



*Dear members of the CEFR & LP SIG,*

Hopefully this newsletter finds you well and you had a good start in the second year of a new normal. It has been silent for the last months, but we have been active behind the scenes with the CEFR and Action Research Project and with preparing for PanSIG 2021. The SIG's keyword for 2021 will again be COLLABORATION, with the notion of reaching out to our members and the foreign language teaching community. We are looking forward to serving our membership.

In this Newsletter you will find a review report by Alexander Imig on a presentation held during an online conference by Claudia Harsch, who is currently an expert member of EALTA (European Association of Language Testing and Assessment), on CEFR criticism.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 we will have a meeting for those of our membership who are already involved in the CEFR & Action research project, and for those who are interested, you are welcome to join by listening and/or by discussing.

For the upcoming summer, in August and September 2021, we plan a series of workshops led by invited speakers about CEFR and our research project related themes. As first speaker we could confirm **Anne Burns** who is internationally known for her expertise in action research and foreign language teaching. As soon as we have more details, we will inform you, our membership immediately!

The next event coming up is PanSIG 2021. The conference theme is “Local and Global: Plurilingualism and Multilingualism” and CEFR & LP will have a CEFR & LP SIG Forum on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 2:30 pm to 4 pm. There are eight other CEFR related presentations at PanSIG 2021, and we guess this is a historic number for CEFR related presentations at a PanSIG conference! The whole conference will have more than 160 presentations. The plenary speaker will be Jane Willis, well-known for task-based teaching, a theme very much related to the CEFR. On Sunday there will be a panel discussion on the conference theme with four panelists. See below for more details on the CEFR and SIG related presentations, or [pansig2021.eventzil.la](https://pansig2021.eventzil.la) event space.

PanSIG 2021 - Special offer: See the email for details.

Other dates to keep in mind:

The JALT 2021 conference will be held on November 12 – 15, 2021 in Shizuoka, Grandship.

PanSIG 2022 will be held on May, 14 -15, 2022 in Nagano, The University of Nagano.

The JALT 2022 conference is planned for Fukuoka.

We are actually looking for a conference chair for PanSIG 2023 and for a site as well, the same for PanSIG 2024. The call will be sent out in the next JALT Announcement mail.

Some news from other JALT SIGs: OLE SIG (Other Language Educators SIG) is organizing a Multilingual Cafe each month. If you want to speak in another language, please come and join. The next Cafe will be open on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 7:30. For more details see: <https://sites.google.com/view/jalt-olesig/>

And last but not least, some good news. Two of our members applied for a Kaken research project and both projects were granted. Good job, congratulations!

Jack Bower: Assessment and placement test

Noriko Nagai: CLIL

If you have some news you would like to share with our members, please feel free to do so. If we don't support each other who will do it?

Gabriela Schmidt

CEFR & LP SIG coordinator

On behalf of all officers

Alexander Imig (treasurer), Noriko Nagai (membership), Gregory Birch (program), Jack Bower (publication), Naoyuki Naganuma (CEFR research liaison), Mark DeBoer (CLIL liaison), Nicole Sonobe (membership assistant), Morten Hunke, Rebecca Schmidt, Valerie Hansford, Shaun Allen (publication assistant)

If you want to get involved, you are very welcome!

## **Contents of Newsletter 31 - April 2021**

### **SIG News**

SIG matters – result of voting

ECML News

### **Featured Article by Alexander Imig**

PanSIG 2021 presentations CEFR and SIG related

Upcoming events

=====

About SIG matters – Voting result -

Feedback from the voting in December 2021

Voting between December 31<sup>st</sup> and January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Motion 2020-1: Do you approve moving to online voting for JALT CEFR & LP SIG affairs?

Unanimous approval

Motion 2020-2: Do you approve the following nominated officers to represent CEFR & LP SIG in 2021? Unanimous approval

Motion 2020-3: Do you approve changing the name FLP SIG to CEFR & LP SIG in the SIG's constitution? The new name of the SIG was approved by the EBM in November 2017.  
Unanimous approval

Officer approval  
All officers have unanimous approval

**Would you like to suggest a motion?** Would you like to suggest yourself or someone as a nominee for an officer position of the CEFR & LP SIG? There are still vacancies in the publicity and communication sections including the homepage, and social networks. And there are options for any position. If you are interested in becoming an officer, you are welcome. You can start with shadowing/monitoring and then get involved.

(Suggestion 1) **We need some coordination of practical resources to help prospective users explore the CEFR forest. Perhaps we could assign an officer role under Publications, Communication, etc.? For the sharing and reviewing of contributions by registered members, a password-protected blog page might suffice.**

**Please step forward and contact us to initiate this step!!**

---

### ECML – News

Link to the News site of the ECML - News on the ECML portal  
<https://www.ecml.at/www.ecml.at/News3/tabid/643/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

See at the European Center of Modern Languages, there are a lot of tools and information available.

“A roadmap for schools to support the language(s) of schooling”: a resource website for all those involved in school development and in creating language-aware schools

The website [www.ecml.at/roadmapforschools](http://www.ecml.at/roadmapforschools) – available in English, French and German – enables schools to focus on systematic quality improvement by setting up a tailor-made whole-school strategy to advance learners’ competences in the language(s) of schooling

---

CercleS - De Gruyter webinar celebrates special LLHE issue

<https://www.cercles.org/EN-H30/cercles-news/283/cercles-de-gruyter-webinar-celebrates-special-llhe-issue.html>

---

and more

## Featured Report

### **CEFR & Companion volume: critical review and a forecast** By Alexander Imig

This year in March, on March 15th-17th, a Conference on German as Foreign language *Fokus DaF/DaZ - Gegenwärtige Tendenzen in Forschung und Lehre*“ (2nd *Internationale Konferenz*) was organized by the German Jordanian University, School of Applied Humanities and Languages in Amman, sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Many scholars were invited as keynote speakers. One among them was **Claudia Harsch**, professor at the University of Bremen, known as an expert on testing and on her critical approach to the CEFR.

Claudia Harsch, University of Bremen  
English Department

<https://www.lab.uni-bremen.de/team/prof-dr-claudia-harsch/>



Recently many conferences are held online and it is therefore possible to participate in conferences in distant areas of the world. One example is the 2nd Conference (“Current trends in research and teaching”) of the German-Jordan University, held in German. This report gives an overview of the talk by Claudia Harsch on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021, together with some background information.

The title of the Prof. Harsch’s presentation: ***The Framework of reference and the Companion Volume: a critical review and a perspective forward***  
(Original in German: *Referenzrahmen und Companion Volume: kritischer Rückblick und Ausblick nach vorn*)

In Germany critiques of the CEFR have been widespread. At the beginning of the talk, Claudia Harsch referenced a (German) paper, which discusses critiques in relation to the new (2018/2020) companion volume. The short paper, which is written in German also incorporates the critiques of Alderson (2007) and Hulstijn (2007). The positive aspects of the CEFR 2001 were then briefly emphasized (transparency, constructive alignment, Can Do-approach and learner autonomy). Then she referenced a discussion known as “Is your B1 my B1”?, using IRT (item response theory). Claudia showed that the level results are only to a very limited extent comparable between different tests, even in the same language. Claudia then used the suitable metaphor of climbing for gaining language proficiency. Climbing IRT and levels means tasks. What tasks should a test taker be able to perform well? IRT maps the difficulty of tasks in relation to how many people are able to perform them effectively. (Almost) All people perform well at the easiest tasks they are then A1 level. The C2 tasks are able to be performed well by only very few people. And using the IRT as a map, the question of level B1 arises again. How many of the tasks, mapped as B1 on the IRT scale, should one person be able to perform well, if this person is considered to be B1. Claudia asked the audience (around 60 persons) and some people said 40%. However, Claudia was definitely more strict than the

audience, saying a person on the B1 level should at least be proficient at at least 50% of the B1 tasks.

#### References

Alderson, Charles (2007): The CEFR and the need for more research. *The Modern Language Journal* 91: 4, 659-663

Hulstijn, Jan H. (2007): The Shaky Ground Beneath the CEFR: Quantitative and Qualitative Dimensions of Language Proficiency. *The Modern Language Journal* 91: 4, 663-667

---

## PanSIG 2021

### Local and Global: Plurilingualism and Multilingualism

For the program and the sessions see [pansig2021.eventzil.la](https://pansig2021.eventzil.la)

- You can join [eventzil.la](https://eventzil.la) (a customized conference platform) and the [pansig2021](https://pansig2021.eventzil.la) event space only by signing up (name and email address), no fee is needed. You can see various event spaces and you can read about the sessions.

- If you want to attend the conference and see the sessions of the conference you need to get a ticket (JALT members 3500 yen, full time students free, non-JALT member 5000 yen).

PanSIG 2021 - Special offer: There is the possibility for a few SIG sponsored tickets. If you are currently in a difficult situation and cannot afford the conference fee, please contact the coordinator: Gabriela Schmidt. She is the conference chair of PanSIG 2021.

For PanSIG see <https://pansig.org>

For CEFR and SIG members related presentations see <https://cefrjapan.net/events>

CEFR and SIG members related presentations at a glance:

*Please verify the dates on the [pansig2021.eventzil.la](https://pansig2021.eventzil.la) event space!*

SAT 09:30 – 09:55, Zoom , Takanori Omura

SAT 13:00 – 13:25, Zoom 10, Yukie Saito

SAT 13:45 – 14:10, Zoom 8, Matthew Vetrini: Leadership

SAT 14:30 – 16:00, Zoom 8, CEFR & LP SIG Forum

SAT 14:30 – 14:55, Zoom 1, Placement test

SAT 16:00 – 16:45, Zoom 11, Video letter

SUN 09:00 – 09:45, Zoom 8, Bob Gettings: Writing

SUN 10:30 – 10:55, Zoom 8, Self-access

SUN 11:00 – 11:25, Zoom 8, Curriculum

SUN 11:30 – 12:25, Zoom 8, Netflix

## CEFR & LP SIG Forum

Theme: **A CEFR-informed Action Research Model: Developing a research plan.** #1244

Maria Gabriela Schmidt, Noriko Nagai, Gregory Birch, Jack Bower, Rebecca Schmidt, Takanori Omura, Colin Rundle

Sat, May 15, 14:30-16:00 JST | Zoom 8, SIG Forum

The JALT CEFR & LP SIG is currently supporting teacher-researchers through a collaborative Kaken research project entitled “Language Education reform using action research: Putting CEFR’s educational principles into practice”. During the Forum, project participants will share the research plans they designed using Stage 1 of a CEFR-focused Action Research Model (CARM) developed by the SIG. These plans were designed in part through collaboration facilitated during workshops held in the first year of the project. The SIG forum will be an opportunity to discuss Stage II, the implementation of the research plan which involves two aspects: the participants’ plan to (1) trial proposed solutions to their teaching-learning dilemma (i.e. the focus of their research plan), and (2) collect data to critically examine the effectiveness of this solution. Forum participants are encouraged to contribute to this ongoing collaborative process to help move these research projects forward, as well as reflect on their current practice and consider how the CEFR and CARM might be utilized in their own contexts. The forum will conclude with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the CARM model and the goals for the second year of the KAKEN project.

CEFR and SIG members related presentations

### Saturday

**How to Enhance Japanese University Students’ Self-Esteem. ~ An Attempt on Self-Affirmation in Written Form ~**, Session #1342

Omura Takanori 大村孝紀, Sat, May 15th, 09:30 ~ 09:55 JST | Zoom 2

Nowadays, a growing number of institutions and educators in English Language teaching (ELT) has been highlighting its psychological aspect. Particularly, self-affirmation methods that contain psychological effects on students’ academic achievement are noticeable in a recent study (Cohen et al, 2009). The purpose of this study is to investigate whether a regular self-affirmation in written-form can improve the degree of self-esteem, specifically, Global Self-Esteem (GSE) and Foreign Language Self-Esteem (FLSE). The research design is quantitative research using online surveys as the main instrument. The participants of this study were 55 university students who were from three different faculties of a private university in Tokyo. The research examined and compared their GSE and FLSE of two experimental groups and a control group at the beginning and the end of the semester. Whereas self-affirmation in written form was mandatory for the experimental groups in every class, the control group was not asked to do any self-affirmation. The results showed that the students’ self-esteem in the experimental groups was boosted by self-affirmation in written-form to some extent. The findings of this study will benefit numerous educators and students since the enhancement of students’ self-esteem is a profound source for their language learning.

**Possibility and Challenges of Online Language Exchanges, Session #1271**  
**Yukie Saito, Sat, May 15th, 13:00 ~ 13:25 JST | Zoom 10**

The spread of Covid-19 has made it difficult for university students to study and travel abroad, which may affect students' motivation to learn English negatively. Hoping to motivate first-year Japanese students to learn English in a class of a private university in Japan, I conducted five online language exchanges with the Japanese students and university students learning Japanese in the U.S. The Japanese students wrote a journal about the contents and feedback in English after every exchange. After the five exchanges, the students also answered a questionnaire survey with closed and open questions. The closed questions were made in terms of oral comprehension, production, and interactions from CEFR Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020), cultural understanding, foreign language anxiety, motivation, and pragmatic competence. The results showed that most of the students were able to improve their listening and speaking skills, understand different cultures, reduce foreign language anxiety, be motivated to learn English, and maintain a conversation. The open question also showed their positive opinion toward the exchanges. In the presentation, I will discuss the possibility and challenges of online language exchanges for the new normal era after Covid-19 based on analyzing the students' journals and the questionnaire survey.

**The need for educational leadership as an aspect of CEFR, and language education in Japan, Session #1253**

**Matthew Vetrini** on Sat, May 15, 13:45-14:10 JST | Zoom 8

The overwhelming majority of K-12 and universities are led by people without explicit leadership training, other than the occasional seminar. For Japan to progress and join the global ranking of schools, leadership must be considered as an integral aspect and this leadership must adhere to a set of standards that are both student focused and measurable (Green, 2016). This push for leadership is also an integral part of the adoption and implementation of CEFR or CEFR-J standards in Japan. The earliest call for educators to play a role in leadership in the implementation of CEFR was made by Nagai (2010) in the Japanese context and sequentially again by O'Dwyer and Nagai (2012) and O'Dwyer (2015), but since then, it has been largely absent. Nonetheless, with the push to bring the CEFR-J to public schools in Japan much work remains to be done, and a significant aspect of that work lies in the adoption of educational leadership standards and practices.

**Creating and Implementing an Online Placement Test, Session #1333**

**Bradley Irwin / Diego Oliveira, Sat, May 15th, 14:30 ~ 14:55 JST | Zoom 1**

This short presentation will describe the experience of moving from a third-party, paper-based English proficiency placement test to an original online version created by the presenters. We will discuss practical approaches to designing a placement test for first and second year undergraduate English language learners that aligns with CEFR bands (A1-B2/C1) and its implementation using Google Forms. The test consisted of 60 multiple choice questions covering listening skills (true/false statements, specific/global comprehension), vocabulary and grammar understanding (sentence completion, word definitions, synonyms, etc) and reading comprehension skills (analyzing content of an advertisement, short and long passage comprehension and interpretation). Students were instructed to complete the test within 90 minutes. Because our test included listening, vocabulary, grammar, and reading items, we will

be able to give a comprehensive overview of the process for creating audio content and including appropriate target language. We will describe the collaborative challenges of creating a test entirely online and give advice for others who are interested in creating their own placement tests. This presentation will be of particular interest to anyone who wishes to learn about creating an online CEFR-aligned placement test. It will also be valuable for educators who are interested in conducting online testing using Google Forms.

**Video Letter Exchange to Oral Development, Session #1343**

**Nami Takase**, Sat, May 15th, 16:00 ~ 16:45 JST | Zoo 11

Engaging students in online exchange has numerous positive effects; one is to keep students connected to the international community (Blake, 2000). This presentation focuses on how CEFR A1- to A2-level English learners engage in authentic communication with native English speakers through an online application during the pandemic as part of a two-month project. The purpose of this presentation is to share the project's classroom practice and the effectiveness of its online communication exchange for speaking development and cultural understanding. In this project, university students learning English in Japan exchanged a video with students learning Japanese in the US. The main language used in the video was English. However, the topics included intercultural aspects, such as sharing stories about their favorite heroes. At the end of the project, the post-test speaking test showed increased gains in English learners' fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical diversity, as the English learners may have picked up native terms from their video exchange partners. This presentation also provides feedback and comments from students from both countries and highlights issues that may arise during the project to assist future project organizers who are interested in conducting an international video exchange project.

## Sunday

**Teach it! Write! What We Can Learn from CEFR, Session #1337**

**Bob Gettings**, Sun, May 16, 09:00-09:45 JST | Zoom 8

Do our students write more than students used to 25 years ago? The internet and smartphones have changed the way that we communicate and interact in our daily lives - even with foreign languages. CEFR offers some insights into how we learn and can teach languages. The presenter will outline the changes in the CEFR Companion Volume (2020) descriptors and suggest practical ways to integrate them into teaching L2 writing. The Companion Volume updates and extends the original CEFR with new descriptors relevant to teaching writing - especially for the lower levels (pre-A1 to B1), as well as for online interaction, plurilingual/pluricultural competence, and mediation. The new descriptors for mediation offer insights into ways to use students' L1 or other languages (L3, L4 . . .) in target language learning and assessment. The Companion Volume also continues to view students as active social agents in their own learning, to encourage an active learning approach, and to focus on what language learners "can do" - not on what they cannot. In particular, the presentation will focus on CEFR as related to CALL and extensive writing task design.



**Adapting CEFR Can-dos to Self-access Learning, Session #1247**

**John Bankier**, Sun, May 16, 10:30-10:55 JST | Zoom 8

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) describes a six-point scale for language abilities/competencies as can-do statements. According to the University of Cambridge (2011), CEFR is frequently used as a planning tool for development of language learning textbooks, examinations, syllabuses and curricula. As well as allowing comparisons of different contexts and programs, when adapted, the can-do statements can clarify the goals and objectives of language curricula into clear and achievable competencies. This presentation will describe a process of aligning existing self-access centre (SAC) facilities to CEFR by adapting can-do statements. Facilities included multi-lingual conversation lounges, an English writing centre and a test-preparation consultation service staffed by students and faculty. I will explain the selection and adaptation of can-do statements and how this process led me to reconsider whether the SAC provided learners the best opportunities to develop their language skills and autonomy. While the pandemic prevented the project's on-the-ground implementation in 2020, the planned next steps for dissemination of the can-do statements will be described. The presenter will also address the general benefits and challenges of aligning language learning curricula and self-access programs to frameworks like the CEFR.

**How Quirky Thinkers Inspired our Organization to Adopt CEFR, Session #1276**

**Engel L.P. Villareal**, Sun, May 16, 11:00-11:25 JST | Zoom 8, Short presentation

There is a dearth of literature on CEFR adoption case studies in the junior high school and high school contexts here in Japan; moreover, the available case studies from the Japanese University context tend to give the impression that such endeavor would be quite an undertaking. Nevertheless, our school, a Japanese private secondary school, took on the challenge of adopting the CEFR as the framework for our English Communication curriculum. This presentation will discuss the process and visualizations that we used, and show how the seemingly disparate ideas of inventor Nikola Tesla and economist Adam Smith provided us with the inspiration to implement the framework in our organization.

**Netflix x CEFR: What should our students really be watching?, Session #1307**

**Barry Condon**, Sun, May 16, 11:30-11:55 JST | Zoom 8, Short presentation

Recommending that students watch TV shows and films in their second language has long been common practice among educators. While all L2 exposure is to be encouraged, not all content is created equal. We may suggest that students watch a particular show or movie for a variety of readily apparent reasons such as general suitability, subject matter, and entertainment value while perhaps the most important factor that should be considered, the true level of language input, often remains oblique. This presentation will examine the results of a text analysis of a variety of television shows and films that are typically available to students in order to determine which content contains the most comprehensible input for learners across each level. Moreover, an explanation of the methodology behind the analysis will be presented, giving educators the tools to conduct similar analyses and to provide better-informed future recommendations.

\* \* \* \* \*

## 2021 - At a glance

Date	Event	Notes
May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<b>CEFR &amp; Action Research meeting</b>	CEFR & LP SIG members only
May 14 – 16, 2021	<b>JALT PanSIG 2021</b>	
June 4 -6, 2021	JALT CALL 2021	
August 2021	AILA	
Aug/Sept 2021	<b>CEFR &amp; Action Research workshop series</b> <b>Anne Burns, Action Research</b>	
28-29, August 2021	JACET conference	
November 12 <sup>th</sup> - 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2021	<b>JALT 2021 conference</b>	

For the most updated version of the events, please visit

**<https://cefrjapan.net/events>**

or

<https://sites.google.com/site/flpsig/home/even>

### **Links**

CEFR & LP SIG: <https://cefrjapan.net>

CEFR Journal: <https://cefrjapan.net/journal>

CEFR events: <https://cefrjapan.net/events>

JALT: <https://jalt.org/>

Language Portfolio for Japanese University, bilingual (English/Japanese):

<https://sites.google.com/site/flpsig/flp-sig-home/language-portfolio-for-japanese-university>

---

The next NEWSLETTER #32 is planned for Summer 2021

\* \* \* \* \* Call for submissions by July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 \* \* \* \* \*