Text of the Powerpoint presentation by Michel Candelier:

FREPA – A complement for the CEFR?

Click for each new slide (**1., 2., 3.** …) and when you see **≥**.

1. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to make this presentation today, as a result of much collective work having been done in the previous years.

And I would like to thank the organizers for this very interesting conference

2. Well! What is FREPA?

What is this *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* which has been developed since two thousand and four at the European Center for Modern Languages in Graz?

You will get some insight into

≥ FREPA instruments and principles.

≥ Possible links between FREPA and the CEFR.

≥ Examples of cooperation with member states and other ECML projects.

3. The FREPA provides sets of descriptors which can be used for all languages, including the major language of schooling.

The descriptors cover all levels of instruction. Users have to make their own choice in reference to their learners. Some advice is given for this in the FREPA tools.

≥ In order to discover the reference document, we will start with an immersion into these descriptors, which constitute the core of the FREPA.

I will use screenshots taken from the FREPA Website.

4. What you see now are the main categories of descriptors as far as *Knowledge about language* is concerned.

≥ When you click under one of these main descriptors, you can see all its sub-descriptors.

≥ You may now discover the meaning of the mysterious keys: They indicate to what extent what we call *Pluralistic approaches* – the framework of reference of which the FREPA intends to be – are essential or just useful in order to develop the capacity each descriptor refers to.

I'll tell you more about *Pluralistic approaches* in a few minutes. Now, if I just tell you that these approaches help establishing links between languages or between cultures, you will for sure understand why such approaches can be seen as…

5. …*essential* for developing an element of knowledge like *Knows that each language has its own, partly specific, way of perceiving or organizing reality*..

(Automatic timing) …And that they are only *useful* for helping students to learn *that a language functions differently in its spoken and written forms*.

6. Now I would like to give you a brief overview of the main descriptors in the second part of the *Knowledge* list, which deals with *culture*, …as well as an overview of the two other lists, which have to do with *attitudes* and *skills*.

I do not need to comment them, but I will also present some sub-descriptors which can be regarded as particularly representative for FREPA descriptors.

≥ (under K 10).

7. *The diversity of cultures*…

≥ (under K 12).

8. And now the *attitudes –* : *Attention, ….*

≥ (under A 4). Just one sub-descriptor…

9. *Openness*, *respect*…

10. . *Questionning*, *willingness*…

11. *Readiness to adapt*..…

≥ (under A 15- *Sense of familiarity*) - Again a sub-descriptor.

I will consider how FREPA descriptors deal with *language learning competence* later.

12. We are now proceeding to *skills* – Again we will have to focus on the headings only.

 Can observe or analyze, can recognize or identify….

≥ (under S 3 –*Can compare*). Again a sub-descriptor, as the icing on the cake…

13. *Can use what one knows of a language in order to understand another language or to produce in another language*…

≥ (under S 5).

14. Thus, the FREPA offers a great variety of descriptors referring to knowledge, attitudes and skills which obviously are always involved in some way in using and learning languages, as well as in interacting / learning to interact in situations of contacts between cultures.

Before we try to identify what these descriptors have to do with the CEFR, with its descriptors, and how they could help complementing it, we should first get to know more about their origin.

≥ (under K 12).

15. Let us start with a definition of what we call pluralistic approaches.

The concept of pluralistic approaches refers to didactic approaches which use learning/teaching activities involving several (i.e. more than one) varieties of language or culture

This is a very simple one, referring to what is done when teaching.

As soon as the language taught or the cultural element being introduced are not dealt with in isolation, but with references to linguistic or cultural phenomena pertaining to another linguistic or cultural area, we may speak of a pluralistic approach.

Language teaching methodology has seen the emergence of four pluralistic approaches over the past 40 years. I would like to mention them here - very quickly, because this cannot be the main purpose of my presentation.

≥

One of them is fairly well known, and is still a matter of intensive debates. But all variants of *intercultural approaches* are based on principles advocating the use of phenomena from one or more cultural area(s) as a basis for understanding others from one or more other areas.

16. *Awakening to languages* – also called *Language Awareness* - represents the approach focusing most directly on linguistic (and cultural) diversity as such.

It differs from the other pluralistic approaches insofar as some of the activities relate to languages which schools do not necessarily aim to teach. It is mainly designed to make pupils aware of the diversity of languages and cultures from the very start of their schooling. It enables to develop metalinguistic and

metacognitive skills which are useful for learning, and is a vector for improving the recognition of allophone pupils' specific competences. It may also be used in support of language learning throughout the learning career of each student.

17. In the approach termed *intercomprehension between related languages* the learner works on two or more languages of the same linguistic family (Romance, Germanic, Slavic languages, etc.) in parallel – one of these languages being the learner's mother tongue, the language of education, or another language learnt previously.

In this approach there is a systematic focus on receptive skills, as the development of comprehension is the most tangible way of using the knowledge and skills of a related language to learn a new one.

18. The *integrated didactic approach to languages studied* is directed towards helping learners to establish links between a limited number of languages - those which are taught within the school curriculum - not forgetting the major language of schooling.

In the last decade, one of the main domains for this approach has been that of teaching German after English as foreign languages. But indeed, this should be done for all languages taught, making of the integrated didactic approach a governing principle for establishing curricula.

19. We can now answer the question about where all these descriptors come from.

≥

The starting point for these lists was a systematic analysis of around a hundred publications within the field of pluralistic approaches, from which we collated extracts describing plurilingual and intercultural competences. These extracts

have been synthesized and some additions have been made to fill in obvious gaps.

Some words about the status of the elements which are included in these lists.

20. .We understand them as *resources* – to be more exact *internal resources* - according to a model of *competence* we have taken from recent developments within the fields of learning psychology and educational Sciences.

In the FREPA, *competences* are seen as units of a certain complexity, implicating the individual as a whole, and linked to socially relevant tasks in the context of which they are activated.

They call upon,

- ≥ on one side, different *resources* which may be either internal (knowledge elements, attitudes, skills) or external (a dictionary, a text book, the help other people can provide…)
- ≥ on the other side the ability to select the right resources for the task which has to be performed.

21. The FREPA also presents a table of the competences which Pluralistic Approaches seem to be more specifically able to develop.

Due to a lack of time, I would just like to indicate the two overarching competences.

- ≥ C1 -Competence in managing linguistic and cultural communication in a context of otherness.
- ≥ C2 –Competence in the construction and broadening of a plural linguistic and cultural repertoire.

This second global competence corresponds to what is more often referred to with the terms *Language learning competence*

22. . Pluralistic approaches appear to develop a great amount of resources which contribute to this Language learning competence. They are systematically presented in the FREPA lists of descriptors, at the end of each category of resources (knowledge, attitudes, skills).

23.

…

The FREPA Website provides two more instruments which can play an important role for implementing pluralistic approaches: a *database* with online teaching materials and a *training kit* for teachers

24. The online *teaching materials database* offers activities in different languages.

These activities fall within the scope of the four pluralistic approaches. All the materials proposed refer explicitly to the resource descriptors and can be selected according to these descriptors - and, additionally, to other criteria like school level.

25. The online self learning kit is available for teachers and teacher trainers who wish to train in pluralistic approaches and in the use of FREPA materials.

The materials can also be used by trainers to prepare their training sessions.

26. We are now proceeding to the second part of this presentation, which deals with FREPA as a possible complement to the CEFR.

By *complement* we understand on the one hand that FREPA shares some common features with the CEFR, and on the other hand that FREPA offers some contents which have not been developed - or not so much developed - by the CEFR.

27. The most important common feature between the two instruments is the very strong link which can be established between the concept of *plurilingual and pluricultural competence* as it appears in Chapter 8 of the CEFR and the general principle *pluralistic approaches* are based on.

≥ As you know, *plurilingual and pluricultural competence* is said to be not *a collection of distinct and separate competences to communicate depending on the languages* [the user] *knows, but a plurilingual and pluricultural competence encompassing the full range of the languages available to the learner*.

≥ The consequences for teaching are clearly summarized in the *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe* (published for the first time as soon as 2003) :

Managing the repertoire means that the varieties of which it is composed are not dealt with in isolation; instead, although distinct from each other, that they are treated as a single competence available to the social agent concerned. (Council of Europe 2007, 67)

≥ How can you treat plurilingual and pluricultural / intercultural competence as a single competence, how can you help students to link languages to one another if you don't deal with more than one language simultaneously in your classroom activities!

And this is precisely the definition of pluralistic approaches.

28. The FREPA team has been informed of the first reflections having taken place since last spring in Strasbourg and Graz about complementing the CEFR in some domains in order to allow it to better respond to the challenges it has to face.

≥ FREPA would be perfectly suited for strengthening the plurilingual and intercultural aspects of the CEFR, for example for establishing sets of descriptors for plurilingual and intercultural competences.

≥ FREPA could also be adapted into a tool helping to develop language learning competences

≥ and it could be used as a basis for a reference tool for teachers' competences.

We are fully aware that this is difficult work, because the FREPA descriptors have not been designed as evaluation tools, but as support for the conception and implementation of teaching/learning as such. This has to be a collaborative work with other researchers and the team has expressed willingness to meet the challenge.

The ECML has invited the FREPA team to think about the possibility to work concretely with another ECML project, the RELANG project, which has been presented this morning by Jose Noijons. Of course, a very challenging demand!

We have been asked whether it would be possible to select FREPA descriptors which could complement the CEFR descriptors already used by RELANG in the domains of reception, interaction, production and mediation.

This reflexion has just started and it isn't possible to give even first results.

29. .. But it may be worth mentioning the work that some team members have undertaken in this context:…

… Locating within the CEFR - in a much more systematic way than before - elements that can be linked directly to the FREPA, and determining how these parts of the CEFR and the FREPA descriptors are related. I will just give two examples:

- - **≥** CEFR lists, which are not given as descriptors, but whose content is very close, or even identical to FREPA descriptors. This is the case in chapter *5.1 – General competences*, for example for section *5.1.3 Existential competence (savoir-être).*

- -≥ Some descriptors in the CEFR seem to be at the same description level than FREPA descriptors, as in the CEFR they are given as an attempt to describe the component**s** of communicative competence. For example the transversal items in the scale *IDENTIFYING CUES AND INFERRING (Spoken & Written), 4.4.2.4 – Reception strategies.*

≥ We do think this is preparatory work which complements, at a micro level, the delineation of potential FREPA applications, which has been mentioned before, and is situated at a macro level.

---

30. I would like to conclude with a few words concerning the dissemination of the ideas and instruments of the FREPA.

31. Since 2012 the emphasis has been placed for FREPA on so called *mediation* activities.

According to our understanding of this term in this context, we have found it necessary not only to adapt the content of our training events to "local" needs…

32. … but also to create so called country pages in the language(s) of the country.

33. FREPA is now participating in the new activity format of the ECML called *Training and consultancy*.

For 2014, eight countries have expressed the wish to collaborate with the FREPA team on training sessions or/and on consultancy at a policy level.

A form of dissemination ways we have used since 2012 – on the advice of the ECML –is to collaborate with other ECML projects.

Two cases are of particular interest in regard to the matters we are dealing with in our conference, because they both imply that we think about using FREPA descriptors as a basis for self assessment descriptors.

34. As we have shown during a recent *EPOSTEL* conference in Graz, self assessment descriptors adapted from the FREPA could be integrated in different ways into a self assessment tool for Student teachers.

≥ -trough subdividing already existing "competences" with reference to FREPA descriptors

≥ -adding competences to some sections or

≥ adding a new category *Plurilingual and Intercultural education* as a whole.

We presume that these three possibilities will appear wherever we very concretely try to add CARAP dimensions to exiting assessment or self assessment tools.

35. In the second case – the collaboration with the *EPOS Portfolio* on line - the most important challenge we experience is that of re-wording.

We are trying to develop a prototype for children at primary school age. With the help of their parents, the children would use the portfolio for their self assessment …

≥ …and could improve their knowledge, attitudes and skills regarding languages and cultures by using *Awakening to language* activities on line.

≥ In order to formulate the self assessment descriptors, we have chosen some of the FREPA descriptors pertaining to the domain we wanted to deal with, and we were happy to observe that it was not that difficult to put them into words which could be understood by the addressees.

36. Finally, I would like to take one of the many results we have collected from the survey we propose at the end of our training sessions.

In most countries very few participants answer "no" to the question whether they intend to make use of the pluralistic approaches / the FREPA in the future. In some cases, none of the participants do. Generally, two thirds of them answer "yes", and the rest "perhaps".

A great majority of them – depending on the country – are already using the CEFR.

For sure, they are aware of some differences between both instruments, but they perceive them as complementary and would need, in order to feel secure, what researchers have not provided them with till now: an explicit articulation between both tools, at a theoretical and a practical level as well.

37. Thank you very much for your attention!