Evaluating Language Proficiency through Complex Tasks and Scenarios: Implementing an Action-Oriented Approach

Prof.Rosanna Margonis-Pasinetti[1], Said Muhammad Khan[2]
[1]*University of Teacher Education State of Vaud (HEP Vaud), Switzerland*
[2]*Royal Commission Yanbu Colleges & Institutes, Saudi Arabia*

Abstract

For decades, language teaching and assessment have focused predominantly on the formal aspects of language, emphasizing grammar and structure. However, research has decisively shifted first toward communicative competence and then toward the adoption of an action-oriented approach. This transformation is clearly articulated in the 2020 edition of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). As stated in the CEFR (2020, p. 29):

"The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures. Thus, the criterion suggested for assessment is communicative ability in real life, in relation to a continuum of ability (Levels A1-C2) (...). It implies that the teaching and learning process is driven by action, that it is action-oriented. It also clearly suggests planning backward from learners' real-life communicative needs, with consequent alignment between curriculum, teaching and assessment."

This shift requires curricular alignment that integrates communicative competence and learner agency with formal language knowledge in a meaningful way. In this presentation, we will explore how scenario-based tasks can be used to assess language proficiency effectively, ensuring coherence between learning goals, instructional methods, and assessment criteria. We will introduce an **ad hoc teaching and learning scenario and a criterion-referenced assessment grid**, designed to develop and evaluate learners' communicative performance within real-life contexts while maintaining linguistic accuracy as a relevant factor. In line with CEFR recommendations and based on proven methodologies for creating scenarios that respect curricular alignment, we intend to develop a complete teaching sequence and test it with a group of adult learners of English as a foreign language.

By examining the development and implementation of these teaching, learning and assessment tools, this presentation will provide educators with practical strategies for designing complex tasks, aligning them with CEFR proficiency levels and overcoming common challenges in communicative assessment.

Keywords: action-oriented approach, learning goals, curricular alignment, backward design, evaluation criteria