Approach adopted

- From Chapter 2 -

Lecture 2

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Vertical vs. Horizontal dimensions

- Vertical dimension
  - Ascending series of common reference levels for describing learner proficiency

- Horizontal dimension
  - Parameters of communicative activity and communicative language competence

The rationale of a vertical dimension

- The development of definitions of learner proficiency related to categories used in the Framework may assist in making more concrete what it may be appropriate to expect at different levels of achievement in terms of those categories. This in turn may aid the development of transparent and realistic statements of overall learning objectives.

- Learning which takes place over a period of time needs to be organised into units which take account of progression and can provide continuity. Syllabuses and materials need to be situated in relation to one another. A framework of levels may help in this process.

The rationale of a vertical dimension (2)

- Learning efforts in relation to those objectives and those units need also to be situated on this vertical dimension of progress, i.e. assessed in relation to gains in proficiency. The provision of proficiency statements may help in this process.

- Such assessment should take account of incidental learning, of out-of-school experience, of the kind of lateral enrichment outlined above. The provision of a set of proficiency statements going beyond the scope of a particular syllabus may be helpful in this respect.

- The provision of a common set of proficiency statements will facilitate comparisons of objectives, levels, materials, tests and achievement in different systems and situations.

The rationale of a vertical dimension (3)

- A framework including both horizontal and vertical dimensions facilitates the definition of partial objectives and the recognition of uneven profiles, partial competencies.

- A framework of levels and categories facilitating profiling of objectives for particular purposes may aid inspectors. Such a framework may help to assess whether learners are working at an appropriate level in different areas. It may inform decisions on whether performance in those areas represents a standard appropriate to the stage of learning, immediate future goals and wider longer-term goals of effective language proficiency and personal development.

- Finally, in their learning career students of the language will pass through a number of educational sectors and institutions offering language services, and the provision of a common set of levels may facilitate collaboration between those sectors. With increased personal mobility, it is more and more common for learners to switch between educational systems at the end of or even in the middle of their period in a particular educational sector, making the provision of a common scale on which to describe their achievement an issue of ever wider concern.

Language learning and teaching & language assessment

Language acquisition, learning and teaching

- it cannot take up a position on one side or another of current theoretical disputes on the nature of language acquisition and its relation to language learning, nor should it embody any one particular approach to language teaching to the exclusion of all others.

- Its proper role is to encourage all those involved as partners to the language learning/teaching process to state as explicitly and transparently as possible their own theoretical basis and their practical procedures.

- In order to fulfil this role it sets out parameters, categories, criteria and scales which users may draw upon and which may possibly stimulate them to consider a wider range of options than previously or to question the previously unexamined assumptions of the tradition in which they are working.

Language assessment

1. for the specification of the content of tests and examinations.

2. for stating the criteria for the attainment of a learning objective, both in relation to the assessment of a particular spoken or written performance, and in relation to continuous teacher-, peer- or self-assessment.

3. for describing the levels of proficiency in existing tests and examinations thus enabling comparisons to be made across different systems of qualifications.