into the following categories.(A) Japanese education in universities.It can be divided into two categories:(1) Japanese major as a foreign language major education(2) General foreign language education, Japanese teaching as a second foreign language (commonly known as "college Japanese");(B) Japanese teaching in senior high schools (including secondary vocational schools) and junior high schools;(C) Japanese classes for social workers (non-academic education);(D) Self-study Japanese education;(E) Japanese teaching in primary education[10].

CEFR regards communication as an important part of tasks, one is "close to real life" tasks, and the other is "teaching-oriented" tasks. The scope of language communication tasks is not limited to the field of education, but also includes the field of personal life, public life and workplace. This requires that teachers should adopt "situational teaching method" instead of cramming knowledge, and create more scenes for students to use Chinese, so that students can improve their language level in the process of daily communication and task completion. In addition, textbook compilers should also adopt more real corpus in real life and integrate language knowledge points into it.

According to the requirements of College Japanese Teaching Guide (2021 Edition), combined with the diversified talent training objectives of our school, college Japanese teaching

constructs a "4 + X" curriculum system, that is, a compulsory course 4 credits + X ability and quality improvement system, which reflects the advanced, systematic and personalized curriculum system.(1)Core modules of compulsory courses.The 2022 edition of Undergraduate Training Program has a total of 4 credits for college Japanese courses for non-Japanese majors, which are offered in the first academic year. The core content of the course consists of two modules, one is the language skills consolidation course with 2 credits to consolidate and improve Japanese listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and the other is the language skills improvement course with 2 credits to strengthen the comprehensive application ability and expression ability of Japanese language and culture.(2)Ability and Quality Improvement System (X Curriculum Plan).In order to meet students' various needs, strengthen ubiquitous learning, improve students' autonomous learning ability, and ensure the continuity of students' Japanese learning in multiple dimensions.

3.3 As a tool to promote international communication

In the member countries of the European Council, although the actual penetration rate varies, CEFR has been used as a framework for language education in many places. Japanese education programs in higher education institutions in Europe are no exception, and they are required or take the lead in adopting CEFR countermeasures. In the promotion of student exchanges in Europe, which was agreed at the meeting of education ministers of Japan and EU countries, many measures were implemented, led by the credit mutual system to promote student exchanges, which also provided great help to the internationalization of universities. In such an environment, wouldn't it be useful if the level and content of Japanese programs provided by universities transcended countries and institutions and were carried out in a common (meta) language. As a tool of educational institutions, CEFR is also possible to be used.

CEFR puts forward the language education concept of "multilingual ability". In fact, "linguistic pluralism" is not "multilingualism", "the latter means that an individual can speak a certain number of foreign languages, or that several different languages coexist in a specific society".It is relatively easy to achieve "multilingual". Schools can offer more languages, or require students to take more foreign language courses, or even limit the dominant position of English in China.However, "linguistic pluralism" is not limited to this. It pays attention to the fact that individual language experience is constantly growing in their environment, that is, from the language at home to the language spoken by most people in society, and then to the languages of other countries and nationalities."European Frame" states that "every learning of a language and every experience of learning a language promotes the construction of communicative competence.In such communicative competence, all kinds of languages learned are interrelated and interact with each other. Based on the concept of "language pluralism", Japanese teaching no longer simply requires students to learn and master Japanese language and culture knowledge, "no longer with the ultimate goal of cultivating'ideal native language speakers', but to cultivate comprehensive language qualities with various language communicative abilities"[11]. CEFR-CV2020 provides detailed descriptive terms, which provides an important reference for users to think about how to cultivate international compound talents with solid foundation based on their respective social and cultural contexts.

4. Conclusions

Although CEFR has many advantages, but they are not perfect. So we should pay attention to taking their essence and discarding their dross when learning from them. After all, CEFR takes the languages of European countries as its main objects, so some of its contents can't describe Japanese properly, and even say that some viewpoints are not applicable to Japanese. While referring to the Concept of CEFR, we should always adhere to the concept of "localization and introduction", which is lacking at present and worthy of further research and discussion in the future. In addition, the ability to describe intermediary activities requires the expression of facts and arguments in clear, fluent and well-structured language, accurately conveying evaluative opinions and the most subtle contents, and pointing out social and cultural meanings. We need to instruct students to avoid simple and formal correspondence between mother tongue and Japanese, and to carry out intermediary activities from meaning.

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