36 Teaching at different levels

A Warm-up

1 Read these five descriptions of learner proficiency and answer the questions.

a Which one describes the highest level?
b Which one describes the lowest level?
c What order would you put the other three descriptions in (from highest to lowest)?

i	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in their field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with users of the target language quite possible, without imposing strain on either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue, giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
ii	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce themselves and others, and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where someone lives, people they know and things they have. Can interact in a simple way, provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
iii	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects …
iv	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance […] Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of their background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
v	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Council of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages,* p.175

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2 Read the text about the Common European Framework and label the descriptors in the table above.

The Common European Framework

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) 'presents a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency' (page 27). It provides descriptors of learners at three broad levels: A: *basic user;* B: *independent user;* and C: *proficient user.* Each level is divided into two bands: A1, A2; B1, B2; C1, C2. The descriptors in the table represent levels C1, B2, B1, A2 and A1.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages Council of Europe

3 Think about the TP group you are currently teaching. What level are they? Do you think these descriptors reflect their abilities?

4 Complete these sentences in any way that seems appropriate to you. You can use ideas from the CEFR descriptors or your own ideas.

a At higher levels, learners might need …
b At lower levels, learners might need …
c The learners in my current TP group are … level, which means that in our lessons …

Compare your ideas with a partner.

B Adapting to different levels

1 Look at these comments made by two CELTA trainees. Maria moved from teaching an elementary class (i.e. CEFR A1–A2) to teaching an upper-intermediate class (i.e. CEFR B2). Salim moved from teaching the B2 upper-intermediate class to teaching the A1–A2 elementary class. Which person do you think made each comment?



a

In the other group, I didn't mind if the learners used their own language a bit – but I try to keep it to an absolute minimum now.



b

I realize that the learners I have now can already say a lot of what they want to, and my job is partly to give them alternative ways of saying things.

c

I got a real shock when I started with this new group. I don't think they understood anything I said in the first lesson! There was an activity that was quite easy but I just couldn't get across what they had to do.

d

I sometimes found it difficult to explain how to use our online platform. I had to remember to carefully show them what to click on and where to type, not just tell them.

e

I've noticed that I have more activities in a lesson and they tend to be a bit shorter – particularly, pair and group work doesn't last as long.

f

I really have to work hard to research grammar now. The learners sometimes ask quite difficult questions and my research helps me to feel more confident.

g

I can't just chat to this group and find out about them as people so easily. I don't think I have such a good rapport with them.

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2 Work in pairs. Compare your experiences.

a Have you had any similar experiences to Maria and Salim with your current TP group?

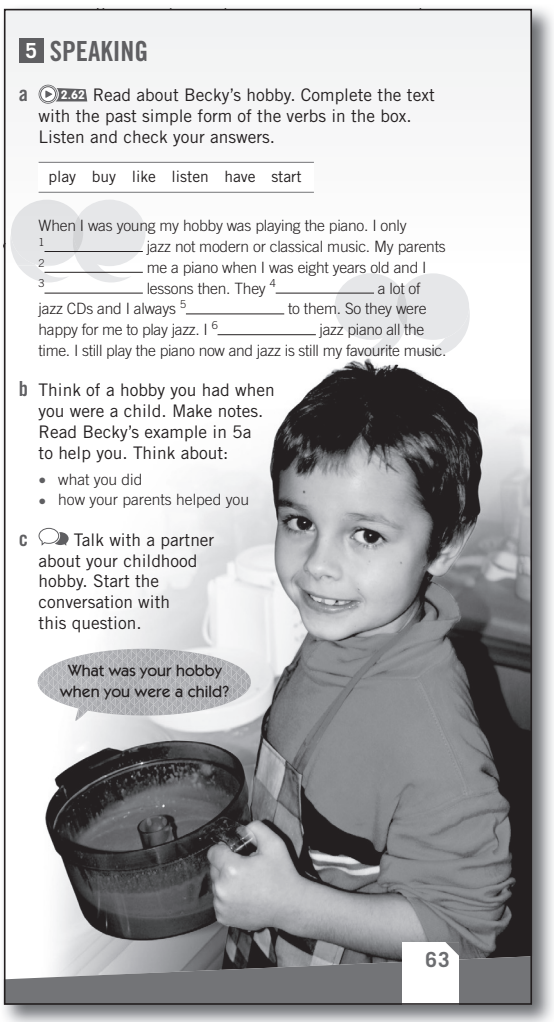
b Is there anything else which has surprised or interested you about the level(s) you have taught so far?

C Productive skills

1 Work in pairs. Read this speaking activity from an elementary coursebook and answer the questions.

a How do the materials support the learners before they speak?

b Can you predict the sort of exchanges that would happen in activity 5c?



5 SPEAKING

a 2.62 Read about Becky's hobby. Complete the text with the past simple form of the verbs in the box. Listen and check your answers.

play buy like listen have start

When I was young my hobby was playing the piano. I only [1]_____ jazz not modern or classical music. My parents [2]_____ me a piano when I was eight years old and I [3]_____ lessons then. They [4]_____ a lot of jazz CDs and I always [5]_____ to them. So they were happy for me to play jazz. I [6]_____ jazz piano all the time. I still play the piano now and jazz is still my favourite music.

b Think of a hobby you had when you were a child. Make notes. Read Becky's example in 5a to help you. Think about:

- what you did
- how your parents helped you

c Talk with a partner about your childhood hobby. Start the conversation with this question.

What was your hobby when you were a child?

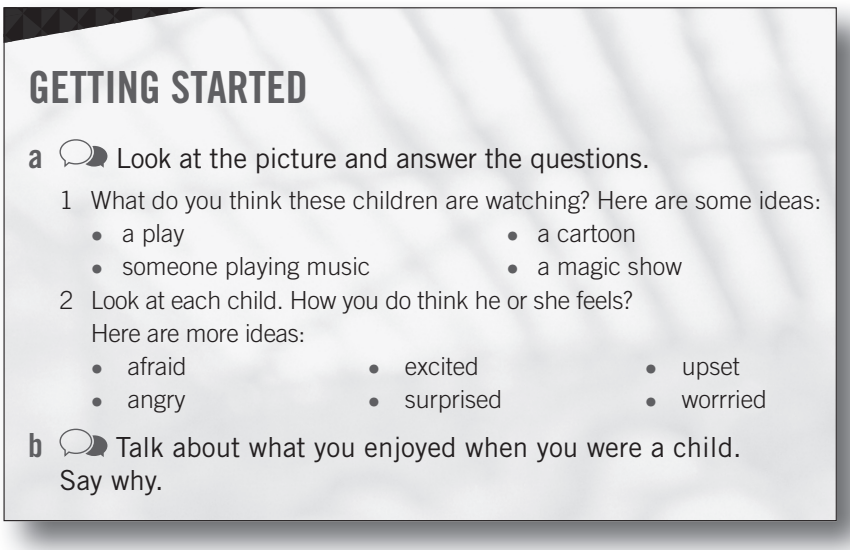
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Empower A2

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2 a Work in groups. Discuss how you would expect a higher-level speaking activity to be the same or different.

b Now look at the following activity from an upper-intermediate coursebook.
Are the activities the same or different in the ways you predicted?



GETTING STARTED

a Look at the picture and answer the questions.

1 What do you think these children are watching? Here are some ideas:
- a play
- a cartoon
- someone playing music
- a magic show

2 Look at each child. How you do think he or she feels?
Here are more ideas:
- afraid
- excited
- upset
- angry
- surprised
- worrried

b Talk about what you enjoyed when you were a child. Say why.

Empower B2

3 How would you expect writing tasks to differ between lower and higher levels?

D Receptive skills

1 Read the following listening transcript. What level do you think it would be appropriate for: elementary, intermediate, or advanced? Why?

CD3 ▸ 31

CAROL The most important moment in my life was um the day I met Owen. An old friend was having a party, but the weather was so bad that I nearly didn't bother going. Just think, if I'd stayed at home, I wouldn't have met my husband. Anyway, my friend introduced me to Owen and we got on really well. He was only in London for a few days – he's American, you see – and he was supposed to fly back to Boston the following day. But the next morning Owen called me to say that Heathrow airport was closed because of ice and snow. He'd have flown home that day if the weather hadn't been so bad. Anyway, he invited me out for lunch and we got to know each other a bit better. He flew home the next day, but by that time we were already madly in love. We got married two years later – and the rest, as they say, is history.

face2face

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2 Read how three teachers used this listening text at different levels. Match the lesson descriptions with the levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced. Think about what features of the activities helped you to decide on the level.

a 'I told the learners that they're at a party and they overhear Carol. The next day they meet a friend and they want to retell Carol's story. They listened once, then worked with their partner to retell the story. After that, they listened again to see what details they had forgotten. They discussed what aspects of Carol's storytelling style had made certain parts of the story more memorable than others.'

b 'I displayed pictures of the different events in the story, for example a party, a man and a woman meeting, a snowy airport, and a wedding. The learners predicted the order of the events, then listened and checked if they were correct. I played the recording two or three times, letting them discuss the task in pairs between each playing. I then handed out the transcript for them to listen one final time.'

c 'I dictated the following questions:

1 Where did Carol meet her husband?

2 Where is her husband from?

3 Why couldn't he fly home?

4 When did they get married?

Then I played the recording, checked the answers and re-played the bits they were having trouble with. I played the recording another couple of times and asked the learners to pick out phrases that helped Carol to tell her story. Finally, the learners talked in pairs about memorable moments in their lives.

3 Work in groups. Discuss what these tasks suggest about dealing with listening texts at different levels.

E Teaching grammar

1 Work in groups. Discuss how you would expect grammar input to differ between levels.

Consider:

- the type of context used to present the language
- how much is taught
- the complexity of the rules that are given
- the type of practice activities that are used

2 Work in groups. Discuss the aspects of grammar input that you would expect to remain the same at different levels.

3 Compare the two coursebook extracts on the next page. One is taken from a beginner coursebook and the other is taken from an upper-intermediate course book.

- In what ways are the extracts similar?
- In what ways are the extracts different?
- How well do they match what you discussed in activities E1 and E2?

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3 GRAMMAR: Statements with *be going to*

A **Circle the correct answer. Use the sentences in the grammar box to help you.**

1 Use *be going to* to talk about **things you're doing right now** / **future plans**.

2 Make future statements with *be going to* + **a verb** / **a noun**.

Statements with *be going to*

I**'m going to be** home tomorrow.	I**'m not going to be** home tonight.
It**'s going to be** light all night.	It **isn't going to be** light all night.
You**'re going to meet** me at the airport.	My friends **aren't going to go** shopping.
We**'re going to get together** with some of my friends.	They**'re not going to eat** outside this weekend.

B **Complete the sentences with *be going to* and the affirmative or negative form of the verb in parentheses ( ).**

1 I _____ (be) home tomorrow. I have to work at the office.

2 My parents _____ (take) me to lunch on Saturday. They're busy.

3 My friends and I _____ (go) on a trip to Rio next year. We have our tickets!

4 I _____ (study) a lot next week. I have an important test.

5 My friend _____ (meet) me tonight. She's sick.

C PAIR WORK **Change the sentences in exercise 3B so they're true for you. Then compare with a partner.**

I'm not going to be home tomorrow. I have to go to college.

D **Now go to page 137. Look at the grammar chart and do the grammar exercise for 10.1.**

Evolve 1

3 GRAMMAR: Future forms

A **Read the sentences in the grammar box. Circle the correct options to complete the rules.**

Future forms

It **won't cause** you stress but **will give** you a real sense of satisfaction.
Eventually I**'m going to edit** it.
I**'m not showing** it to them until it's done.
In a couple of years, I**'ll be looking for** a job.
This video **is going to be** a useful example of my skills as a filmmaker.
If things go smoothly, I **might start** my own video production business one day.

1 Use *be going to*, *will*, or ***don't*** / ***won't*** for predictions, expectations, or guesses about the future.

2 Use *be going to* or the **present continuous** / **simple present** for future plans and intentions.

3 Use *will* + *be* + verb + *-ing* for **an action in progress** / **a finished action** at a time in the future.

4 Use *might*, *may*, or *could* when you're **certain** / **uncertain** about the future.

B **Now go to page 136. Look at the grammar chart and do the grammar exercise for 8.2.**

C **Write six sentences on plans and predictions about your work, studies, or side projects. Use a different future form from exercise 3A in each sentence. Check your accuracy. Then compare with a partner. Are any of your predictions similar?**

ACCURACY CHECK

Use the future continuous, not the present continuous, for an action in progress in the future.

In a couple of years, ~~I'm~~ looking for a job. ✗
In a couple of years, I'll be looking for a job. ✓

Evolve 5

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KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

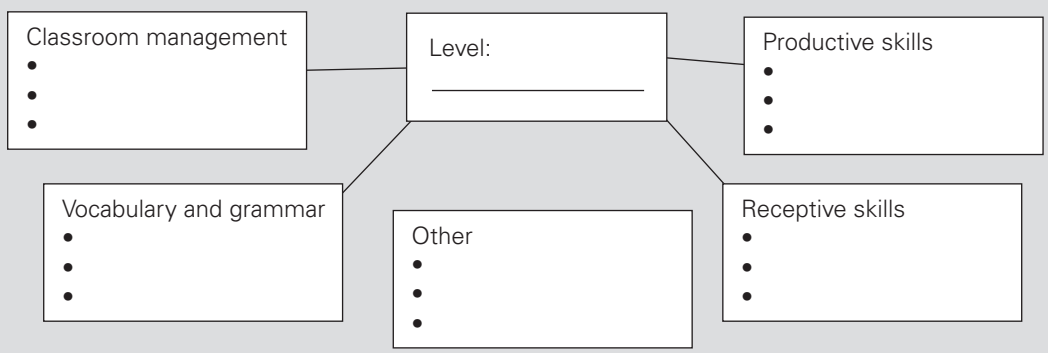
Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *CEFR*
- *beginner, elementary, intermediate, advanced, proficiency*
- *grading language*

REFLECTION

Think about the level you have just been working with on your course. Work with the rest of your teaching practice group and complete the chart below with information which might be useful for your colleagues when they take over the class. Then compare your charts with a partner from another teaching practice group.

Advice for teaching my class



Reference

Council of Europe (2020), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment – Companion volume*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr. p.175

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