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Teaching and Assessing Plurilingually Using the CEFR: Towards Linguistically Inclusive Additional Language Instruction

John Wayne N. dela Cruz
McGill University

Abstract

Plurilingualism puts forth a theoretical-pedagogical framework for additional language (AL) instruction that is linguistically inclusive and culturally responsive. Despite increasing multilingualism and multiculturalism in Canada, however, official and de facto monolingual policies persist—both in societal and educational settings—and continue to promote outdated target language-only instructional methods. It is therefore unsurprising that AL educators often express feeling unprepared to teach multilingual and multicultural learners. To help teachers address this gap among theory, practice, and policy in the AL classroom, I propose a linguistically inclusive, action-oriented, plurilingual approach to AL task design and assessment. Drawing from the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for languages, I outline how (1) to use specific CEFR “Can-do” descriptors (2) to design or adapt specific language tasks, and (3) to then assess student task performance accordingly afterwards. I conclude with implications with regards to critically employing plurilingual instruction to foster linguistically inclusive Canadian AL education.

Following trends of increasing superdiversification around the globe (Blommaert, 2010), Canada's multilingualism has been steadily increasing over the years beyond its official English and French languages (Statistics Canada, 2016; 2019). In major Canadian cities, multilingualism has been increasingly becoming the norm in both school (Lyster & Lapkin, 2007) and societal settings (e.g., Galante & dela Cruz, 2021). Yet, monolingual instruction and policies persist in mainstream Canadian additional language (AL) education (e.g., Guo, 2013; Haque, 2012; Sterzuk, 2015) despite research showing that target language-only approaches provide no measurable long-term benefits for AL learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2020).

An emergent alternative approach is plurilingualism, a theoretical-pedagogical framework for AL instruction that emphasizes the interconnection of languages and cultures in learners' linguistic repertoire (Marshall & Moore, 2018). However, given persisting monolingual approaches to AL classroom practice and policy, teachers across Canada tend to express unreadiness to tackle multilingualism in the classroom, citing their lack of training as well as paucity of guiding resources and materials (Blandford et al., 2019; Boisvert et al., 2020; Chung & dela Cruz, in press; Dault & Collins, 2016; Mujawamariya & Marhouse, 2006; Piccardo, 2013; Querrien, 2017; see also Galante et al., 2022). Hence, implementation of inclusive plurilingual pedagogies remains a challenge in Canadian AL education (Kubota, 2020; Kubota & Bale, 2020; Kubota & Miller, 2017).

To help address this challenge, I propose a plurilingual approach to AL task design and assessment. I begin by outlining my positionality as AL teacher and researcher, which informs the plurilingual lens I adopt in this paper. Then, I review relevant literature that pertains to inclusion, language policy, and plurilingualism. Next, I provide an overview of the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) for languages. Finally, using my own sample task and rubrics, I outline (1) how to use specific CEFR "Can-do" descriptors and plurilingual strategies (2) to design or adapt a specific language task, and (3) to assess AL learners' task performance afterwards. I conclude with implications regarding plurilingually inclusive AL education.

POSITIONALITY

I am a Filipino-Canadian teacher and researcher of English as an Additional Language (EAL). As well, I am a plurilingual: I speak Tagalog as my first language (L1), Ilocano and Kapampangan as heritage languages (HLs), and I learned English and French as ALs. As a racialized and linguistically minoritized immigrant, my lived experiences pertaining to language learning and use inform my critical stance towards AL education and research. That is, I view language (use), and by extension AL teaching and learning, as intricately embedded in issues of social discrimination, (in)justice, and (in)equity (Pennycook, 2021; 2022). As an applied linguist, I recognize and insist on the role of applied linguistics theory and research in the ongoing struggle for social justice and inclusion (Charity-Hudley & Flores, 2022; Motha, 2020). Hence, my use of 'additional' instead of 'second' in AL is intentional: I echo calls from scholars in applied linguistics and the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for a more inclusive, just, and accurate AL research praxis (Anderson, 2022; Block, 2003; Douglas Fir Group, 2016). My goal in this paper is to draw from applied linguistics literature to help foster inclusivity in AL classrooms by identifying barriers that limit learners' participation and achievement in the classroom, in order to help eliminate forms of discrimination in their learning environment (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017) that pertain to language use, assessment, and policing.

LANGUAGE POLICY AND INCLUSION IN AL CLASSROOMS

UNESCO (2017) defines inclusion in education as recognizing impediments to learning, and removing them not only from the curricula, but more importantly from daily teaching practices. In AL education, linguistic inclusion can be a challenge due to persisting target language-only approaches to instruction and assessment (Kubota, 2020). Such monolingual approaches draw from native speaker ideologies in SLA (Block, 2003), which views AL learners as deficient versions of the idealized monolingual native speaker (Cook, 1999; 2016). Such native speakerism is often reflected in official and de facto language policies, which become "the primary mechanism for organizing, managing and manipulating language behavior" (Shohamy, 2006, p. 45) in and beyond the classroom. This is the case in Canada (Dagenais, 2013), where language policies have long been used to manage linguistic and cultural differences (e.g., Fleras, 2012; Jedwab, 2012a; Yalden, 2012). Examples

include Canada's Official Languages Act (1969) and Multiculturalism Act (1985), which promote the official English and French languages within a multicultural framework that embraces the equality of all cultures that make up a multicultural mosaic (Haque, 2012). Yet, provinces, like Québec (1977), uphold *La charte de la langue française*, which mandates French as the only official language within a de facto intercultural framework that endorses a dominant French culture while accepting Indigenous and immigrant cultures (Jedwab, 2012a; 2012b).

Within AL education, these policies tend to problematize linguistic and cultural diversity (Guo, 2013; Haque, 2012; Krasny & Sachar, 2017; Marshall, 2020), framing multilingualism and multiculturalism as challenges pertaining to inclusion that need to be resolved (Jedwab, 2012a; 2012b). Such issues surrounding inclusion are exacerbated in contexts like Québec, where official monolingual and de facto intercultural policies interplay with official federal bilingual and multicultural policies (Cooper, 2012; Leroux, 2012; Van Praagh, 2012). Ironically, despite the ostensible differences between these federal and provincial policies, they echo similar principles: they normalize a monolithic, colonial vision of Canadian nation-building rooted in the English and French languages and cultures embodied by a white, anglophone or francophone citizen (Fleras, 2012; Haque, 2012; Jebwad, 2012b; Leroux, 2012; see also Chung & Chung Arsenault, this issue).

Thus, these policies present practical consequences for linguistically and culturally inclusive AL education in Canada. For one, these policies and their monoglossic ideologies tend to be assimilationist, which influences how AL teachers include or exclude certain language practices in their classroom practice (Cummins, 2007; Guo, 2013; Haque, 2012; Henderson, 2017; Krasny & Sachar, 2017; Prasad, 2013). For instance, the Québec Education Program (QEP) (Québec, 2011; n.d.) for pre-service EAL teachers explicitly mandate to use only English in the classroom. Hence, these policies offer poor concrete guidance on how AL teachers and programs can effectively deliver linguistically inclusive and culturally responsive AL learning (Mady, 2007; Mady & Black, 2012; Mady & Turnbull, 2010). It is therefore unsurprising that Canadian AL teachers may find it difficult to overcome AL education's monolingual orientation (Galante et al., 2020; Piccardo, 2013; Querrien, 2017). That is, teachers report having little to no training for teaching in multilingual and multicultural classrooms (Blandford et al., 2019; Boisvert et al., 2020; Chung & dela Cruz, in press; Mujawamariya & Marhouse, 2006), and call for more resources and materials to help guide linguistically inclusive

practices (e.g., Dault & Collins, 2016) that foster critical awareness of societal multilingualism and multiculturalism in the classroom (Galante, 2021a).

PLURILINGUALISM AS THEORY-PEDAGOGY FOR INCLUSIVE AL INSTRUCTION

An emergent approach for inclusive AL learning and teaching is plurilingualism, which views languages and cultures as inherently interrelated in a composite linguistic repertoire (Coste et al., 1997/2009). The plurilingual theory posits that AL learners have the agency to flexibly draw from their repertoire, either partially or fully, depending on their communicative goals and needs (Council of Europe [CoE], 2001; 2020a). Further, plurilingualism puts forth that AL learners' competences normally vary across their languages, and across languages domains (CoE, 2020a). Thus, a plurilingual lens shifts away from deficit perspectives in AL education (Cook, 2016; Cummins, 2007; 2017; Marshall, 2020; Taylor & Snoddon, 2013).

In the AL classroom, plurilingual pedagogy aims to develop learners' communicative competence not only in the target AL, but in all the languages and cultures in their repertoire (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Moore & Gajo, 2009). AL teachers explicitly encourage creative and flexible use of learners' ALs alongside the target language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2013; Piccardo, 2017; see also Burton, this issue; Passi, this issue) to increase learners' overall language learning ability (Göbel & Vieluf, 2014; Piccardo, 2019). Additionally, plurilingual instruction is action-oriented (CoE, 2020a; Piccardo, 2013; Piccardo et al., 2021): it uses communicative tasks that reflect authentic language use that occur beyond the AL classroom. Such tasks engage students in using plurilingual strategies including:

- (a) Translation-for-mediation (e.g., Galante, 2021b; Muñoz-Basols, 2019): learners translate across their languages when completing classroom tasks;
- (b) Translanguaging for meaning-making (e.g., Cenoz, 2017; Hornberger & Link, 2012): learners fluidly mix and switch across their languages when discussing and making meaning about course content and materials;

(c) Cross-linguistic comparisons (Auger, 2005; 2008a; 2008b): learners systematically compare forms and meanings in the target language to their counterparts in their L1 or ALs;

(d) Cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., Byram, 2020; CoE, 2020a): learners compare and contrast items in the target language to counterparts in their L1/ALs through a cultural lens (e.g., discussing idioms in different languages that pertain to the same meaning, but use different cultural references);

(e) Pluriliteracies (e.g., García et al., 2007; Meyer, 2016): learners draw from their full semiotic repertoire and multiliteracies during multimodal language use (for more specific examples of these plurilingual strategies in the AL classroom, see also Galante et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence shows that plurilingual strategies benefit AL learning in terms of developing vocabulary (e.g., Galante, 2021b; Joyce, 2015; Makalela, 2015; Pujol-Ferran et al., 2016), grammar (e.g., Apaloo & Cardoso, 2021; Dault & Collins, 2017; Payant & Kim, 2015), pronunciation (Galante & Piccardo, 2021), writing (e.g., Marshall & Moore, 2013; Payant & Maatouk, 2022; Stille & Cummins, 2013; Wilson & González Davies, 2017; see also Passi, this issue) and other literacies (e.g., Lau et al., 2016), and metalinguistic awareness (e.g., Lau et al., 2020; Stille & Cummins, 2013; Woll, 2018). More importantly, engaging with plurilingual strategies in the AL classroom helps democratize the language learning process, and provides AL learners equitable opportunities to see themselves as knowledge-holders and capable AL speakers, instead of as imperfect non-native learners (dela Cruz, 2022a; 2022b; Lau & Van Viegen, 2020; see also Burton, this issue). Such a ‘can-do’ approach is central to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages and its scalar descriptors for language competences.

USING THE CEFR FOR PLURILINGUAL TASK DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT

The CEFR provides a multitude of ‘can-do’ descriptors that reflect a partial and constantly shifting plurilingual competence across languages and language domains, and that emphasize skills relevant to real-world language use (CoE, 2020a; Coste et al., 1997/2009; Moore & Gajo, 2009). For

example, according to the CEFR, I am a C1 or low-advanced in oral comprehension in my AL French because I “can understand enough to follow extended discourse on abstract and complex topics beyond [my] own field, though [I] may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the [French] variety is unfamiliar” (CoE, 2020b, cell G3) to me, while being C2 or high-advanced in my written production because I “can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps [my] reader identify significant points” (CoE, 2020b, cell G317). Contrarily, in these domains, I will be C2 in my AL English, but B1 (low-intermediate) in my HLs Ilocano and Kapampangan.

The CEFR (CoE, 2020a; 2020b) organizes its descriptors using the following categories: the mode of communication employed; the language activity, strategy or competence targeted; the specific skill assessed (i.e., referred to as “scale”; CoE, 2020b, cell E1); and the corresponding competence level (A1 to C2). There are four modes of communication under which all other subcategories are organized: reception; production; interaction, or using reception and production skills to communicate with another person; and mediation, or employing any of the abovementioned plurilingual strategies to “make communication possible between persons who are unable, for whatever reason, to communicate with each other directly” (CoE, 2020a, p. 34). Table 1 below shows a few examples of descriptors corresponding to these communication modes, as well as to various competences, specific skills (scale), and competence levels (for a full list of descriptors in multiple languages in a downloadable, searchable document format, see CoE, 2020b). Importantly, notice how the descriptors pertain to authentic language use (e.g., watching television) that is not limited to AL use in the classroom. I now turn to describe a sample AL task that I designed using CEFR’s descriptors.

Table 1. Example of CEFR Scheme and Descriptors

Mode	Competence	Scale	Level	Descriptor
Reception	Oral comprehension	Watching TV, film and video	C1	Can understand nuances and implied meaning in most films, plays and TV programmes,

Reception	Oral comprehension	Watching TV, film and video	B2	provided these are delivered in standard language or a familiar variety. Can understand documentaries, live interviews, talk shows, plays and the majority of films in the standard form of the language or a familiar variety.
Production	Oral production	Sustained monologue: putting a case (e.g. in a debate)	B1	Can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions.
Production	Oral production	Sustained monologue: describing experience	B1	Can describe events, real or imagined.
Interaction	Oral interaction	Overall oral interaction	B1+	Can express thoughts on more abstract, cultural topics such as films, books, music, etc.
Mediation	Mediating a text	Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)	B1	Can explain briefly the feelings and opinions that a work provoked in them.

Designing AL Tasks

Because plurilingual instruction is context specific (Galante, 2020; Marshall & Moore, 2018), the first step to designing plurilingual tasks is defining a classroom context. For my sample task, I refer to an EAL class that I taught in Montréal: a multi-age, mixed levels (B1-B2), combined Secondary 1 and 2 group, composed of 11 francophone students. My sample task (see Appendix A) was part of this class' ongoing work with a novel and its film adaptation.

The next step is to select specific CEFR descriptors to scaffold the task design. The selected descriptors will help define the AL task's objectives and the specific language skills it targets. I selected descriptors that align with the students' current English proficiency (B1-B2) and that also allow them to progress to a higher level (C2). For my task, I draw from the descriptors shown in Table 1, and the plurilingual strategies discussed previously. That is, the task aims to engage students' skills in oral comprehension, production and interaction, as well as their mediation skills. Specifically, the task targets students' skills in reading/watching parts of a novel/film via an online written component that scaffolds and culminates in an in-person oral component. Thus, the task engages students' pluriliteracies. Additionally, as the instructions state, students are directed to critically use plurilingual strategies including translation and translanguaging. Overall, the task encourages students to use their L1 alongside English. I now turn to describe how I designed assessments for this task.

Assessing AL Tasks

Since descriptors were used to define the sample task's objectives, teachers can readily appropriate these descriptors as criteria when assessing student task performance. This could be done in conjunction with creating or adapting their chosen scoring scheme. For my task however, I created my own rubrics: one each for the task's written and oral components (see Appendices B and C, respectively).

Through these rubrics, I argue that assessing plurilingually is not merely a pedagogical act, but a pedagogical stance. In the written rubric for example, I explicitly choose not to deduct points simply because

students engage in plurilingual strategies such as translation; however, they can lose points if they translate uncritically (e.g., they randomly use whatever translations they find, especially even after I have flagged it as inappropriate in a given context). This stance emphasizes how plurilingualism views mediation (e.g., via translation) as a higher-difficulty competence that AL teachers should help learners value and develop.

Further, the oral rubric exemplifies how a plurilingual stance to assessment must allow space for both low and high stakes language use in the AL classroom. This approach is already an aspect of conventional target language-only instruction; however, in a plurilingual assessment, AL teachers explicitly validate students' successful use of language mixing instead of penalizing non-native-like performance through scores.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, I aimed to illustrate how to use plurilingual theory and pedagogy to foster inclusion in AL classroom. Using a sample task and rubrics, I hope to have provided guidance on how to draw from the CEFR and its descriptors to design tasks and evaluate student performance in a way that recognizes AL learners as competent language users, and that challenges native speakerism and deficit framings in AL education. Ultimately, I posit that teaching and assessing plurilingually is not simply an act but a stance, one that should explicitly promote linguistically inclusive and culturally responsive practices in AL teaching.

However, there are limitations and challenges with regards to plurilingual task design and assessment. First, Canadian mono/bilingual policies tend to translate into target language-only approaches in AL education (Guo, 2013; Haque, 2012; Henderson, 2017; Krasny & Sachar, 2017), which can make it challenging for teachers to implement plurilingual instruction (e.g., Galante et al., 2020; Piccardo, 2013; Querrien, 2017). Such policies may also promote uncritical plurilingual instruction that mostly, if not exclusively, privileges the use of only the official English and French languages in AL teaching (Kubota, 2020; Kubota & Bale, 2020; Kubota & Miller, 2017), which is evident in my sample task and assessment.

Second, plurilingual instruction is context dependent (Galante, 2020; Marshall & Moore, 2018). That is, the CEFR is a guide: it is not a universal solution to address linguistic exclusion in AL classrooms. Indeed,

teachers' plurilingual practices may be restrained by context-specific policies (e.g., QEP; Québec, 2011; n.d.). Further, not all levels for certain language competences/strategies in the CEFR have corresponding descriptors. More importantly, some descriptors (see CoE, 2020b) still use notions such as 'standard' language and 'conventional' language use, which may perpetuate native speakerism if not drawn from critically. As such, designing and assessing AL tasks plurilingually should not be seen as a replacement for conventional monolingual approaches, but as a complement.

Finally, this paper provides a guide and examples. Though this is important considering AL teachers' calls for more resources for plurilingual instruction, it is nonetheless paramount to offer them sufficient plurilingual training (e.g., Blandford et al., 2019; Boisvert et al., 2020; Dault & Collins, 2016; Mujawamariya & Marhouse, 2006), both via teacher education programs (e.g., Galante et al., 2022) and ongoing professional development (e.g., Chung & dela Cruz, in press). Doing so will be a significant course of action to foster and sustain long-term plurilingually inclusive AL education in Canada.

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APPENDIX A

SAMPLE TASK: COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS (THE GIVER; LOIS LOWRY, 1993)

Instructions: Answer the questions below. Type your answers in the space provided. Revise your answers based on my feedback and remember to use Google Translate critically. You will share and debate your answers orally in class (**Note:** If you feel like you cannot fully share your answers in English, that is fine! Try sharing in English first, and then use French to fill in gaps when necessary, and we can translate together ☺).

1. What important event(s) took place in the first half of the film?
2. What is the importance of this event/these events for Jonah? How about for his sister? What about for the community?
3. How similar or different were the events in the film compared to the ones described in the book?
4. What started happening when Jonah took home the apple?
5. Predict what you think will happen to Jonah's vision from now on. Elaborate.
6. If you were to decide which memories to pass on to the next generation, which top 5 memories will you pass on and why?

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE RUBRIC: WRITTEN COMPONENT (GOOGLE DOC)

Criteria		Points		Total
Questions 1-5	1	0.5	0	2 (x5)
Questions 6	2.5	1.25	0	5
Content (50%)	Accurate and/or well- supported response	Generally accurate and/or well-supported response; some inaccurate/ unsupported response	Response is mostly inaccurate/ unsupported	
Syntax/ Vocabulary (50%)	Syntax is error-free; vocabulary is appropriate; used translation critically	Syntax is mostly error-free and vocabulary is generally appropriate; some syntax errors/word choice affect clarity; sometimes used translation uncritically	Syntax errors and inappropriate vocabulary significantly affect clarity; used translation uncritically	15

Note: Partial points are possible. Plurilingual strategies are encouraged/not always penalized.

APPENDIX C**SAMPLE RUBRIC: ORAL COMPONENT (IN-PERSON)**

Criterion	Points			
	10-9	8-7	6-5	4-0
Content (100%)	Shared and defended responses using supporting evidence; translanguageed/ translated aptly to support AL English production	Shared responses using some supporting evidence; was mostly able to defend responses; sometimes relied on translanguageing/ translation before attempting to use AL English first	Shared responses but use little supporting evidence; was only sometimes able to defend responses; relied mostly on translanguageing/ translation with little signs of attempting to use AL English first	Little to no sharing/ defending of responses; relied only on translanguageing/ translation, with no attempts to use AL English at all

Note. Unlike in the written component, syntax and vocabulary are not assessed in the oral component to provide students low to no-stakes oral production practice, wherein they can engage in plurilingual strategies, make errors, and receive real-time feedback.