The Impact of the CEFR on Teaching and Testing English in Uzbek Universities

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ABSTRACT: the most complete and extensively utilized set of international standards for teaching foreign languages is the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). English language instruction has been a major focus of recent revisions to foreign language education in Uzbekistan at all educational levels. Currently, CEFR serves as the primary framework to be used in creating the national standard. This article will explore the acceptance and implementation of the new standard, revisions that were necessary at the time and signaled the beginning of a new era for the Uzbek system of teaching foreign languages.

KEYWORD: CEFR, second language acquisition, educational establishments, higher education.

Introduction

English Language Teaching (ELT) in Uzbekistan underwent several significant changes in the 2000s because Uzbek teachers overemphasized "native-like" pronunciation and memorization of isolated words and grammatical patterns, similar to English teachers in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. English used to be taught in the same way as Russian (politically designated as the socialist block). The focus of traditional language instruction was on the teacher rather than the pupils, who were merely passive recipients of the teacher's explanations and always anxious about being corrected. The most secure method of learning was memorization of the information provided by a teacher. Learning outcomes were not centralized measured even though the nation had a uniformed system in which everything was administered centrally, such as syllabuses, techniques, and the same course books. Oral testing in Universities is based on centrally developed subjects, which allowed teachers to construct questions reflecting their own teaching and omit entire curriculum areas without any external review, according to the study on the reform of language tests in Central and Eastern Europe.

11 nations took part in the regional conference on higher education held in Vilnius in the middle of the 1990s. Following tendencies (in Europe) towards convergence in the standards for European institute-leaving credentials, the participants came to the opinion that education should align with market demands and competence-based skills should be measured more accurately. The establishment of an authority group and an international working party was the result of the Rüschlikon intergovernmental symposium on "Transparency and Coherence in Language Learning in Europe" in 1991. The authoring team, which included Joe Shiels, director of the Language Policy Division, John Trim, Brian North, and Daniel Coste, concentrated on language teaching and testing because language education was their main concern. Their main goals were to create a useful communication tool that would allow practitioners in various contexts to

discuss objectives and language levels coherently and to encourage practitioners to consider their current practice in terms of objectives (Cambridge ESOL, 2011) [9, p 281-289].

Methods and materials.

Using an action-oriented methodology, the Common European Framework of Reference for learning, teaching, and evaluation (Council of Europe, 2001) developed a general model of language use. The traditional four skills—listening, reading, speaking, and writing—have been replaced by communicative language activities like reception (aural and visual), production (oral and written), interaction (oral and written), and mediation, all of which are completed by techniques that are crucial for language processes and required for carrying out language performances.

The action-oriented and sociocognitive approaches are the foundations of the language use model put out by the CEFR, which emphasizes the cognitive processes involved in language learning and use as well as the significance of social context. The evolving competency of a language user represents a variety of cognitive processes, tactics, and knowledge. When performing a task, a language learner must utilize language that is contextualized for that particular area. A learner must participate in language activities to achieve a task, which calls on cognitive abilities. This promotes education. Reading, listening, speaking, and writing are all integrated into language action through using language in a natural way to solve issues.

Discussion

For the time being, CEFR is considered to be significant almost in all educational establishments. Especially, the institutions that specialised for foreign languages, admit the CEFR's importance. As aforementioned information, CEFR certificate is received according to the level of it. In order to be accepted to work in higher education, the candidate should have C1 level. As well as, it presents an opportunity to get higher salary. Mainly, teacher of foreign language institute who has a C1 level can get salary two times higher than the teacher that doesn't have any certificate. Moreover, B2 level of CEFR is accepted non-specialised institutions. It is seen that candidate is considered to be the multifunctional.

The European Framework of Reference for Languages, or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), is regarded as a ground-breaking language policy document that was created by the Council of Europe's language policy division in the 1990s. The CEFR also makes it easier for experts and regular individuals to move across other nations by facilitating cooperation between a variety of educational institutions, educational stakeholders, and other parties (Council of Europe, 2001). According to Goullier (2007) and North (2007), the CEFR is more of a descriptive guide than a prescriptive one. In other words, it refers to and is applicable to all languages, and its main objective is to improve the reflections of language practitioners on their unique educational and geographic contexts, language learners, and language teaching goals. The CEFR is described as a "concertina-like reference tool, not an instrument to be applied," by North (2007, p. 656). As a result, it should not be blindly followed as a set of concrete, unchangeable, and discrete results was published online in 1996 and introduced in a paper version in 2001. Instead, it should be referred to, consulted with, and modified depending on the needs and realities of a specific local area. Since it began to gain popularity around the world, the CEFR document has been translated into 39 languages and utilized or referred to by many nations, including Uzbekistan, for the establishment and implementation of foreign language policy. The CEFR's primary goal, according to the Council of Europe, is to align language learning, teaching, assessment, and testing in order to ensure that learning results are consistent across languages, situations, and countries. According to the Council of Europe [4, p 1], the document "provides a common basis for the design of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, tests, textbooks, etc." While the communicative approach replaced the grammar-translation approach in language instruction, the CEFR was also changing fundamentally. The document is seen as a tool that may "be used to analyze L2 learners' needs, describe

countries L2 learning goals, lead the development of L2 learning materials and activities, and give orientation for the assessment of L2 learning results" in a clear and concise manner. The CEFR outlines the competencies language learners must develop in order to use a language effectively. It also suggests sets of "can do" descriptors that highlight what learners can do once they have attained a particular competency at a specific proficiency level. The CEFR also provides instructional guiding principles for how to teach and assess learners' competencies and common reference level scales for the comparability and recognition of language competences across contexts and countries.

Results.

The results showed that participants agreed that the CEFR is a crucial and helpful rule for English language teaching settings. Because they had not received training in the CEFR across all domains, the teachers said that they knew little about it. These findings are in line with a research by Celik, who discovered that teachers knew nothing about the CEFR. In a related study, 105 teachers from Universities were asked about their opinions on the use of the CEFR and how it was integrated into their lessons. The majority of the participants had a general comprehension of the CEFR, according to the data analysis. More precisely, instructors were more familiar with the CEFR than University teachers because they had more CEFR training [5, p 43].

Despite being widely used, the CEFR implementation has drawn criticism. The vague descriptors for each level in the CEFR are the first area of criticism. North stated that the CEFR descriptors were based on teachers' perceptions rather than second language acquisition, and therefore were limited in their second language acquisition (SLA). The validity and quality of the CEFR descriptive scales could influence the design of language tests, according to Davidson and Fulcher. They claimed that because the descriptors combine the activities of language learners within a single stage and not all of them make reference to particular situations, they were not intended for use in the development of language examinations.

Conclusion.

Overall, the quantitative findings showed that participants in the preservice English program had a moderate understanding of the CEFR. Knowledge in the reference level description and teaching and learning approach domains was less than that in the assessment domain. Thai preservice teachers demonstrated a good degree of understanding of the CEFR in the assessment domain. However, the examination of the qualitative data showed that preservice English instructors appeared to know the CEFR only in part, notably in the evaluation area. In spite of the fact that preservice English instructors comprehended the CEFR, they were unable to apply any domains in a real-world setting.

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