

IMPACT OF THE CEFR ON TEACHERS’ CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY



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Аннотация

Мақолада “Тил билишнинг умумевропа компетенциялари: ўрганиш, ўқитиш, баҳолаш”нинг таълим сиёсатлари ҳужжати сифатидаги ўрнини ўрганишга бағишланган адабиётлар шарҳи келтирилган, ушбу ҳужжатнинг турли таълим контекстларида жорий этилиши ва ҳужжат жорий этилишининг ўқитувчи педагогикасига таъсири муҳокама қилинган.

Аннотация

В статье делается обзор литературы на тему «Общеввропейские компетенции владения иностранным языком: изучение, преподавание, оценка» как документа образовательной политики и ее внедрения в различных образовательных контекстах. Автор также обсуждает влияние данного документа на педагогику преподавателей иностранных языков.

Abstract

The article is devoted to the revision of literature on the CEFR as an educational policy document and its implementation in various educational contexts. Further the author discusses the impact of the CEFR policy on language teachers’ classroom pedagogy.

Калит сўзлар: умумевропа компетенциялари, таълим сиёсати, педагогика, таълим контексти.

Ключевые слова: компетенции владения иностранным языком, образовательная политика, педагогика, образовательный контекст.

Keywords: CEFR, educational policy, document, classroom pedagogy, educational context.

Most of the CEFR experts and scholars are cautious in discussing language teachers’ knowledge on the use of CEFR and they commonly argue that the influence of the CEFR on the teacher education and their classroom pedagogy was not as wide as its influence on the language policy and testing (2). Moreover, as Coste (3) notes, similarly to the predisposition detected at the policy level of the CEFR’s impact, most practitioners e.g. language teachers have only limited knowledge about the CEFR, which often includes knowledge about the reference levels and level descriptors. Martyniuk and Noijon (6) suggest some explanations for the relatively small impact of the CEFR on teachers’ pedagogy. They are: a) the CEFR is not a very reader-friendly and complex document which does not address

teachers' and learners' needs in a comprehensible language; b) there is not enough materials which provide and disseminate adequate knowledge about the role of the CEFR in teacher education and teachers' development programs (6); c) and as Byram and Parmenter (2) note the CEFR as an innovative document and policy comes across resistance from the teachers.

An additional issue which adds up to the low level of dissemination of knowledge on the use of the CEFR in classroom teaching among practitioners is that there are still quite few published materials on the CEFR's pedagogical implications(7). Thus, it appears to be complicated to outline a clear image of the relationship between the CEFR and language learning and teaching realities. Research on the area of pedagogical influence of the CEFR can be categorized into two groups: 1) written reports of practices related to the use of the CEFR and 2) academic studies carried out on the CEFR use by teachers.

Thus far, there are two main research findings that report on the application of the CEFR in definite educational contexts which are Alderson's (1) and Morrow's (2004) publications. These publications contain reports and analysis on how language practitioners depict the CEFR related projects conducted to design innovative courses and materials and/or to advance existing language curricula, courses and programs. As it can be seen from the publication dates of the reports, they date back to early days when the CEFR was first started to be applied and these publications were supposed to provide examples of good CEFR application practices and models for other educational bodies and language teaching professionals to follow. Nevertheless, afterwards no other case reports of this kind have been published in European contexts. On the other hand, recently there have been published several accounts on the application of the CEFR in non-European contexts, which include Mexico, Japan and Turkey(8).

It is worthwhile to note that there are a small number of quantitative and qualitative studies that investigate the impact of the CEFR on teaching, learning and assessment from the language teaching practitioners' point of view.

Among those few surveys it is worth mentioning a survey administered by Hehl and Kruczek (5) among language instructors at two German universities. The study aimed at examining the extent of knowledge of the CEFR and its use in the respondents practices. In the survey Hehl and Kruczek (5) found that the CEFR was reflected in the structure of courses, learning objectives of the courses, learner assessment procedures, and was reported as a helpful tool for the application of approaches which are communication-oriented. However, the survey reported that the degree of teachers' knowledge about the CEFR and its uses was considerably varied. Most of the language instructors pointed out the complexity of the CEFR document and the need for more training in the application of the CEFR.

Moonen et al. (9) conducted a large scale study among language teachers at the Dutch secondary education system. The purpose of the research was to study the relationships between the CEFR and language teaching, assessment and curriculum design. The study also aimed at investigating the impact of national teacher development project previously carried out by the Dutch Ministry of Education aimed at facilitating the implementation of the CEFR. Research methods of the study included questionnaires, interviews and focus groups research. Study findings revealed that the majority of teachers have basic knowledge about the CEFR and its major impact in the language classroom was concentrated on the use of the CEFR related textbooks and preparation of language learners for the national examinations, which are aligned to CEFR (9, 244).

Another survey and focus group research conducted in four European countries by Piccardo et al. (10) showed teachers' opinion and knowledge about the CEFR during the teacher development project. According to the research results: a) language teaching professionals had partial knowledge about the CEFR and most of their responds showed that they had knowledge about reference levels and global descriptor scale of the CEFR; b) most of the respondents had problems in transferring the CEFR concepts in classroom practice due to the complexity of the document; c) whereas most of the respondent teachers showed positive attitude towards the CEFR and its innovative potential they also were hesitant in its application and considered it as a top-down instrument rather than a reflection and improvement tool; d) most of the respondents reported that they needed further training on the implementation of the CEFR in their teaching practice.

A context questionnaire data collection, which was the part of SurveyLang project (4), carried out among language teachers of 16 educational systems in different countries yielded a considerable variation in teacher training focused on the CEFR in different contexts. The variation was ranging from 20% to 80%. The survey results also confirmed limited use of the CEFR in language classrooms.

The above mentioned studies mainly report that quite identical findings, despite the fact that they were conducted in different research contexts. The overall picture suggests that despite two decades since its publication the CEFR has had narrow impact in the micro-context of the classroom practice. Among the reasons that are related to this issue can be related to the lack of teachers' knowledge and experience on using the CEFR, which on the other hand is related to the lack of training and support in the implementation of the CEFR in the classroom.

Researchers, from the methodological point of view, have studied the role and the impact of CEFR on teaching and learning primarily by obtaining language teachers' and practitioners' views by means of questionnaires and interviews and

attempted to give a wide range description of what respondents reported in the surveys and interviews.

The insufficiency of written reports on the impact of the CEFR on classroom pedagogy of language teachers, do not imply a scarcity of implementation of CEFR in designing and developing language curricula and courses, which may be conducted without being documented and published, may imply a lack of systematic reflections on language teachers part and lack of awareness of the prospective uses of this document which extends far beyond the reference levels. This study seems to be supported by the outcomes of qualitative and quantitative researches on language teachers' perceptions, and underpins the position of many scientists who argue that CEFR has not still reached its full potential in terms of language teachers' knowledge and its uses in classroom practice.

Introduction of the CEFR in Uzbekistan was initiated by the implementation of large scale projects in reforming the Pre-Service English Teacher Training programs and In-Service Teacher Training courses in higher education institutes. Successful implementation of the projects led to the further rethinking of the whole system of foreign language learning and teaching in Uzbekistan and the last resort and starting point for the reform of the whole system was adopting the CEFR in national standards and curricula development for all levels of education.

Introduction of the CEFR and its impacts on education policy has been immense in various contexts ranging from European countries to Far Eastern countries such as Japan. However, the extent to which the CEFR's impacted on teachers' pedagogy in these contexts still remains untouched. However, studies carried out by the researchers suggest that there was an impact of the CEFR in teachers' classroom pedagogy. The influence ranges from textbook selection for teaching purposes to assessment procedures of learners' foreign language proficiency, although in some context the extent to which the CEFR influenced teachers' beliefs and teaching practices are still awaiting for investigations.

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