



**Drama in the Margins? The Common European  
Framework of Reference and its Implications for Drama  
Pedagogy in the Foreign Language Classroom**

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## **DRAMA IN THE MARGINS?**

### **The Common European Framework of Reference and its Implications for Drama Pedagogy in the Foreign Language Classroom**

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This article examines possible implications of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF) for the fields of language learning and teaching, focusing on the potential role of drama pedagogy. The introductory part focuses on the role of drama pedagogy in language teaching, followed by a brief outline of the main objectives of the CEF and the standards it sets for language learning. The following section discusses some of the underlying assumptions of the CEF regarding language learning and teaching. I argue that the predominant focus in the CEF on pragmatic and strategic components of language learning and its 'output-orientedness' may pose a problem for language educators who conceive of language learning as a personal experience which cannot adequately be conceptualised in terms of scaled competences and strategic behaviours, and which may often lead to rather unforeseeable results. Subsequently, I discuss potential impacts of the CEF on the role of drama pedagogy in the foreign language classroom. Since the use of drama techniques may be considerably reduced and marginalised within a framework of standardised objectives and descriptors of language competences, I conclude that it is paramount for language educators to take subjective and aesthetic dimensions of language learning seriously. They should therefore be given a major role in the language classroom, and not consigned to the margins.

#### **0. Introduction**

Drama pedagogy has been increasingly influential in foreign language education in recent years. Although it is anything but a pedagogic novelty, its importance in foreign language education has considerably grown within the past two decades. In the field of German as a Foreign Language, for example, the use of drama is no longer seen as an extracurricular alternative method only, but many scholars promote drama as an integral part of language classrooms (e.g. Even 2003; Huber 2003; Schewe 1993; Schlemminger et al. 2000). According to such views, language learning cannot adequately be conceptualised as a process of accumulating 'linguistic formulae' (i.e. grammar and vocabulary which may eventually lead to native-like performance), but it should more appropriately be conceptualised as a very personal process that involves aesthetic, emotional and

intercultural dimensions and that ought to be considered an identity-related phenomenon (Schwerdtfeger 2000). Hence, there have emerged many critical views of traditional communicative language classrooms, since the latter often appear to be based mainly on the assumption that language is a “fixed system of formal structures and universal speech functions, a neutral conduit for the transmission of cultural knowledge” (Kramsch 1996: 6).

Taking a more comprehensive view of language and language learning as a starting point that acknowledges the fact that language learning is neither a linear process of knowledge accumulation nor a matter of merely acquiring an additional linguistic system therefore calls for different teaching methods as well. Drama pedagogy can in many respects help students to experience language use and language learning as very personal processes which call traditional boundaries of self and other into question and which may thus often lead to a heightened sensitivity and reflexivity of language, cultures, and selves. One important reason for this is the fact that “drama improves role taking, which is comprehending and correctly inferring attributes of another person. These inferences, which include another’s thinking, attitudes, and emotions, are a function of cognitive perception [...]. Growth in cognition is dependent on growth in role taking” (Wagner 2002: 6).

However, although drama is thus gaining increasing recognition in the fields of language learning and teaching, one can hardly ignore the fact that there are other, more powerful discourses in the current ‘globalised’ world of language learning that are quite different in focus. In what follows, I will consider the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” published by the Council of Europe, which aims at setting standards for European language programmes. Which views of language and language learning does it provide, what role do intercultural and aesthetic dimensions of language and language learning play in this document, and to what extent does it help promote drama pedagogy?

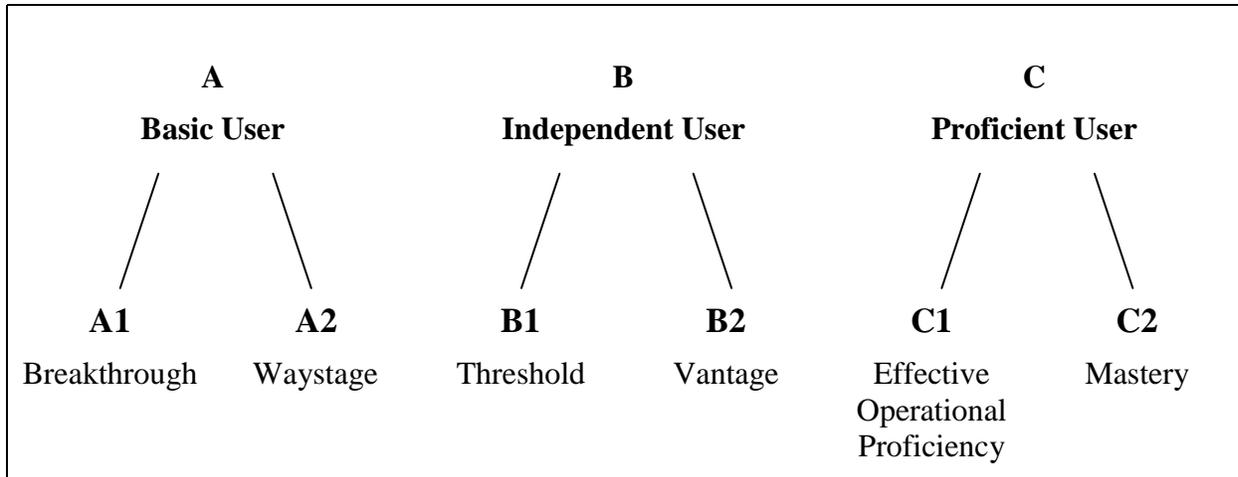
## **1. Aims and objectives of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages**

Facilitating communication across national boundaries is one of the most important aims of the EU. Developing a common European basis for the field of language learning has therefore been a central aim of the Council of Europe for the past decades. One of the most important results is now available: *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEF). Published in 2001, it immediately became one of the most important documents in the fields of language learning and teaching in Europe. Its basic aims and objectives are stated in the opening paragraphs:

The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively (...). The provision of objective criteria for describing language proficiency will facilitate the mutual recognition of qualifications gained in different learning contexts, and accordingly will aid European mobility. (Council of Europe 2001: 1)

These lines clearly reflect the political dimension of the CEF: it seeks to help overcome barriers all too familiar to everybody involved in international exchange programmes. Most certainly, any attempt to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications in the field of languages is well worth an effort. Yet, trying to find a common ground for a complex field such as language competences that is potentially acceptable to all parties involved in Europe is likely to turn out to be quite a difficult, if not an impossible endeavour. This may be the reason why the authors of the CEF mention the “objective”, hence “neutral” criteria they have developed in order to describe language proficiency: they seek to offer criteria that do not clash with subjective, political, cultural or ideological views of the various EU-members (curriculum designers, language teachers, textbook authors, etc.).

The fundamental aim of the CEF, as suggested in the passage quoted above, is therefore not to provide materials or methods to be chosen in European language programmes, but to conceptualize learning objectives that may serve as a common framework of reference for language teaching, learning and assessment in Europe. To that end, it sets out to establish a descriptive scheme of competences and proficiency levels that help identify learners' progress:



**Figure 1:** Common reference levels (Council of Europe 2001: 23)

The three levels A, B and C correspond to basic, intermediate and advanced levels, while their breakdown into six different levels of competence results in the following general scale:

<b>Proficient User</b>	<b>C2</b>	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	<b>C1</b>	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself 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, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
<b>Independent User</b>	<b>B2</b>	Can understand the main idea of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for 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.

	<b>B1</b>	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.
<b>Basic User</b>	<b>A2</b>	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). 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 his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	<b>A1</b>	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows, and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

**Table 1:** General scale (Council of Europe 2001: 24)

These overall descriptions are broken down into a broad range of additional scales to conceptualize different language competences as precisely as possible. The CEF offers various scales that describe the six levels of proficiency in particular areas of language learning, pertaining both to language skills and to strategic competences. In total, the CEF comprises 55 scales, ranging from oral production (plus subscales), written production (plus subscales), production strategies (several scales), overall listening comprehension (plus subscales), overall reading comprehension (plus subscales), watching TV and film, reception strategies (several scales), overall spoken interaction (plus subscales), overall written interaction (plus subscales), interaction strategies (several scales), note-taking, processing text, etc.

Thus, the Framework offers quite a tight net of descriptions of language competences (can-do descriptors) in a remarkably detailed way. It clearly sets the stage for a new era of standardisation with respect to language learning achievement.

For teachers, learners, textbook authors, curriculum designers, etc. it may provide a basis to spell out particular aims and objectives of a language course as clearly as possible, allowing

them to differentiate between several domains (i.e. language for the workplace, language for personal domains, education etc.) or between different areas of specialization (i.e. spoken rather than written discourse, etc.)<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the CEF may help learners (and others) to spell out learning objectives and to describe individual proficiency profiles quite precisely.

These profiles, however, will reflect learners' proficiency *only* with respect to the competences mentioned in the scales provided in the CEF. That is why it is crucial to take a closer look at the views of language and language learning underlying the Framework.

## 2. Language learning objectives and their underlying assumptions about language learning

The view of language learning which the CEF is based on is revealed in the opening chapter:

Language use, embracing language learning, comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and as social agents develop a range of **competences**, both **general** and in particular **communicative language competences**. They draw on the competences at their disposal in various contexts under various **conditions** and under various **constraints** to engage in **language activities** involving language processes to produce and/or receive **texts** in relation to **themes** in specific **domains**, activating those **strategies** which seem most appropriate for carrying out the **tasks** to be accomplished. The monitoring of these actions by the participants leads to the reinforcement or modification of their competences (Council of Europe 2001: 9; original emphasis).

Evidently, language is conceptualised with respect to its social functions, hence learning processes are assumed to be based on general competences and communicative language competences. The theoretical framework adopted clearly draws on pragmatic and

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<sup>1</sup> Additionally, it may in many respects offer learners a basis for differentiated self-assessment, since the tables and scales can serve as self-assessment grids (e.g. Council of Europe 2001: 26f). Self-assessment is one important objective of the *European Language Portfolio* (ibid. 20), enabling learners to get quite a detailed picture of their language competences and, consequently, to learn more about what they *can do* in a second or foreign language (as opposed to the type of assessment they are often accustomed to: a summary of what they lack and *cannot do*). For example, they may be at level C1 in understanding conversation between native speakers, B2 in listening as a member of a live audience, C1 in listening to announcements and instructions, B1 in reading instructions, B1 in reading for information and argument and so forth.

communicative approaches to language learning and use. The mentioning of “language activities”, “strategies” and “tasks” further clarifies the authors’ view of language learning and teaching, as the CEF clearly subscribes to task-based approaches<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, the authors of the CEF insist that the framework is not intended to be normative or even suggestive regarding theoretical conceptions of learning/acquisition processes and teaching methodology.

The role of the framework in respect of language acquisition, learning and teaching must however be made clear once more. In accordance with the basic principles of pluralist democracy, the Framework aims to be not only comprehensive, transparent and coherent, but also open, dynamic and non-dogmatic. For that reason 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 (Council of Europe 2001: 18).

Clearly, the authors want to avoid getting involved in current disputes about the psychological, social and cultural aspects of language learning. Whilst this ‘neutral’ stance allows them to escape controversial arguments on the nature of language learning, it also causes them to remain very vague on methodological aspects of language learning and teaching:

In general, how are learners expected to learn a second or foreign language (L2)? Is it in one or more of the following ways?

- a) by direct exposure to authentic use of language in L2 (...)
- b) by direct exposure to specially selected (...) spoken utterances and written texts in L2 (‘intelligible input’)
- c) by direct participation in authentic communicative interaction in L2 (...)
- d) by direct participation in specially devised and constructed tasks in L2 (‘comprehensible output’)

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<sup>2</sup> The following passage explains this in more detail: “Communication and learning involve the performance of **tasks** which are not solely language tasks even though they involve language activities and make demands upon the individual’s communicative competence. To the extent that these tasks are neither routine nor automatic, they require the use of strategies in communicating and learning. In so far as carrying out these tasks involves language activities, they necessitate the processing (through reception, production, interaction or mediation) of oral or written **texts**” (Council of Europe 2001: 15; original emphasis).

- e) autodidactically, by (guided) self-study (...)
- f) by a combination of presentations, explanations, (drill) exercises and exploitation activities, but with L1 as the language of classroom management, explanation, etc.
- g) by a combination of activities as in f), but using L2 only for all classroom purposes
- h) by some combination of the above activities (...)
- i) by combining the above with group and individual planning (...)

Users of the framework may wish to consider and state which approaches, in general, they follow, whether one of the above, or some other (Council of Europe 2001: 143).

This list is arguably very ‘neutral’. Many of the suggestions listed have repeatedly proven to be less successful than others, a fact that is glossed over due to their presentation in a multiple-choice manner, suggesting that these methodological options are equally useful and effective. The options listed may therefore serve to rehabilitate rather traditional concepts of classroom language learning (Quetz 2001). Hence, although the options may appear to reflect a “pluralist democracy” with respect to teaching methods, their equality could be seriously questioned on the basis of research into language learning and teaching methodology.

### **3. Potential impact of the CEF on language learning and teaching**

While it would undoubtedly be helpful to have a common European framework for languages, the actual set-up and implementation of such a document is inherently problematic. Not only is it likely not to be neutral enough to satisfy various European teachers, learners, textbook authors, curriculum planners, researchers etc., but such a framework will also be an immensely powerful instrument that may have a profound influence on language policies and programmes throughout Europe (and beyond). Thus, there are several questions arising from the CEF that need further discussion with respect to their potential impact on language learning and teaching<sup>3</sup>, three of which I will briefly discuss in the following because of their immediate relevance to drama pedagogy.

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<sup>3</sup> For a very controversial discussion of the Common European Framework see also the volume edited by Bausch et al. (2003), a collection of papers on the CEF and its potential implications for institutionalised language learning by German foreign language researchers.

### 3.1 Objectivity of objective criteria

The scales and descriptors reflect a view of communication and language learning/language use that is severely limited. Language is assumed to be a more or less neutral means of communication (for a more detailed account of this point see, for example, Barkowski 2003; Schwerdtfeger 2003). The intercultural domain is left out at the level of descriptions (and, hence, at the level of concrete language learning objectives and competences to be derived from the CEF). Evidently, the concept of language proficiency underlying the CEF is that of an entity which can be broken down into measurable units.

This point will have implications for drama pedagogy as well as for comprehensive language/culture/literature programmes in general, since affective, aesthetic, intentional, intercultural, etc. dimensions of language, communication and language learning are largely ignored. This may be related to the view of communicative competences as based on “objective” criteria underlying the CEF. It is hard to imagine that one could and should develop a scale on, say ‘empathy’, ‘role-taking’ or ‘stereotype alertness’, etc. What could a can-do descriptor of empathy at the A1-level look like? Or how could one formulate a descriptor of ‘stereotype-alertness’ at the level B2, or a descriptor of ‘role-taking’ at A2, etc.? Obviously, the “objective” criteria of the framework do not allow for an inclusion of cultural, aesthetic, emotional or critical aspects, which is itself an indicator that what appears to be neutral may be less so. As soon as one takes a closer look at what is included and what is excluded from the CEF, the asserted objectivity can be seriously questioned.

### 3.2 The tension between descriptive and normative dimensions of the CEF

Another important point to be considered is a problem I will call the normativity-problem. Although the Framework offers can-do descriptors, the descriptors in question and their underlying concepts of language learning are inherently normative. It is tempting to re-interpret can-do descriptors in terms of learning objectives, hence ‘can-do-norms’<sup>4</sup>. Once

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<sup>4</sup> This is what is currently happening in many language learning and teaching contexts: textbooks for German as a foreign language, for example, have rapidly redesigned their covers and added a few passages which identify the level of competence that learners will achieve when using a

the descriptors have turned into language learning objectives or standards, however, they are likely to dominate language classes in ways that its authors may not have intended. This point is particularly important with respect to drama pedagogy, intercultural learning or critical reflexivity<sup>5</sup>, for these dimensions may be entirely neglected in language courses and curricula that are based on the CEF and that are designed to make learners reach the competences required at a certain level. The normativity-problem, therefore, may result in considerable reductions of language curricula, which – alongside the fact that the authors of the CEF remain silent on teaching methodology – may lead to a serious pedagogical backlash, both in terms of methodological diversity and in the contents of language programmes. This, in turn, is likely to have serious implications for the use (or lack of use) of drama in language education. Drama pedagogy may therefore be consigned to the margins.

### **3.3 Instrumental view of language, communication and language learning**

The focus on learning objectives leads to strongly output-oriented, instrumental views of communication, language and language learning through interaction. As the underlying concept of communication is based on strategic behaviour, important dimensions of communicative events are left out. As Lothar Bredella (2003: 45ff) has pointed out, communication with persons requires at least an interest in the other person's view and her or his interests, intentions, feelings, etc., while the view of communication as outlined in the CEF is purely instrumentalist, reducing communicative behaviour to strategic actions. It

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particular textbook. The levels themselves, therefore, remain global, e.g. textbook x announces that it will lead to level B1, without any differentiation between different areas of learning, skills and potential sub-competences (Bausch 2003). This indicates that the can-do descriptors seem to have triggered the belief that the Framework sets standards for language learning that have to be achieved within a language course. As a result, the descriptors serve as norms against which language performance can be measured rather than as helpful descriptions of what a learner can already do in a second or foreign language (for an example of immediate implementation of the CEF to language programmes see also Kirchner 2002).

<sup>5</sup> Due to space constraints, I have to limit the discussion to drama pedagogy. However, apart from possible implications for drama pedagogy, this point would, of course, be worth investigating with respect to other domains related to language and culture in foreign language education as well.

is indeed very telling that the example chosen to illustrate communicative learning tasks and strategies in the CEF is ‘moving a wardrobe’:

The overall approach outlined above is distinctly action-oriented. It is centred on the relationship between, on the one hand, the agents’ use of strategies linked to their competences and how they perceive or imagine the situation to be and on the other, the task or tasks to be accomplished in a specific context under particular conditions. Thus someone who has to move a wardrobe (task) may try to push it, take it to pieces so as to carry it more easily and then reassemble it, call on outside labour or give up and convince himself or herself that it can wait till tomorrow, etc. (all strategies). (Council of Europe 2001: 15)

Apart from the fact that the ‘moving-wardrobes-strategies’ mentioned can barely be considered communicative, the example itself uncovers a thoroughly instrumental and one-dimensional nature of language and communication underlying the CEF.

#### **4. The role of drama pedagogy**

Let us finally turn to the role of drama pedagogy as outlined in – or rather as implied by – the CEF. As indicated in the previous sections, the CEF does not particularly focus on language learning as a personal and emotional, identity-related intercultural experience that may enable persons to discover new and alternative perspectives, new senses of self, etc. The CEF is strongly directed towards language learning ‘output’, i.e. competences, whilst it does not offer concomitant reflection on processes and appropriate teaching methods, i.e. how to help students achieve the objectives set – apart from the repeated explanation that such processes are strategy-induced. Since elements of drama in language education as outlined by many authors (see, for example, the articles of Blankemeyer; Even; Huber in this issue) and their potential aid in language learning processes cannot be conceptualised in terms of strategic behaviour, drama elements appear to be barely compatible with the CEF.

The fact that drama often brings about rather surprising results is thoroughly at odds with any approach to language learning that is predominantly output-oriented. In fact, it would be utterly ironic if a language teacher were to embark on spontaneous improvisation projects in class, whilst having in mind that by the end of the lesson or the sequence, students will be able to e.g. “use simple everyday forms of greeting and address” etc. (A2

in conversation). It is precisely the open-endedness and non-predictability of processes and experiences which characterise ‘dramatic language classrooms’. Determining ‘communicative outcomes’ and operationalising aims and objectives *first*, however, is likely to result in a potentially ‘undramatic language classroom’.

In the light of these thoughts, however, it is remarkable that the CEF does include a brief section dealing with “aesthetic uses of language”, and even though this passage is not referred to in the heart of the CEF, the competence-scales, it is noteworthy that the authors have indeed included it in the chapter on “Communicative tasks and purposes”:

#### Aesthetic uses of language

Imaginative and artistic uses of language are important both educationally and in their own right. Aesthetic activities may be productive, receptive, interactive or mediating (...), and may be oral or written. They include such activities as:

- Singing (nursery rhymes, folk songs, pop songs, etc.)
- Retelling and rewriting stories, etc.
- Listening to, reading, writing and speaking imaginative texts (stories, rhymes, etc.) including audio-visual texts, cartoons, picture stories, etc.
- Performing scripted or unscripted plays, etc.
- The production, reception and performance of literary texts, e.g.: reading and writing texts (short stories, novels, poetry, etc.) and performing and watching/listening to recitals, drama, opera, etc. (Council of Europe 2001: 56)

Although this passage may assign drama pedagogy an implicit role in language learning programmes, the passage remains rather cloudy. Given the fact that this is the only section in the CEF that deals with aesthetic uses of language (which could, of course, only be the beginning of a reflection on the potential role of aesthetics in language learning), its significance is obvious, for it is rather short and very general. With respect to drama pedagogy, it is impossible to generate arguments from the CEF that would help us promote the use of drama in the language classroom. Drama is mentioned only with respect to potential literary classics to be read in class – which may be performed as well. In addition to this, the passage suggests performing scripted and unscripted plays. No mention is made of possible contexts into which such activities could be incorporated. Are such performed plays simply to be added to ‘ordinary’ language classes? Or are they to be integrated into

literature classes? And if so, why and how? Since the CEF does not include competence scales on e.g. aesthetic dimensions of language, literature or culture, and since these dimensions would, in any case, be thoroughly at odds with communicative output-orientedness, the above section seems an isolated adjunct to the CEF – *in the margins*.

It is followed by a commentary that deserves further attention:

This summary treatment of what has traditionally been a major, often dominant, aspect of modern language studies in upper secondary and higher education may appear dismissive. It is not intended to be so. National and regional literatures make a major contribution to the European cultural heritage, which the Council of Europe sees as ‘a more valuable common resource to be protected and developed’. Literary studies serve many more educational purposes – intellectual, moral and emotional, linguistic and cultural – than purely aesthetic. It is much to be hoped that teachers of literature at all levels may find many sections of the Framework relevant to their concerns and useful in making their aims and methods more transparent.

Users of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state:

- which (...) aesthetic uses of language the learner will need/be required to make. (Council of Europe 2001: 56)

In this commentary, we are confronted with a very reduced view of aesthetics: basically, aesthetic products are limited to literature, which in turn is conceptualised as part of European cultural heritage. This view of literature as something one has to preserve (cultural products as ‘high culture’) is rather at odds with other potential roles aesthetic uses of language (including literature) could play in language classrooms. For example, a view of literature as something which triggers processes of identification, dialogue, identity constructions, self-reflection etc. requires a much more detailed reflection on language, language learning and its interrelatedness with personal, social and cultural dimensions.

Apart from that, the final sentence of the above passage, which is addressed to users of the CEF, refers only to “which aesthetic uses of language learners will need”. No other ‘pragmatic’ function of aesthetic uses of language in language learning processes is mentioned. Yet a ‘learner-needs-analysis’ with respect to the potential use of aesthetic language seems to me to be thoroughly inappropriate. This phrasing suggests that dealing with aesthetic uses of language is relevant only to those students who are going to be poets

or actors. Clearly, there is much more to think about when it comes to aesthetics and language learning – both on the part of literature teachers and of language teachers.

In asserting that literature is indeed an important part of European cultural heritage, the authors mainly seem to pay mere lip service to all those who insist on integrating aesthetic dimensions (not to be limited to “literature”) into modern language courses. The crucial question as to how and why ‘dealing with literary texts and cultural heritage in general’ may be integrated into European language learning contexts is not addressed.

## **5. Conclusion**

In a special issue on drama pedagogy in language education, it is particularly odd to conclude that we have to face the fact that educational drama is not mentioned in the most important document on European language policy. Moreover, the CEF does not encourage teachers to use drama techniques, let alone drama pedagogy, as a principle of language learning and teaching. In fact, the instrumentalist view of language and language learning processes may prevent textbook authors, curriculum designers, teachers, etc. from taking drama pedagogy more seriously and seeking to integrate drama into language programmes and materials. Hence, the CEF might encourage what Schewe (1993) has termed “undramatic dialogues”, the kind of dialogue prevalent in many communicative language classrooms, textbooks and other materials, often depicted as a pseudo-communicative event in which ‘students talk a lot but have little to say’.

Dramatic dialogues, on the other hand, would be characteristic of a classroom which allows students and teachers to interact in different ways. The potential roles and positions available to learners and teachers can be considerably enhanced in a drama classroom, a point that has repeatedly been made with respect to drama and its role in developing communicative competence (Schewe 1993; Huber 2003), in intercultural awareness (Axtmann 2002; Fels & McGivern 2002) or in critical pedagogy (Doyle 1994; Kao & O’Neill 1998).

The CEF does not provide for a framework that helps strengthen personal, aesthetic, interpersonal and intercultural dimensions as well as critical reflections on these in language learning environments. As Wagner (2002: 5) reminds us:

When a person learns another language, something is “undergone”. We “undergo” when we allow our encounters to modify our established conceptions. When we undergo an experience, we ultimately have to change ourselves and our way of looking at the world. This is what true learning is – a modification of our very selves. No instructional strategy is any more powerful than drama-based education for creating situations in which students undergo an experience that has the potential of modifying them as persons.

Similarly, Schewe (2002: 89) argues that if students are to become “potential mediators between cultures”, drama concepts of teaching and learning foreign languages are essential: “Foreign- and second-language education, after all, consists of more than learning how to speak, listen, read, and write”. Accordingly, he suggests that “in Europe, [...] language teaching and learning needs to be seen within a broader context of an ‘Education for Citizenship’” – a central goal of which is to use language in order to, in Wringe’s words, get “access to knowledge at social, cultural, administrative and political levels and participate actively in transnational concerns” (Wringe 1996: 77; cf. Schewe 2002: 89).

Reformulating the aims of European language policy in this way would bring them closer to what Kramersch (1998: 27) has termed the ideal of the “intercultural speaker”, who is able to operate “on the border between several languages or language varieties, manoeuvring his/her way through the troubled waters of cross-cultural misunderstandings”.

To that end, teachers, researchers, curriculum designers, etc. will have to co-operate and develop scenarios and more comprehensive common frameworks so as to pave the way for establishing alternative views of language learning, which ought to be less ‘pragmatic’ and ‘instrumental’ but which may help learners to become truly intercultural mediators.

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