



# Curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an bhFráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach do Theangacha: plépháipéar peirspictíochta

*Aligning the Leaving Certificate Irish curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: a perspective paper*

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## Réamhrá/ Preface

### Comhthéacs agus sprioc an pháipéir seo/ Context and aim of this paper

Tá siollabais reatha Ghaeilge na hArdteiste (Ardleibhéal, Gnáthleibhéal agus Bonnleibhéal) i bhfeidhm ó bhí 1995 ann, agus foilsíodh leagan uasdátaithe in 2010 (An Roinn Oideachais & Eolaíochta, 2010). Tá obair idir lámha le roinnt blianta anuas le hathbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar na siollabais sin (NCCA, 2021a; 2021b). Ag an am céanna, tá athbhreithniú ar siúl ar churaclam na Sraithe Sinsearaí go ginearálta, agus tá forbairtí suntasacha á ndéanamh ó thaobh an pholasaí náisiúnta teanga (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2021). Foilsíodh dréachtsonraíochtaí nua curaclaim do Ghaeilge na hArdteiste (T1 agus T2) in 2021. Léirigh aiseolas ó chomhairliúchán poiblí, áfach, nach raibh an pobal sásta leis na leasuithe a bhí molta, ach nach rabhthas ar aon tuairim maidir leis an gcur chuige ab fhearr le freastal ar dhaltáí Ardteiste a bhfuil riachtanais éagsúla acu. Rinneadh cinneadh, mar sin, stop a chur leis an obair forbartha ar an gcuraclam agus tuilleadh taighde a dhéanamh ar na creata agus ar na modhanna soláthair a d'fhéadfadh a bheith oiriúnach don chomhthéacs seo (NCCA, 2023a).

Tá an páipéar seo ar cheann de thrí pháipéar 'peirspictíochta' a bhfuil CNCM tar éis coimisiúnú a dhéanamh orthu le tacú leo cinntí a dhéanamh maidir leis na féidearthachtaí a bhainfeadh le cúrsa athbhreithnithe Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an bhFráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach do Theangacha nó an FTCE.

### Struchtúr an pháipéir/ Structure of the paper

Tá an páipéar seo roinnte ina chúig chuid, mar seo a leanas:

- Tugtar achoimre ghearr ar phríomhghnéithe an FTCE i gCuid 1.
- Díríonn Cuid 2 ar an bpróiseas a bhainfeadh le curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an FTCE.
- I gCuid 3, pléitear na buntáistí a bhainfeadh leis an ailíniú sin, le dul i ngleic le laigí agus dúshláin a bhaineann leis an gcúrsa reatha.
- I gCuid 4, tugtar aghaidh ar chuid de na ceisteanna coitianta a ardaítear faoi úsáid an FTCE i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge.
- Déantar achoimre an-ghéarr ar na príomhphointí mar fhocal scoir i gCuid 5.

The current Leaving Certificate (LC) syllabuses for Irish, at Higher, Ordinary and Foundation Levels, have been in place since 1995, with updates published in 2010 (An Roinn Oideachais & Eolaíochta, 2010). Work has been underway in recent years to review and revise these syllabuses (NCCA, 2021c; 2021d). This is happening in the context of general redevelopment of the Senior Cycle curriculum, and at a time of significant developments around Irish-language policy nationally (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2021). New draft curriculum specifications for LC Irish (L1 and L2) were published for public consultation in 2021; however, feedback from this process showed general dissatisfaction with the proposed revisions and a lack of consensus on the best approach to cater for the needs of all LC Irish students. A decision was therefore made to pause curriculum development to allow for further research on potential frameworks and models of provision that might be suitable for the LC Irish context (NCCA, 2023b).

This paper is one of three perspective papers commissioned by the NCCA to support and inform decision-making on the potential alignment of the revised LC curriculum with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR.

The paper is structured in five sections as follows:

- Section 1 provides a brief overview of the key aspects of the CEFR.
- Section 2 discusses what it means to 'align' a curriculum to the CEFR and how might this alignment be achieved in the context of LC Irish.
- Section 3 focuses on the potential advantages of CEFR alignment to address existing weaknesses and challenges associated with LC Irish.
- Section 4 addresses some of the common questions often raised about the use of the CEFR in this context.
- A brief conclusion and summary of key points is presented in Section 5.

## Nóta faoin Údar/ About the Author

Tá na tuiscintí sa pháipéar seo bunaithe ar mo thaithí ghairmiúil, agus mé ag obair leis an FTCE le beagnach 20 bliain anuas – mar mhúinteoir tacaíochta teanga ag múineadh Béarla i mbunscoil in Éirinn, mar thástálaí teanga le [Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge](#) (TEG), mar theagascóir agus léachtóir Ollscoile in Éirinn agus i SAM, agus mar thaighdeoir. Faoi láthair, tá mé i mo Stiúrthóir ar Lárionad na Gaeilge, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad, áit a bhfuil obair cheannróaíoch ar siúl ó bhí 2003 ann maidir le húsáid an FTCE i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge. Ó 2011-2020, bhí baint agam le siollabas Ollscoile bunaithe ar an FTCE a chur i bhfeidhm, a theagasc agus a mheas don Ghaeilge ag leibhéal na bunchéime, do mhic léinn ó chúlráí T1 agus T2 araon (Ní Ghloinn, 2019). Le linn an ama sin, bhí deis agam a bheith ag obair le húdair an imleabhair bhreise den FTCE, an Dr Brian North agus an Dr Enrica Piccardo, ar thionscadal de chuid an ECML maidir leis an [dearbhu feabhais in úsáid an FTCE](#). Tá taighde dochtúireachta idir lámha agam freisin le próifiliú a dhéanamh ar an gcumas gramadaí sa Ghaeilge ag leibhéil B1-C1 den FTCE, bunaithe ar anailís ar chorpas foghlaimeora (Ní Ghloinn, 2020). Tá cuirí faighte agam aoichainteanna a thabhairt in institiúidí éagsúla faoi úsáid an FTCE i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge.

Tá tionscadail eile curtha i gcrích agam le tamall anuas, a thug léargas breise dom ar chumas agus ar mheasúnú na Gaeilge ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile. Rinne mé anailís ar bhailíocht bhéaltrial Ghaeilge na hArdteiste, i gcomhar le comhghleacaithe ó Lárionad na Gaeilge (Ní Ghloinn et al., le foilsiú) agus bhí baint agam le tástáil dhiagnóiseach litearthachta, [MDLI-G](#), a fhorbairt in iar-bhunscoileanna T1.

Tá tionchar ag mo thaithí phearsanta ar na dearcthaí a léirítear sa pháipéar seo freisin. Tógadh mé go dátheangach i gCeatharlach, áit ar fhreastail mé ar scoileanna lán-Bhéarla (T2), ach tá dlúthcheangal agam i gcónaí le háit dhúchais mo mhuintire i nGaeltacht Dhún na nGall. Tugann an taithí sin léargas breise dom ar riachtanais agus ar phróifíilí éagsúla cumais cainteoirí óga Gaeilge ó chúlráí agus ó scoileanna T1 agus T2, taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht, agus ar an mbearna a bhíonn ann go minic idir na scileanna teanga a theastaíonn sa ghnáthshaol gairmiúil agus sóisialta, agus na cinn a ndírítear isteach orthu sa chóras oideachais.

The perspectives in this paper have been informed by almost 20 years of professional experience working with the CEFR, as an English-Language Support Teacher in an Irish primary school, as a language tester with [Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge](#) (TEG), as a university tutor and lecturer in the US and Ireland, and as a researcher. I am currently Director of the Centre for Irish Language at Maynooth University, a centre that has pioneered the adoption of the CEFR in the context of Irish since 2003. From 2011-2020, I worked on the implementation, teaching and assessment of a new CEFR-based syllabus for undergraduate Irish, designed for students from both L1 and L2 backgrounds (Ní Ghloinn, 2019). During that time, I had the opportunity to be involved in an ECML project related to [quality assurance in the use of the CEFR](#), led by CEFR Companion-Volume authors, Dr Brian North and Dr Enrica Piccardo. My ongoing PhD research also aims to profile grammatical competence in Irish at B1-C1 levels of the CEFR, based on a learner-corpus analysis (Ní Ghloinn, 2020). I have been invited to give numerous lectures in various institutions on the use of the CEFR in the context of Irish.

Other recent projects have given me some additional insight into Irish-language assessment and proficiency at post-primary level. Along with colleagues at the Centre for Irish Language, I recently completed a detailed validation study of the LC Irish oral exam (Ní Ghloinn et al., forthcoming). I was also involved in the development and initial piloting of a literacy diagnostic assessment, [MDLI-G](#), for L1 post-primary schools.

My perspective is also informed by my personal experience as an Irish speaker and learner. Raised in a bilingual home in Carlow, I attended English-medium (L2) schools but have close family ties to the Donegal Gaeltacht. This background has given me some additional insight into the complex and varied proficiency profiles and needs of many young Irish speakers from L1 and L2 homes and schools, within and outside of the Gaeltacht, as well as the gap that often exists between the Irish language skills needed in authentic social or professional settings, and those taught and assessed within the education system.

## 1. Céard é an FTCE/ What is the CEFR?

Is creat inniúlachta do theangacha é an [Fráma Tagartha Comónta Eorpach](#) (FTCE) (Comhairle na hEorpa, 2001), a forbraíodh leis an dea-chleachtas a chur chun cinn i bhfoghlaim, múineadh, measúnú agus dearadh curaclaim teanga, agus le cur leis an trédhearcacht agus leis an leanúnachas idir cúrsaí agus cáilíochtaí éagsúla teanga. Ó foilsíodh é in 2001, is é an córas is mó a úsáidtear go hidirnáisiúnta le cur síos a dhéanamh ar an inniúlacht teanga ag leibhéil éagsúla chumais, agus tá sé tar éis machnamh agus nuálaíocht a chothú maidir le múineadh agus measúnú teangacha.

Sa bhliain 2020, foilsíodh [imleabhar breise](#) (IB) den FTCE, a thógann ar ábhar an bhunleagain. Tá cuid den ábhar céanna le fáil sa dá leagan, ach déantar forbairt agus uasdátú ar ghnéithe áirithe san IB, m.sh. na scileanna a bhaineann leis an gcumarsáid sa ré dhigiteach. Tugtar míniú níos gonta agus níos soiléire ar phointí áirithe, líontar bearnaí faoi leith a bhí sa chéad leagan, agus cuirtear béim bhreise ar choincheapa áirithe (m.sh. an idirghabháil) a bhí beagán caillte san eolas ar fad a bhí sa bhuncháipéis. Níl gach cuid d'ábhar an bhunleagain le fáil san imleabhar nua, áfach. Cé gur féidir neamhaird a thabhairt anois ar na scálaí cumais atá i gcaibidil 4 agus 5 den bhunleagan, agus díriú ar na cinn uasdátaithe atá i gcaibidil 3 agus 4 den IB, is fiú i gcónaí leas a bhaint as an ábhar eile atá sa bhuncháipéis le tuiscint chuimsitheach a fháil ar phrionsabail agus ar fhealsúnacht an FTCE.

Chomh maith leis an dá phríomhcháipéis sin, tá acmhainní eile curtha ar fáil mar uirlisí breise d'úsáideoirí an FTCE. Ina measc siúd, tá an [Phunann Eorpach Teanga](#), a dearadh mar acmhainn phraiticiúil le cabhrú leo siúd atá ag iarraidh prionsabail an FTCE a chur i bhfeidhm i gcúrsaí teagaisc, foghlama agus measúnaithe. Trí úsáid a bhaint as an bpunann, is féidir deiseanna a chruthú don fhéinmheasúnú agus don fhéinmhachnamh, rud a thacaíonn le forbairt na feasachta, leis an bhfoghlaim fhéinriartha, agus leis an gcur chuige deisteangach. Cé nach bhfuil an phunann ina cuid oifigiúil de na príomhcháipéisí a luadh thuas, dearadh é ag an am céanna agus is minic a chuimhnítear uirthi mar chuid den chóras ina iomláine.

The [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#) or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) is a competency framework designed to increase transparency and coherence between language programmes and qualifications, and to promote effective language learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum design. Since its initial publication in 2001, it has become the most common system used internationally to describe language proficiency at various levels of ability, and it has stimulated reflection and innovation in language education.

A [Companion Volume](#) (CV), which builds on the 2001 document, was published in 2020 (Council of Europe, 2020). While much of the content in the CEFR-CV reiterates the key aspects of the original volume, the CV expands and updates aspects of the earlier version to include skills such as digital and online communication. Gaps in the original volume are filled, complex content is presented in a more succinct and user-friendly way, and additional emphasis is placed on key concepts (such as mediation) that may have been obscured in the detail of the original volume. Not all the content of the original CEFR is reproduced in the CV, however. While the updated descriptors of language competence presented in chapters 3 and 4 of the CV are intended to replace those found in chapters 4 and 5 of the original version, users should continue to refer to the earlier document for a comprehensive understanding of the principles and philosophy underpinning the CEFR.

As well as the main CEFR documents listed above, several additional resources have been added to the CEFR toolkit over the years. Among these is the [European Language Portfolio](#) (ELP), designed to help operationalise some of the principles of the CEFR in teaching, learning and assessment, and to support the development of learner autonomy, awareness and plurilingualism, through self-assessment and reflection. While the ELP is not part of the main CEFR documents mentioned above, it was designed in parallel and is often included as part of the broader system.

Tá codanna agus feidhmeanna éagsúla ag baint leis an FTCE, agus tá gnéithe de beagán casta nó teibí. Is maith liomsa cuimhneamh air, mar sin, mar thrí uirlis phraiticiúla – slat tomhais, lionsa agus compás. Is dócha gurb iad na leibhéil chumais, A1-C2, an ghné is mó den chóras a mbíonn cur amach ag daoine orthu. Cuireann siad sin slat tomhais nó pointí comónta tagartha ar fáil, a chabhraíonn linn an inniúlacht teanga ag leibhéil éagsúla chumais a mheas agus a phlé, ar bhealach atá intuigthe ar fud an domhain, ó theanga go teanga agus ó institiúid go hinstitiúid. Níl ansin ach cuid amháin den FTCE, áfach. Is iad na gnéithe is tábhachtaí den chóras ná an cuntas cuimsitheach agus nuálach a thugann sé ar an inniúlacht teanga, agus an fhealsúnacht a chuireann sé chun cinn maidir leis an dea-chleachtas i bhfoghlaim, teagasc agus measúnú teangacha. Tugann na gnéithe sin den FTCE lionsa dúinn a chothaíonn tuiscint úrnua ar an bhfoghlaim teanga, ar an gcumas teanga agus ar an bhfoghlaim féin. Tugann cur chuige an FTCE treoir úsáideach phraiticiúil dúinn freisin, a d'fhéadfadh a bheith ina chompás<sup>1</sup> agus muid ag iarraidh an dea-chleachtas a chur chun cinn i gcúrsaí teagaisc, foghlama agus measúnaithe teanga, agus sa dearadh curaclaim. Déanfaidh mé tuilleadh plé thíos ar na gnéithe is tábhachtaí den FTCE.

The CEFR contains multiple parts and serves multiple functions, some of which may appear complex or abstract. It might be useful to think of it as three practical tools – a yardstick, a lens and a compass. The common reference levels, A1-C2, which are probably the best-known aspect of the documents, provide a useful common yardstick or benchmark with which to measure and describe language proficiency at various levels, in a way that can be understood universally, across languages, educational institutions and countries. The levels are just one part of the system, however. Perhaps the most important aspects of the CEFR are the general philosophy it promotes for the effective teaching, learning and assessment of languages, and its broad and innovative conceptualisation of communicative language competence. These aspects can act as a lens to help us see the language learner, language learning and language competence in a new light. Furthermore, the approach offered by the CEFR provides a very useful guide and a compass for quality<sup>1</sup> in language teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum development. I will discuss some of the key aspects of the CEFR in more detail below.

### 1.1 An cur chuige gníomhdhírithe/ The action-oriented approach

Ceann de na gnéithe is réabhlóidí faoin FTCE ná an bealach a dtugann sé orainn breathnú ar an gcumas teanga agus ar an bhfoghlaim teanga trí lionsa 'gníomhdhírithe'. De réir an dearcaidh seo, ní hé sprioc na foghlama daltaí a ullmhú do scrúdú, ach iad a chumasú le bheith ina n-úsáideoirí teanga, gníomhaithe féinriartha sóisialta atá in ann an teanga a úsáid le tascanna a chur i gcrích, iad féin a chur in iúl, caidreamh a fhorbairt le daoine eile, fadhbanna a réiteach agus a bheith cruthaitheach i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla a bhaineann leis an ngnáthshaol. Ní hionann an cumas teanga agus eolas faoin teanga, mar sin, ach an cumas tarraingt ar an eolas sin agus ar inniúlachtaí eile ginearálta agus straitéiseacha, chun an teanga a úsáid go héifeachtach i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla cumarsáide.

Perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of the CEFR is the way it encourages us to see language proficiency and language learning through an 'action-oriented' lens. Viewed through this lens, the primary goal of language education is not simply to prepare students to pass an exam, but rather to enable and empower them to become language users, autonomous social agents capable of using language to accomplish tasks, express themselves, relate to others, solve problems and be creative in real-life target-language situations. Language proficiency is viewed as more than just linguistic knowledge, but the ability to draw on that knowledge and on other general and strategic competences, in order to use the language effectively in a range of authentic communicative contexts.

<sup>1</sup> Fuair mé an meafar seo den FTCE mar 'chompás don dea-chleachtas' ón Dr Enrica Piccardo, a bhain úsáid as i seimineár a thug sí in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad sa bhliain 2018.

I have borrowed the analogy of the CEFR as a 'compass for quality' from Dr Enrica Piccardo, who used it in a seminar delivered in Maynooth University in 2018.

Mar chuid den chur chuige gníomhdhírthe sin, díríonn an teagasc, an fhoghlaím agus an measúnú ar thascanna nó ar ghníomhaíochtaí fiúntacha cumarsáideacha atá ag teacht go dlúth le riachtanais chumarsáide na bhfoghlaiméoirí (na bealaí a bhféadfaíds úsáid a bhaint as an teanga ina saol sóisialta, gairmiúil agus pearsanta taobh amuigh den scoil). Tugann sé sin deis do na foghlaiméoirí a gcuid scileanna teanga a fhorbairt trí úsáid a bhaint astu i gcomhthéacs na cumarsáide. Is minic a bhíonn céimeanna éagsúla ag baint le tascanna nó tionscadail ghníomhdhírthe, agus bíonn comhoibriú agus scileanna éagsúla cumarsáide ag baint leis na céimeanna sin (Piccardo & North, 2019). Mar shampla, cruthaíonn mic léinn fochéime in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad punann sa Ghaeilge ghairmiúil mar chuid de chúrsa na tríú bliana. Ag tús na bliana, déanann siad roinnt tascanna a bhaineann le deiseanna fostaíochta agus iarratais ar phoist, mar shampla:

- Déanann siad taighde i ngrúpaí ar ghairmeacha le Gaeilge, trí úsáid a bhaint as ábhar dílis clóite agus ilmheán atá curtha ar fáil ag eagraíochtaí Gaeilge. Eagraíonn siad aonach gairmeacha sa rang, áit a ndéanann gach grúpa cur i láthair ar na deiseanna a bhaineann le hearnáil faoi leith.
- Foghlaimíonn siad faoi bheith ag obair mar chuid d'fhoireann agus déanann siad féinmheasúnú (bunaithe ar [thástáil Belbin](#)), le hiad a chur ag machnamh faoina gcuid buanna agus laigí féin, agus faoi na ról a ghlacann siad i ngrúpaí.
- Aimsíonn siad fógra poist a bhfuil spéis acu ann (ó [www.peig.ie](http://www.peig.ie)), agus réitíonn siad CV agus litir iarratais bunaithe ar an bhfógra. Faigheann siad aiseolas ón teagascóir agus réitíonn siad dréacht ceartaithe.
- Oibríonn siad i mbeirteanna le hagallaimh phoist a chur ar a chéile agus a thaifeadadh, bunaithe ar na fógraí agus iarratais ón gcéim thuas. Déanann siad machnamh ar aiseolas an teagascóra agus scríobhann siad cuntas air.

I gcuid eile den chúrsa, foghlaimíonn na mic léinn faoi chearta teanga, scríobhann siad litir ghearáin chuig an gCoimisinéir Teanga agus réitíonn siad ábhar d'fheachtas feasachta chun Acht na dTeangacha a mhíniú do dhaoine óga. D'fhéadfaí tascanna eile a bhunú ar thuras nó imeacht a phleanáil, an turasóireacht áitiúil a chur chun cinn, podchraoladh a dhéanamh, club leabhar a reáchtáil, srl. Is forbairt é an cur chuige gníomhdhírthe ar na modhanna cumarsáideacha agus tascbhunaithe a tháinig chun cinn idir na 1970í agus na 1990í. Tá fealsúnacht níos iomlánaíche taobh thiar de, áfach. Cuireann sé béim bhreise ar acmhainn

Teaching, learning and assessment are thus focused on meaningful communicative tasks or language activities that reflect the communicative needs of the learners (the ways in which they might realistically use the language in their social, professional and personal lives beyond a classroom or exam context), so that the learners develop their communicative language skills by engaging those skills through meaningful action. Action-oriented tasks are often sequenced into broader 'scenarios' or projects that include a number of steps involving a range of communicative skills and collaboration (Piccardo & North, 2019). For example, undergraduate students in Maynooth University develop a portfolio in professional Irish as part of their third year programme. At the beginning of the year, students carry out a number of connected tasks related to employment opportunities and job applications, including the following:

- Students work in groups to research employment opportunities in Irish using authentic print and multimedia resources provided by Irish-language organisations. They then host an in-class 'careers fair', where each group delivers a presentation on opportunities within a particular sector.
- Following the groupwork, students learn about teams and conduct a self-assessment (based on the [Belbin test](#)) to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, and the roles they assume when working with others.
- Each student finds a live Irish-language job advertisement that interests them (from [www.peig.ie](http://www.peig.ie)) and prepares a CV and application letter focused on that ad. These are re-drafted based on feedback from the tutor.
- Students work in pairs to conduct and record job interviews, based on the job advertisement and application from the previous step. They then write a reflection based on feedback from the tutor.

Another scenario involves learning about language rights, writing a letter of complaint to the Language Commissioner and planning an awareness campaign to mediate information about the Official Languages Act to young people. Scenarios could also focus on planning a trip or event, promoting local tourism, making a podcast, or running a book club to discuss course literature, etc. The action-oriented approach can be seen as an extension and development of the communicative and task-based learning approaches that emerged from the 1970s to 1990s, but it is more holistic in its philosophy, placing greater emphasis

fhéinriartha an fhoghlaimeora sa tsochaí, ar an idirghníomhaíocht nádúrtha, ar an gcomhoibriú, agus ar fheidhm shóisialta na cumarsáide.

on the social agency of the learner, on authentic interaction, collaboration, and the social purpose of communication.

## 1.2 Ailíniú tógachaíoch agus an dearadh ‘droim ar ais’/ Constructive alignment and backward design

Tá impleachtaí faoi leith ag baint leis an gcur chuige gníomhdhírthe don fhorbairt curaclaim; moltar cúrsaí nó curaclaim teanga a dhearadh ‘droim ar ais’ (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Richards, 2013; North et al., 2018). De réir an chur chuige seo, tosaítear le hanailís ar riachtanais chumarsáide an fhoghlaimeora taobh amuigh den seomra ranga. Scríobhtar torthaí foghlama bunaithe ar na riachtanais sin agus ar thuairiscíní cumais ón FTCE. Déantar tascanna dílse measúnaithe a dhearadh ag an bpointe sin, bunaithe ar na torthaí foghlama, agus déantar an teagasc agus an fhoghlaim a phleanáil dá réir. An phríomhaidhm a bhaineann leis an gcur chuige seo ná a chinntiú go bhfuil leanúnachas nó ailíniú tógachaíoch idir an curaclam, an teagasc agus an measúnú. Déantar tuilleadh plé ar an gcur chuige sin i gcuid 2 thíos.

The action-oriented approach also has clear implications for curriculum development. It promotes a ‘backward design’ approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Richards, 2013; North et al., 2018) in which analysis of learners’ communicative needs beyond the classroom is the starting point for curriculum design. Learning outcomes are articulated according to those needs, based on the CEFR descriptors. Crucially, consideration is then given to the kind of evidence that might be needed to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes in authentic assessment tasks. Finally, teaching and learning activities are planned accordingly, in order to maximise constructive alignment between the curriculum, teaching and assessment. This approach is illustrated further in section 2 below.

## 1.3 An deisteangachas agus an t-aitheantas do pháirtchumais/ Plurilingualism and the recognition of partial competences

Coincheap eile atá lárnach san FTCE ná an deisteangachas. Is éard atá i gceist leis sin ná an stór iomlán teanga atá ag na foghlaimeoirí sna teangacha éagsúla atá acu, bídis sin ar a dtail acu nó ná bíodh. Aithníonn an deisteangachas nach gcoinnítear an t-eolas faoi theangacha éagsúla i mboscaí ar leith in intinn an fhoghlaimeora. Is gnách go mbíonn an t-eolas sin fite fuaite ina chéile, rud a ligeann don fhoghlaimeoir tarraingt ar eolas trasteangeolaíoch (eolas ar theanga amháin a chuireann le tuiscint nó le feacht an fhoghlaimeora faoin mbealach a n-oibríonn teangacha eile) le tacú leis an gcumarsáid agus leis an bhfoghlaim éifeachtach teanga.

A third core concept promoted in the CEFR is plurilingualism. This refers to the overall inter-related linguistic repertoire of a language learner/user, which includes all the languages a learner may know or partially know. The plurilingual approach recognises the reality that language learners and users do not keep their knowledge of various languages in strictly separate mental compartments but often draw on their plurilingual repertoire or crosslinguistic knowledge (knowledge about one language that contributes to the learners understanding or awareness of how other languages work) to facilitate effective communication and language learning.

## 1.4 Scéimre cumais an FTCE/ The CEFR descriptive scheme

Gné an-tábhachach den FTCE ná go ndéantar na scileanna teanga a athshamhlú agus a rangú ar bhealach úrnua. Sular foilsíodh an FTCE, ba mhinic a dhéantaí cur síos ar an gcumas teanga de réir mhúnla Lado (1961); is é sin, ceithre scil (léamh, scríobh, labhairt agus éisteacht) agus trí ghné (gramadach, stór focal agus fuaimniú). Déanann an FTCE athshamhlú ar an inniúlacht teanga mar chuid de scéimre iltoiseach cumais. In ionad na gceithre scil, díríonn an FTCE ar cheithre

A major component of the CEFR is its conceptualisation or categorisation of language skills. Prior to the CEFR, language skills were usually presented according to Lado’s (1961) model of four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) and three elements (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). The CEFR moves away from this model, expanding our view of language competence considerably in its multidimensional ‘descriptive scheme’. The four skills are

mhodh cumarsáide; is iad sin ginchumas, gabhchumas, idirghníomhaíocht agus idirghabháil. Pléitear an scríobh agus an labhairt mar chuid de na modhanna sin, sa chaoi is go gcuimsíonn aicmí an FTCE na ceithre scil thraidisiúnta, ach déantar leathnú suntasach orthu ó thaobh na hidirghníomhaíochta agus na hidirghabhála de, chun béim níos mó a chur ar an ngné shóisialta, idirghníomhach agus chomhoibríoch a bhaineann leis an gcumarsáid sa ghnáthshaol. Tugtar mionchur síos ar réimse leathan gníomhaíochtaí agus straitéisí cumarsáide teanga a bhaineann le gach modh (m.sh. féachaint ar an teilifís nó ar scannáin, an chaint phoiblí, nótaí a thógáil, anailís a dhéanamh ar an litríocht – féach an liosta i dtábla 7 thíos), rud a léiríonn, i dtéarmaí praiticiúla, na scileanna éagsúla cumarsáide a theastaíonn ó fhoghlaimeoirí agus ó úsáideoirí teanga.

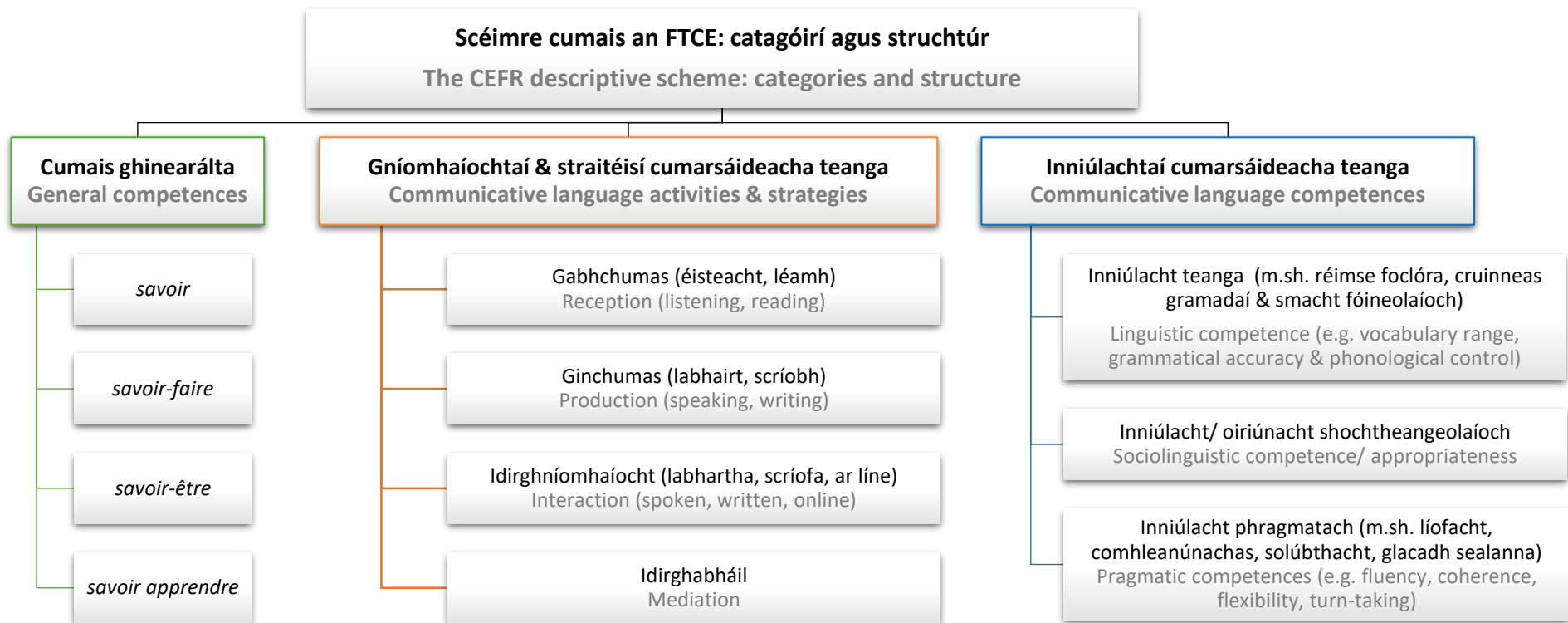
Níl ansin ach gné amháin de scéimre cumais an FTCE, áfach. Tugtar cuntas freisin ar na hinniúlachtaí cumarsáide teanga a theastaíonn chun na gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáide a luadh thuas a chur i gcrích, m.sh. réimse foclóra, cruinneas gramadaí, smacht fóineolaíoch agus líofacht, chomh maith leis an oiriúnacht shochtheangeolaíoch agus cumais phragmatacha, ar nós sealanna cainte a ghlacadh. Léiríonn na hinniúlachtaí sin, ní hamháin *céard* is féidir leis an bhfoghlaimeoir a dhéanamh, ach an leibhéal cruinnis, castachta, oiriúnachta agus stró (nó easpa stró) a bhaineann leis an gcumarsáid.

Ar deireadh, aithnítear san FTCE go mbíonn cumais ghinearálta eile ag teastáil le tacú leis an gcumarsáid nó leis an bhfoghlaím éifeachtach teanga; is iad sin, *savoir* (eolas), *savoir-faire* (scileanna praiticiúla agus fios gnó), *savoir-être* (tréithe pearsantachta, dearcadh, féinfheasacht, srl.) agus *savoir apprendre* (scileanna foghlama). Cuirtear na ceithre chumas ghinearálta sin leis an scéimre, chun cuntas an-saibhir agus iltoiseach a thabhairt ar an inniúlacht teanga. Tugann an léaráid thíos (atá bunaithe ar an eolas ar lch 32 den FTCE-IB) achoimre ar struchtúr agus ar phríomhchatagóirí scéimre cumais an FTCE.

reframed as four modes of communication: namely production, reception, interaction and mediation. Production, reception and interaction are further divided into written and oral modes, so that the CEFR categories include the four skills, but expand them considerably under the modes of interaction and mediation, in order to emphasise the social, interactive and collaborative nature of real-life communication. Each mode is elaborated further through a range of communicative language activities and strategies (e.g. watching TV and film, public speaking, note-taking, literary analysis – see full list in table 7 below) that illustrate in functional terms what language learners and users typically need to be able to do with language.

That is just one dimension of the CEFR descriptive scheme, however. The functional description of language ability is complemented with an account of the communicative language competences, the linguistic skills needed to accomplish the communicative language activities discussed above. These include skills such as vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, phonological control and fluency, as well as sociolinguistic appropriateness and other pragmatic competences such as turn-taking. These competences illustrate not just *what* a learner can do, therefore, but with what level of precision, complexity, appropriateness and ease.

Finally, the CEFR descriptive scheme also acknowledges the role of general competences in enabling or facilitating effective communication and language learning. Four general competences, *savoir* (knowledge), *savoir-faire* (skills and know-how), *savoir-être* (individual characteristics, personality traits, attitudes and self-awareness) and *savoir apprendre* (ability to learn) are therefore incorporated into the descriptive scheme, to provide a very rich, multidimensional view of overall language proficiency. The figure on page 6 below, adapted from page 32 of the CEFR-CV, provides an overview of the categories and structure of the FTCE descriptive scheme.



Léiríonn an tábla thíos an réimse leathan gníomhaíochtaí agus straitéisí cumarsáide (67 scála ar an iomlán) a chuimsítear taobh istigh de na ceithre mhodh. Is ón FTCE-IB féin a tógadh teidil na scálaí ar fad, agus mar sin, is i mBéarla amháin atá an tábla.

The table below lists the wide range of scales (67 in total) relating to communicative language activities and strategies across the four modes. It is provided in English only, as scale titles are taken directly from the CEFR-CV.

## Scálaí an FTCE do Ghníomhaíochtaí agus Straitéisí Cumarsáideacha Teanga/ CEFR scales for Communicative Language Activities and Strategies

|            | Reception                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Production                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Interaction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Mediation                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Activities | <p><b>Oral Comprehension (Listening)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall oral comprehension</li> <li>Understanding conversation between other speakers</li> <li>Listening as a member of a live audience</li> <li>Listening to announcements and instructions</li> <li>Listening to audio media and recordings</li> </ul> <p><b>Audio-Visual Reception</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watching TV, film and video</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading Comprehension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall reading comprehension</li> <li>Reading correspondence</li> <li>Reading for orientation</li> <li>Reading for information/ argument</li> <li>Reading instructions</li> <li>Reading as a leisure activity</li> </ul> | <p><b>Spoken Production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall spoken production</li> <li>Sustained monologue: Describing experience</li> <li>Sustained monologue: Giving information</li> <li>Sustained monologue: Putting a case (e.g. in a debate)</li> <li>Public announcements</li> <li>Addressing audiences</li> </ul> <p><b>Written Production</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall written production</li> <li>Creative writing</li> <li>Written reports and essays</li> </ul> | <p><b>Spoken Interaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall oral interaction</li> <li>Understanding an interlocutor</li> <li>Conversation</li> <li>Informal discussion (with friends)</li> <li>Formal discussion (meetings)</li> <li>Goal-oriented co-operation</li> <li>Obtaining goods and services</li> <li>Information exchange</li> <li>Interviewing and being interviewed</li> <li>Using telecommunications</li> </ul> <p><b>Written Interaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall written interaction</li> <li>Correspondence</li> <li>Notes, messages and forms</li> </ul> <p><b>Online Interaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Online conversation and discussion</li> <li>Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration</li> </ul> | <p>Overall Mediation</p> <p><b>Mediating Concepts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Collaborating in a group:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitating collaborative interaction with peers</li> <li>Collaborating to construct meaning</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Leading group work:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing interaction</li> <li>Encouraging conceptual talk</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Mediating Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitating pluricultural space</li> <li>Acting as intermediary in informal situations (with friends and colleagues)</li> <li>Facilitating communication in delicate situations and disagreements</li> </ul> <p><b>Mediating a Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relaying specific information (in speech or in writing)</li> <li>Explaining data (in speech or in writing)</li> <li>Processing text (in speech or in writing)</li> <li>Translating a written text (in speech or in writing)</li> <li>Note-taking (lectures, seminars, meetings, etc.)</li> <li>Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)</li> <li>Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)</li> </ul> |
| Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying cues and inferring (spoken &amp; written)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning</li> <li>Compensating</li> <li>Monitoring and repair</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taking the floor (Turn-taking)</li> <li>Cooperating</li> <li>Asking for clarification</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p><b>Strategies to Explain a New Concept</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linking to previous knowledge</li> <li>Adapting language</li> <li>Breaking down complicated information</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategies to Simplify a Text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amplifying a dense text</li> <li>Streamlining a text</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### 1.5 Leibhéil agus scálaí tuairiscíní an FTCE/ CEFR levels and descriptors

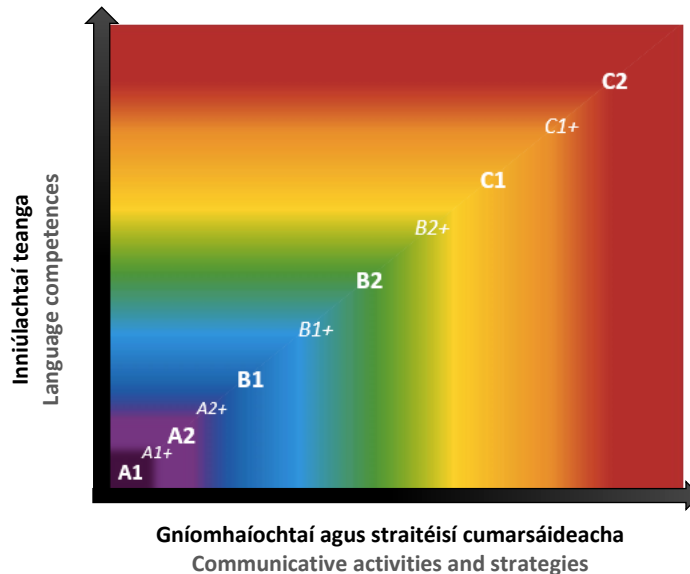
Ar mhaithe leis an trédhearcacht agus an leanúnachas idir cúrsaí, institiúidí agus tíortha éagsúla, tá gné eile ag baint le scéimre cumais an FTCE freisin; is é sin na sé leibhéal cumais (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 agus C2) ar féidir iad a úsáid mar phointí tagartha i gcomhthéacs teanga ar bith. Baineann A1 leis an leibhéal is ísle cumais lenár féidir le duine bunchumarsáid a dhéanamh. Tá sé tábhachtach a thuiscint nach ionann C2 agus leibhéal an chainteora dúchais, ach an cumas teanga a bhíonn ag cainteoirí oilte teanga a bhfuil ardleibhéal oideachais agus sárscileanna cumarsáide acu.

Is bandaí sách leathan iad leibhéil an FTCE, agus is féidir iad a roinnt ina bhfoleibhéil; m.sh., is féidir leibhéal B2 a roinnt ina dhá fholeibhéal, B2.1 agus B2.2 (nó B2+ mar a thugtar air freisin). Tá solúbthacht áirithe ag baint leis an gcóras agus uaireanta déantar na leibhéil a roinnt níos mó chun an teagasc a eagrú thar théarmaí nó thar chúrsaí éagsúla. Is minic a fheictear cúrsaí teanga á bhfógairt, mar shampla, mar chúrsaí 12 sheachtain ag leibhéil A1.1, A1.2 agus A1.3. Féach, mar shampla: <https://www.alliance-francaise.ie/registration-general-french-for-adults/#/>

For the sake of transparency and coherence between various language programmes, institutions, countries and language contexts, the CEFR also describes language proficiency along a third dimension comprising six common reference levels. These are labelled A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 and are applicable to learners of any language. While A1 represents the lowest level of functional language ability, C2 does not denote the competence of an idealised native speaker, but rather a very proficient educated speaker with advanced communication skills.

These are broad levels and can be divided into sublevels; for example, B2 can be divided into B2.1 and B2.2 (or B2+ as it is also known). There is a certain amount of flexibility in the system and some course providers may subdivide the levels further to organise teaching over a number of successive terms or courses. It is not uncommon, for example, to see a language course offered in 12-week blocks labelled A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3. See, for e.g. <https://www.alliance-francaise.ie/registration-general-french-for-adults/#/>

Léiríonn an íomhá seo ó Ní Ghloinn (2020) an dul chun cinn iltoiseach a bhaineann le leibhéil an FTCE.



This image, adapted from Ní Ghloinn (2020), shows the multidimensional view of progression implied by the CEFR levels.

Déantar mionchur síos ar leibhéil an FTCE i scálaí tuairiscíní a bhaineann le gach ceann de na hinniúlachtaí teanga (13 cinn) agus de na gníomhaíochtaí agus straitéisí cumarsáide (67 ar an iomlán) a luadh thuas. Déantar an cur síos seo i bhfoirm ráitis ‘can-do’ nó tuairiscíní cumais a léiríonn céard is féidir leis an bhfoghlaimoir a dhéanamh taobh istigh de gach scil, ag gach leibhéal cumais. Ag bun gach scála (A1-A2), tá na gnéithe is bunúsaí de cibé gníomhaíocht atá i gceist — tascanna nithiúla, intuartha a bhraitheann ar fhoirmlí béil agus ar theanga réamhullmhaithe den chuid is mó. De réir mar a théann muid suas na scálaí i dtreo B2-C2, feictear méadú suntasach i réimse, castacht, cruinneas agus sofaisticiúlacht na dtascanna cumarsáide atá i gceist. Tá an fhorbairt sin le feiceáil go soiléir sa scála thíos a bhaineann leis an gcaint phoiblí, atá ar fáil ar lch 65-66 den FTCE-IB. Ós rud é go mbaineann an scála sin le gníomhaíocht chumarsáide, ba cheart é a léamh in éineacht leis na tuairiscíní a bhaineann leis na hinniúlachtaí teanga (ar nós an scála eile thíos a bhaineann leis an gcruinneas gramadaí, ó lch 132 den FTCE- IB.) chun radharc iltoiseach a fháil ar an gcumas teanga i gcomhthéacs na cainte poiblí.

The CEFR levels are elaborated fully through the descriptor scales for each of the 13 communicative language competences, and 67 activities and strategies mentioned above. They are described in positive terms using can-do statements or proficiency descriptors, that outline exactly what a learner can do in relation to each skill, at each proficiency level. At the bottom of each scale (A1-A2), the focus is on the most basic aspects of the given activity – concrete, predictable tasks that rely on a limited repertoire of formulaic stock phrases and chunks. As we move up the scales towards B2-C2, we see a significant increase in the range, complexity, precision and sophistication of the communicative tasks involved. This progression can be seen clearly in the descriptor scale for ‘Addressing Audiences’ below, taken from page 65-66 of the CEFR-CV. As that scale relates to a communicative language activity, it should be read alongside descriptors for communicative language competences, such as the scale for Grammatical Accuracy also shown below (page 132 of the CEFR-CV), to provide a multidimensional view of language proficiency in the context of public speaking.

### Addressing Audiences

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>C2</b>  | Can present a complex topic confidently and articulately to an audience unfamiliar with it, structuring and adapting the talk flexibly to meet the audience’s needs. Can handle difficult and even hostile questioning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>C1</b>  | Can give a clear, well-structured presentation on a complex subject, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples.<br>Can structure a longer presentation appropriately in order to help the audience follow the sequence of ideas and understand the overall argumentation.<br>Can speculate or hypothesise in presenting a complex subject, comparing and evaluating alternative proposals and arguments.<br>Can handle interjections well, responding spontaneously and almost effortlessly. |
| <b>B2+</b> | Can give a clear, systematically developed presentation, with highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.<br>Can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up interesting points raised by members of the audience, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>B2</b>  | Can give a clear, prepared presentation, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

### Grammatical Accuracy

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>C2</b>  | Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others’ reactions).                                                                                                             |
| <b>C1</b>  | Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot.                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>B2+</b> | Good grammatical control; occasional “slips” or non-systematic errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and can often be corrected in retrospect.                                                                                         |
| <b>B2</b>  | Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make mistakes which lead to misunderstanding.<br>Has a good command of simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms, although they tend to use complex structures rigidly with some inaccuracy. |
| <b>B1+</b> | Communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; generally good control, though with noticeable                                                                                                                                                                       |

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|            | Can take a series of follow-up questions with a degree of fluency and spontaneity which poses no strain for either themselves or the audience.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>B1+</b> | Can give a prepared presentation on a familiar topic within their field, outlining similarities and differences (e.g. between products, countries/regions, plans).                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>B1</b>  | Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within their field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision.<br>Can take follow-up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the delivery is rapid. |
| <b>A2+</b> | Can give a short, rehearsed presentation on a topic pertinent to their everyday life, and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions, plans and actions. Can cope with a limited number of straightforward follow-up questions.                                                                                               |
| <b>A2</b>  | Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject.<br>Can answer straightforward follow-up questions if they can ask for repetition and if some help with the formulation of their reply is possible.                                                                                                             |
| <b>A1</b>  | Can use a very short prepared text to deliver a rehearsed statement (e.g. to formally introduce someone, to propose a toast).                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|               |                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               | mother-tongue influence. Errors occur, but it is clear what they are trying to express.                                                              |
| <b>B1</b>     | Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used “routines” and patterns associated with more predictable situations.                      |
| <b>A2</b>     | Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes; nevertheless, it is usually clear what they are trying to say. |
| <b>A1</b>     | Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertoire.                                      |
| <b>Pre-A1</b> | Can employ very simple principles of word/sign order in short statements.                                                                            |

## 1.6 Próifílí v. leibhéil chumais/ Proficiency profiles v. levels

Aithníonn an FTCE gur minic nach mbíonn an leibhéal céanna cumais ag duine sna scileanna éagsúla teanga. D’fhéadfadh foghlaimoir a bheith níos láidre ó thaobh na scileanna gabhchumais ná na scileanna ginchumais, nó a mhalairt. Fiú taobh istigh d’aon scil amháin, is minic a bhíonn buanna agus laigí ag foghlaimoirí maidir le hinniúlachtaí áirithe (m.sh. líofacht v. cruinneas na teanga labhartha) nó i gcomhthéacsanna faoi leith cumarsáide (m.sh. cur i láthair réamhullmhaithe a thabhairt ar ábhar a bhfuil taithí ag an bhfoghlaimoir air v. an idirghníomhaíocht shóisialta i gcomhthéacsanna neamhfhoirmiúla).

Cé gur minic a bhíonn curaclaim, cúrsaí nó scrúduithe teanga bunaithe ar leibhéal faoi leith den FTCE, moltar a bheith ag cuimhneamh ar phróifíl seachas ar leibhéal cumais an duine aonair, le haitheantas a thabhairt do na leibhéil éagsúla chumais a d’fhéadfadh a bheith ag an duine sin i scileanna nó i gcomhthéacsanna éagsúla.

The CEFR recognises that language users often vary in their ability across different language skills. A learner might have stronger receptive skills than productive skills, or vice versa. Even within an individual skill, a learner may have strengths or weaknesses in relation to certain dimensions (e.g. fluency v. accuracy in speech), or in certain communicative contexts (e.g. a prepared presentation on a familiar topic v. social interaction in an informal setting).

While a particular language curriculum, course or exam might be based on a specific CEFR level, it is often useful to think of proficiency ‘profiles’ rather than levels, when describing the competence of an individual learner, in order to recognise the uneven proficiency profiles learners might have across different language skills and contexts.

## 2. Céard atá i gceist le curaclam a ailíniú leis an FTCE? / What does it mean to align a curriculum with the CEFR?

### 2.1 Céard atá á ailíniú againn? / What are we aligning?

Is minic sa lá atá inniu ann a mhaítear go bhfuil curaclaim, cúrsaí agus téacsleabhair teanga ailínithe leis an FTCE, ach ní i gcónaí a dhéantar an t-ailíniú sin ar bhealach críochnúil. Is minic, mar shampla, a luaitear leibhéal de chuid an FTCE le cúrsaí teanga, lena chur in iúl go bhfuil an cúrsa ag leibhéal A2 nó B1, nuair is beag fianaise atá ann go bhfuil sé sin bailí. Tá an fhadhb seo aitheanta ag roinnt mhaith scoláirí, ina measc, údair an imleabhair bhreise den FTCE:

*Unfortunately, the CEFR is often 'applied' by superimposing the CEFR levels on a traditional curriculum organised around the four skills and a grammatical progression ... Many people think they know what the CEFR is without having actually read it; some even think that the ELP self-assessment grid is the complete CEFR. (Piccardo & North, 2019: 15)*

Mar a míníodh i gcuid 1 thuas, níl sna leibhéil chumais ach gné amháin de chóras an FTCE. Tá sé tábhachtach a thuiscint freisin nach bhfuil sa scála iomlánaíoch (Council of Europe, 2001: 24) ná sna greillí féinmheasúnachta (Council of Europe, 2001: 26-27; 2020, 177-181) ach achoimrí a thugann sracfhéachaint ar an gcumas teanga ag gach leibhéal. Níl sna gnéithe sin ach cuid bheag amháin den chóras, agus ní hionann tagairt a dhéanamh dóibh i gcuraclam teanga agus an curaclam sin a ailíniú leis an FTCE. Ní hé aidhm an FTCE a bheith saintreorach agus moltar úsáid a bhaint as ar bhealach criticiúil agus solúbtha, chun na gnéithe is ábhartha a roghnú agus a chur in oiriúint do riachtanais an chomhthéacs. D'fhéadfaí, i gcásanna áirithe, curaclam nó acmhainn a ailíniú ar bhealach an-ghinearálta le hábhar, struchtúr agus cur chuige an chreata. Fiú i gcásanna den chineál sin, áfach, ní leor tagairt a dhéanamh do na leibhéil amháin, agus ní mór an nasc leis an FTCE a mhíniú i gcáipéisí an churaclaim.

Anuas air sin, fiú má dhéantar curaclam a ailíniú leis an FTCE ar bhealach ginearálta, ba cheart go mbeadh an curaclam ar fad i gceist seachas cuid bheag amháin. Ní féidir a mhaíomh go bhfuil curaclam ar bith ailínithe leis an FTCE mura bhfuil ailíniú tógachaíoch nó inmheánach idir gnéithe éagsúla an chórais; is iad sin, na torthaí foghlama, an measúnú foirmitheach agus suimitheach, na modhanna teagaisc agus foghlama, téacsleabhair (más cuí) nó acmhainní eile, agus an oiliúint do mhúinteoirí. Maíonn O'Sullivan (2020) go bhfuil an t-ailíniú tógachaíoch sin

Many language curricula, courses and textbooks claim alignment to the CEFR these days but may do so with varying degrees of rigour. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for language course providers to use the CEFR level labels in a superficial way, stating that a course is at A2 or B1 level, with little or no basis to support that claim. This problem has been identified by many within the field, including authors of the CEFR-CV:

As outlined in section 1 above, the CEFR levels are just one aspect of the system. Similarly, the 1-page global scale (Council of Europe, 2001: 24) or 2-5 page self-assessment grids (Council of Europe, 2001: 26-27; 2020, 177-181) are quick-glance summaries of language proficiency at each level. These aspects are merely the tip of the iceberg and reference to them in a curriculum does not constitute alignment with the CEFR. The CEFR is not intended to be used prescriptively, and its authors encourage a critical and somewhat flexible approach to its use, whereby the elements most relevant to the users' needs are selected and adapted to the given context. It may be sufficient in some cases for a curriculum or resource to be informed by the CEFR, or aligned in a broad, generic sense to the overall structure, content and approach of the framework; however, even broad or generic alignment must go beyond reference to the levels, and the basis for any claim of alignment should be explained in curriculum documentation.

Furthermore, even broad alignment of a curriculum to the CEFR should relate to entire curriculum, and not just one component. No curriculum can be said to be aligned with the CEFR without constructive or internal alignment between all aspects of the system, including learning outcomes, formative and summative assessment, teaching and learning, textbooks and resources, and teacher training. In fact, O'Sullivan (2020) argues that this kind of coherence is essential

riachtanach le go mbeadh rath ar aon chóras foghlama, agus mar a mhíníonn Little (2011: 382-3), is féidir leis an FTCE tacú go mór leis an ailíniú sin i gcás cúrsaí teanga, má bhaintear leas as mar is cuí:

*... the single most innovative feature of the CEFR is its capacity to bring curriculum, pedagogy and assessment into much closer interdependence than has usually been the case ... The overwhelming tendency to make only partial use of the CEFR means that it has the least impact where it should make the greatest difference: in the L2 classroom.*

for the success of any learning system, and as Little (2011: 382-3) explains, the CEFR can greatly facilitate and support such constructive or internal alignment within a language learning programme, if used appropriately:

## 2.2 Acmhainní agus modhanna ailínithe/ Resources and approaches to alignment

Tá go leor treoracha úsáideacha ar fáil le tacú leo siúd atá ag iarraidh tabhairt faoin ailíniú leis an FTCE. Is ar thástálacha agus scrúduithe a dhírigh na treoracha luatha (Council of Europe, 2009) ach foilsíodh lámhleabhar nua le déanaí (British Council, UKALTA, EALTA, & ALTE, 2022) a bhfuil sé mar aidhm aige treoir níos cuimsithí a chur ar fáil dóibh siúd atá ag iarraidh aon ghné den oideachas a ailíniú leis an FTCE. Molann an lámhleabhar cúig chéim ba cheart a thógáil mar chuid den phróiseas ailínithe; is iad sin, Tuiscint a fháil ar an FTCE, Sainiú, Caighdeánú, Socrú caighdeán agus Bailíochtú. Tugtar comhairle chuimsitheach phraiticiúil le haghaidh gach ceann de na céimeanna sin, chomh maith le gníomhaíochtaí a d'fhéadfaí a dhéanamh le foireann atá ag plé le curaclam/measúnú a dhearadh nó a ailíniú, nó mar chuid de cheardlanna oiliúna do mhúinteoirí atá ag iarraidh an FTCE a chur i bhfeidhm.

Nuair atá curaclam nua á fhorbairt, is féidir an FTCE a úsáid mar phointe tosaigh le tacú leis an machnamh agus leis an anailís ar riachtanais, agus chun ábhar an churaclaim a shainiú ón mbarr anuas. I gcás curaclaim atá ann cheana féin, áfach, is féidir ailíniú a dhéanamh ón mbonn aníos, trí anailís chriticiúil a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama, tascanna measúnaithe, ábhair, acmhainní agus cleachtais an churaclaim, agus iad a mheaitseáil le hábhar an FTCE. Molann Beacco et al. (2016) an cur chuige sin, ionas gur féidir athruithe a chur i bhfeidhm de réir a chéile. Tacaíonn North (2014: 111) leis an tuairim sin nuair a mhaíonn sé: “a wide ‘innovation gap’ induces failure in very many cases.” Má tá athbhreithniú nó athdhearadh an-chuimsitheach á dhéanamh ar churaclam, seans go mbeadh meascán den ailíniú ón mbarr anuas agus ón mbonn aníos úsáideach.

There are several very useful resources available to guide those embarking on a CEFR-alignment project. While earlier guides (Council of Europe, 2009) focused primarily on the alignment of tests or exams with the CEFR, a more recent handbook (British Council, UKALTA, EALTA, & ALTE, 2022) aims to provide a more comprehensive and user-friendly guide to aligning education, more broadly, with the CEFR. As with the previous manuals, the handbook describes the alignment process in five steps, including Familiarisation, Specification, Standardisation, Standard-setting and Validation. Detailed practical advice is provided for each of those steps, including group activities to be conducted by teams involved in curriculum/test development or alignment projects, or as part of teacher training workshops for successful implementation.

When developing a new curriculum, the CEFR can serve as a starting point to facilitate reflection, needs analysis, and top-down specification of curriculum content. In the case of an existing curriculum, however, alignment might involve a bottom-up approach, whereby existing learning outcomes, assessment tasks and other curricular content, resources and practices may be analysed critically and mapped to the CEFR. Beacco et al. (2016) advocate such an approach, so that changes can be implemented incrementally. This view is supported by North (2014: 111) who warns that a “wide ‘innovation gap’ induces failure in very many cases.” If CEFR-alignment is part of a more comprehensive reform or redevelopment of an existing curriculum, a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches might be appropriate.

## 2.3 Curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an FTCE tríd an dearadh droim ar ais/ Aligning the LC Irish curriculum to the CEFR through backward design

Bunaithe ar an méid atá thuas agus ar na treoirlínte a luaitear sa ‘Lámhleabhar’ a luadh faoi 2.2, déanfaidh mé plé anois ar chuid de na céimeanna agus ceisteanna ba thábhachtaí le curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an FTCE, trí chur chuige ‘droim ar ais’.

With the above in mind, drawing on the guidelines in the ‘Handbook’ referenced in the previous section, I will now discuss some of the key steps and questions most relevant to the alignment of the LC Irish curriculum with the CEFR, through a ‘backward design’ approach.

### 2.3.1 Tuiscint a fháil ar an FTCE/ Familiarisation with the CEFR

Sula gcuirtear tús leis an ailíniú, tá sé tábhachtach eolas agus tuiscint a fháil ar an FTCE é féin, agus ar na codanna éagsúla den scéimre iltoiseach cumais. Tá treoir agus gníomhaíochtaí úsáideacha ar fáil i gCaibidil 2 den ‘Lámhleabhar’ ailínithe, chun cabhrú le húsáideoirí cur lena dtuiscint ar an gcóras.

Before attempting CEFR alignment, users must ensure that they are thoroughly familiar with the framework itself, and with the various parts of the multidimensional descriptive scheme. Chapter 2 of the alignment ‘Handbook’ provides very useful activities and materials to facilitate the familiarisation process.

### 2.3.3 Anailís agus ailíniú ón mbonn aníos / Bottom-up analysis and alignment

Mar chuid den phróiseas thuas, seans go mbeadh sé úsáideach anailís a dhéanamh ar shiollabais reatha na hArdteiste agus ar na dréachtsonraíochtaí nua a foilsíodh in 2021, le haird a tharraingt ar na cosúlachtaí agus ar na difríochtaí atá idir na cáipéisí sin agus an FTCE. Is cosúil, mar shampla, go bhfuil cuid de na seacht gcróichumas a luaitear anois leis an tSraith Shinsearach (NCCA, 2024) – leithéidí ‘Cumarsáid’, ‘Ag obair le daoine eile’, ‘Páirt a ghlacadh sa tsochaí’ – ag teacht go dlúth le hábhar agus le fealsúnacht an FTCE. Luaitear freisin ‘Tú féin agus an fhoghlaim a bhainistiú’, rud atá ag teacht leis na coincheapa *savoir-être* agus *savoir apprendre* san FTCE. Tá trasnaíl idir cuid de na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis an snáithe ‘Feasacht’ sna dréachtsonraíochtaí freisin agus na coincheapa *savoir-être* agus *savoir apprendre*, an cruinneas gramadaí agus an oiriúnacht shochtheangeolaíoch. Nuair a chuirtear na gnéithe seo i gcomparáid lena chéile, feictear bearnaí agus difríochtaí, freisin, idir curaclam na Gaeilge agus an FTCE. Mar shampla, cé go luaitear an idirghníomhaíocht labhartha sna dréachtsonraíochtaí, rud atá ag teacht leis an FTCE, d’fhéadfaimis a fhiafraí ar cheart go mbeadh na scileanna a bhaineann leis an idirghníomhaíocht scríofa nó ar líne san áireamh

As part of the familiarisation process, it may be useful to analyse the existing LC syllabuses and the 2021 draft specifications, in order to highlight areas of convergence or divergence from the CEFR. For example, some of the seven Key Competences in Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2024), such as ‘Communicating’, ‘Working with others’ and ‘Participating in society’, appear to align very well with the content and philosophy of the CEFR. The key competence of ‘Managing learning and self’ is very compatible with the CEFR general competences of *savoir-être* and *savoir apprendre*. Some of the learning outcomes relating to the ‘Awareness’ strand in the 2021 draft specifications also overlap with the concepts of *savoir-être* and *savoir apprendre*, while others could be mapped onto CEFR descriptors listed under grammatical accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriateness. This kind of mapping may also highlight gaps and differences between the existing curriculum and the CEFR. For example, while the inclusion of spoken interaction in the learning outcomes for the draft specifications is in line with the CEFR approach, we might consider whether written or online interaction and the skills related to mediation should also be included. Similarly, comparison of CEFR

freisin, chomh maith leis na scileanna a bhaineann leis an idirghabháil. Seans go bhfeicfí áiteanna freisin a bhféadfaí sainiú níos iomláine a dhéanamh ar thorthaí foghlama na ndréachtsonraíochtaí. Sampla maith de sin ná an toradh foghlama a deir gur “chóir go mbeadh ar chumas an scoláire ... foghraíocht agus fuaimeanna na Gaeilge a úsáid go cruinn” (NCCA, 2021a: 32; 2021b: 31). Feictear chomh doiléir agus atá sé sin, nuair a chuirtear i gcomparáid é leis na tuairiscíní mionsonraithe a bhaineann leis an smacht fóineolaíoch ar lch 34-35 den FTCE-IB.

descriptors with learning outcome included in the draft specifications may highlight areas where the latter could be conceptualised more fully. A good example of this is the learning outcome which states that “students should be able to ... accurately use Irish pronunciation and sounds” (NCCA, 2021c: 31; 2021d: 28). The vague nature of this statement becomes strikingly clear when contrasted with the detailed descriptor scales for phonological control on pages 34-35 of the CEFR-CV.

### 2.3.2 Anailís ar riachtanais ón mbarr anuas, bunaithe ar thuairiscíní an FTCE/ Top-down needs analysis using the CEFR descriptors

Nuair atá tuiscint ag úsáideoirí ar an gcreat, is féidir tosú ar an deardh droim ar ais. Is é an chéad chéim sa phróiseas sin ná anailís a dhéanamh ar riachtanais chumarsáide dhaltaí Gaeilge na hArdteiste, taobh istigh agus taobh amuigh den chóras oideachais. Go hidéalach, bheadh réimse páirtithe leasmhara páirteach sa phróiseas seo, ina measc: múinteoirí, tuismitheoirí, daltaí, ionadaithe ón tríú leibhéal, eagraíochtaí Gaeilge, baill den CNCM, Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit (CSS), *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* (COGG), agus páirtneirí eile cuí.

D’fhéadfaí úsáid a bhaint as an 67 scála a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí agus straitéisí cumarsáide teanga (sa tábla ar lch 7) le tacú leis an anailís, trí fhiafraí:

- Cé na modhanna agus na gníomhaíochtaí is tábhachtaí don chomhthéacs?
- Cé na cinn ar cheart tús áite a thabhairt dóibh sa churaclam?
- Cé na cinn nach gá a chur san áireamh?
- Cén chaoi ar cheart na gníomhaíochtaí a chur in oiriúint d’aoisghrúpa na ndaltaí nó do chomhthéacs sochtheangeolaíoch na Gaeilge?
- Cé na leibhéil ab oiriúnaí do dhaltaí Ardteiste ó chúlraí éagsúla? An dócha go mbeadh na leibhéil chéanna i gceist sna scileanna ar fad, nó an dócha go mbeadh próifílí éagothroma ag grúpaí éagsúla daltaí sna scileanna éagsúla?

Ba cheart dul tríd an bpróiseas céanna i gcás na n-inniúlachtaí cumarsáide teanga (13 scála a bhaineann le scileanna ar nós cruinneas gramadaí, réimse foclóra, smacht fóineolaíoch agus líofacht). Ba cheart cuimhneamh freisin ar na ceithre inniúlacht ghinearálta agus an ceangal atá eatarthu siúd agus riachtanais na ndaltaí Ardteiste.

Once users are familiar with the CEFR, work can begin on the backward design of the curriculum. The first step in this process should be an analysis of the real-life communicative needs of LC Irish students, both within and beyond the education system. Ideally a range of stakeholders would be involved in this process, including teachers, parents, students, third-level educators, Irish-language organisations, members of the NCCA, State Exams Commission (SEC), *An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta* (COGG), and other relevant partners.

Looking at the 67 descriptor scales for communicative language activities and strategies (summarised on page 7) to support this analysis, we might ask:

- Which modes and activities are most relevant to the context?
- Which should be prioritised in the curriculum?
- Which could be excluded?
- How should the descriptions of activities be adapted to make them more appropriate to the age-group and sociolinguistic context of Irish?
- Which level(s) would be most appropriate as learning targets for LC Irish students from various backgrounds, taking into consideration the potential for uneven proficiency profiles across various skills?

The process above may then be repeated for the communicative language competences (the 13 scales related to skills such as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range, phonological control and fluency). Consideration should also be given to the four general competences and their relevance to the needs of LC Irish students.

### 2.3.4 Sainiú agus rangú na dtorthaí foghlama/ Specification and organisation of learning outcomes

D'fhéadfaí torthaí foghlama a dhréachtú bunaithe ar an anailís thuas, trí na tuairiscíní is feiliúnaí a roghnú agus a chur in oiriúint don chomhthéacs mar is cuí. Léiríonn North (2014: 116-117) conas is féidir tuairiscíní an FTCE a shimpliú, a fhorbairt nó 'unzipping' a dhéanamh orthu le micrea-thuairiscíní a fhorbairt, chun iad a chur in oiriúint do riachtanais comhthéacs faoi leith, nó chun tascanna praiticiúla nithiúla a dhéanamh astu. D'fhéadfaí a rá go bhfuil an cur chuige sin ag teacht, ar bhealach, le moltaí a rinneadh le déanaí maidir le teimpléad na sonraíochtaí nua don tSraith Shinsearach (NCCA, 2023c). Moladh, as seo amach, go gcuirfí tuilleadh eolais nó scafláil bhreise leis na torthaí foghlama, chun iad a léiriú ar bhealach níos soiléire do na húsáideoirí. D'fhéadfaí liosta téamaí agus fothéamaí, cosúil leo siúd atá ar fáil i siollabais reatha Ghaeilge na hArdteiste, a chur ar fáil mar chuid den scafláil sin, le comhthéacs breise a thabhairt do na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáideacha.

Is dócha go mbeidh gá, go háirithe, na tuairiscíní a bhaineann leis na hinniúlachtaí cumarsáideacha teanga a chur in oiriúint do chomhthéacs na Gaeilge. Mar gheall gur dearadh an FTCE le go bhféadfaí é a úsáid i gcomhthéacs teangacha éagsúla, is cur síos sách ginearálta a dhéantar ar chuid de na hinniúlachtaí teanga. Rinneadh sin d'aon ghnó, ionas go bhféadfaí iad a shainiú do theangacha faoi leith (Council of Europe, 2005; Saville and Milanović, 2012; Ní Ghloinn, 2020). Sa scála faoin gcruinneas gramadaí atá le feiceáil i gcuid 1.5 thuas, mar shampla, déantar tagairt do 'struchtúir shimplí teanga' agus 'foirmeacha casta gramadaí'. Beidh sainiú níos mó le déanamh ar na tuairiscíní áirithe sin, chun iad a chur in oiriúint do chomhthéacs na Gaeilge, chun go mbeidh siad soiléir mar thorthaí foghlama.

Is fiú machnamh a dhéanamh freisin ar rangú na dtorthaí foghlama. Sna dréacht-sonraíochtaí curaclaim Ardteiste a foilsíodh in 2021, leagadh amach na torthaí foghlama de réir trí shnáithe – cumarsáid, feacht agus cruthaitheacht. Dúradh gurbh í an chumarsáid an príomhshnáithe, agus luadh cúig scil mar chuid de: éisteacht, léamh, labhairt, idirghníomhaíocht labhartha agus scríobh. Dá ndéanfaí torthaí foghlama nua a shainiú bunaithe ar an anailís ar riachtanais thuas, bheadh cinneadh le déanamh ar cheart iad a chomhtháthú leis na cúig scil ó na dréacht-

A draft set of learning outcomes may then be specified based on the needs analysis above, drawing on CEFR descriptor scales and adapting or reformulating them to suit the given context. North (2014: 116-117) illustrates how CEFR descriptors can be elaborated, simplified or 'unzipped' into micro-descriptors in order to adapt them to the needs of a particular context, or to translate them to concrete functional tasks. This 'unzipping' may be compatible with recent recommendations for the 'technical form' of curriculum specifications within the redeveloped Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2023c), whereby broad learning outcomes will be accompanied by additional detail or 'scaffolding', in order to illustrate them more clearly to users. A list of themes and subthemes, such as those included in the current LC Irish syllabuses, could potentially be included as part of this scaffolding, to provide additional context for learning outcomes related to communicative activities.

The descriptors for communicative language competences, in particular, may require adaption to the context of Irish. As the CEFR was designed to be universally applicable to a range of languages, these descriptors were deliberately underspecified to allow for localisation in specific language contexts (Council of Europe, 2005; Saville and Milanović, 2012; Ní Ghloinn, 2020). The scale for grammatical accuracy (shown in 1.5 above), for example, includes references to "simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms". Descriptors such as those may therefore require further specification in order to adapt them to the context of Irish, and formulate them as clear, unambiguous learning outcomes.

The organisation of the learning outcomes is also worth noting. The 2021 draft specifications for LC Irish structure learning outcomes according to three strands – communication, awareness and creativity. The primary strand, communication, includes five skills: listening, reading, speaking, spoken interaction and writing. If new learning outcomes were specified based on the needs analysis exercise above, a decision would need to be made whether to integrate them into the existing five skill categories of the draft specifications, or to restructure them

sonraíochtaí, nó arbh fhearr iad a leagan amach de réir na gceithre mhodh atá san FTCE, an idirghníomhaíocht agus an idirghabháil san áireamh. Cé go bhfuil taithí ag daoine ar na cúig scil, seans go mbeadh sé níos fusa aird a tharraingt ar na gnéithe sóisialta agus comhoibríocha den chumarsáid taobh istigh de na ceithre mhodh. Ceist faoi leith ar cheart machnamh a dhéanamh uirthi ná an t-idirdhealú idir gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáide (céard is féidir a dhéanamh leis an teanga) agus na hinniúlachtaí teanga (na scileanna teanga a theastaíonn chun an chumarsáid sin a chur i gcrích ar bhealach éifeachtach). Is faoin gcatagóir ‘Feasacht Teanga’ is mó a luaitear na hinniúlachtaí teanga sin sna dréacht-sonraíochtaí, ach mar gheall ar an bhfócas a bhaineann leis an snáithe sin, is dócha, ní chuirtear mórán béime ar an líofacht ná ar inniúlachtaí eile pragmatacha a luaitear san FTCE.

### 2.3.5 An measúnú a dhearadh/ Designing the assessment

#### **Tascanna measúnaithe a dhearadh bunaithe ar na torthaí foghlama:**

Is é an chéad chéim eile sa chur chuige droim ar ais ná machnamh a dhéanamh ar chúrsaí measúnaithe. Cén cineál fianaise a theastóidh lena dheimhniú go bhfuil na torthaí foghlama bainte amach? Cén chaoi ar féidir na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáide a úsáid le tascanna dílse cumarsáide a dhearadh, don mheasúnú foirmitheach agus suimitheach (seachtrach)? Tóg, mar shampla, ráiteas mar seo a leanas: “Is féidir cláir faisnéise agus ábhar craolta a thuiscint, den chuid is mó, a fhad is a úsáidtear an teanga chaighdeánach, agus is féidir meon agus dearcadh a aithint, srl.” D’fhéadfaí sin a thástáil trí thascanna cluastuisceana bunaithe ar ábhar dílis (nó leath-dhílis) craolta. Ar an lámh eile, d’fhéadfaí toradh foghlama a bhaineann le scileanna cur i láthair a thástáil mar chuid de mheasúnú rang-bhunaithe nó mar chuid de scrúdú béil.

#### **Critéir mheasúnachta/ rúibricí scórála a dhearadh:**

Mar a léiríodh thuas, is féidir na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí cumarsáideacha teanga a úsáid le tascanna measúnaithe a dhearadh, ach is féidir na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis na hinniúlachtaí cumarsáide teanga a úsáid le critéir mheasúnachta nó rúibricí scórála a dhréachtú do na tascanna measúnaithe sin. Seans go mbeadh an ghreille ‘*Qualitative features of spoken language*’ (Council of Europe, 2020: 183-5) cabhrach freisin agus critéir

according to the four modes of the CEFR, including interaction and mediation. While the former may be more familiar to teachers and learners, the latter might allow for greater emphasis on the social and collaborative nature of the language skills.

Another consideration in the organisation of the learning outcomes might be the distinction between communicative language activities and strategies (what learners can do with the language) and communicative language competences (the linguistic skills needed to communicate effectively). The draft specifications include specific learning outcomes related to grammatical accuracy and sociolinguistic appropriateness under the category of ‘Language Awareness’, but due in part to the organisation of the strands, fluency and other pragmatic competences described in the CEFR, receive less attention.

#### **Designing assessment tasks based on learning outcomes:**

The next consideration in the backward-design approach is assessment. What evidence might be required to assess students’ attainment of learning outcomes? How can learning outcomes based on communicative language activities be used to design authentic communicative tasks, as part of formative and summative (external) assessment? For example, a descriptor such as “Can understand most documentaries and most other recorded or broadcast material delivered in the standard form of the language and can identify mood, attitude, etc.” could easily be translated into listening assessment tasks, using authentic or semi-authentic broadcast material. Similarly, a statement such as, “Can give clear, detailed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to their field of interest, expanding and supporting ideas with subsidiary points and relevant examples” could be incorporated into class-based assessments or oral exams.

#### **Elaboration of assessment criteria/ scoring rubrics:**

While learning outcomes related to communicative language activities and strategies provide a useful basis for the design of assessment tasks, those related to communicative language competences can be used to draft assessment criteria or scoring rubrics that measure performance on tasks and assessments. The summary grid ‘Qualitative features of spoken language’ (Council of Europe,

mheasúnachta á ndearadh do thascanna labhartha. Ar ndóigh, mar a luadh thuas, ba cheart na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann le scileanna ar nós cruinneas gramadaí a shainiú tuilleadh chun critéir mheasúnachta atá cruinn agus soiléir i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge a bhunú orthu.

Tá sé tábhachtach go ndéantar sonraíochtaí an churaclaim agus an scrúdaithe a dhearadh ag an am céanna, lena chinntiú go mbeidh ailíniú tógachaíoch idir na torthaí foghlama agus an measúnú. Ní leor eolas a thabhairt sna sonraíochtaí maidir le codanna an mheasúnaithe agus dáileadh na marcanna (m.sh. Béaltriail: 40%); ba cheart eolas a thabhairt freisin maidir leis na cineálacha tascanna a bheidh le déanamh i ngach cuid den mheasúnú, na cineálacha téacsanna a bheidh mar chuid de na trialacha gabhchumais, agus na critéir mheasúnachta a úsáidfear do na tascanna ginchumais. Thabharfadh sonraíochtaí den chineál sin treoir shoiléir do mhúinteoirí agus d'fhoghlaimoirí, agus bheidís ina dteimpléad leanúnach le tacú le dearadh na bpáipéar scrúdaithe do gach tréimhse mheasúnaithe. Chun go dtarlódh sé sin ar fad, bheadh comhoibriú éifeachtach ag teastáil idir CNCM agus CSS, agus an curaclam nua á dhearadh. Is cosúil go mbeadh sé sin ag teacht le haidhmeanna an athbhreithnithe ar an tSraith Shinsearach, a bhfuil sé mar aidhm aige cur leis an gcomhleanúnachas idir an curaclam agus an measúnú. Mar a luaitear sa Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022: 65), beidh an comhoibriú le CSS agus le páirtithe leasmhara eile lárnach san obair sin.

2020: 183-5) may also be helpful in this area. As mentioned above, learning outcomes for skills such as grammatical accuracy or phonological control may need to be specified further to adapt them as clear, consistent assessment criteria in the context of the Irish language.

It is essential that specifications for tests and other assessments are designed in parallel with curriculum development to ensure constructive alignment between learning outcomes and assessment. Such specifications should include more than just the components of the exam and their weighting (such as Oral exam: 40%); they should include further detail on the kind of tasks to be included within each component, the kind of texts that could be included in receptive tests, and the assessment criteria for productive tasks. In this way, they would provide a clear guide to teachers and learners, while acting as a consistent blueprint for the design of test materials for each exam session. For this to happen, there must be very close collaboration between the NCCA and SEC at curriculum development stage. Again, this would appear to be in line with a key focus of Senior Cycle redevelopment, which aims to increase coherence between curriculum and assessment. As stated in the Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (NCCA, 2022: 65) collaboration between the SEC and other relevant stakeholders will be central to the attainment of that goal.

### 2.3.6 Píolótú, caighdeánú agus socrú caighdeán/ Piloting, standardisation and standard-setting

Nuair atá teimpléid do na tascanna measúnaithe réidh, b'fhiú píolótú a dhéanamh orthu lena chinntiú go bhfuil siad ag an leibhéal cuí do na foghlaimoirí, go ndéanann siad measúnú éifeachtach ar chumas na ndaltaí agus go bhfuil caighdeán teanga na ndaltaí ag an leibhéal a rabhthas ag súil leis. D'fhéadfaí na samplaí agus sonraí ón bpíolótú sin a úsáid le coigeartú a dhéanamh ar na torthaí foghlama, ar na tascanna measúnaithe agus ar na rúibricí scórála.

It may be useful at this point to pilot task formats to ensure that they are at the appropriate level for learners, that they collect meaningful evidence for assessment and that learner output is at the standard expected. The data and insights gleaned from this pilot, including illustrative examples of learner performance on production tasks, could be used to refine learning outcomes, assessment tasks and scoring rubrics.

Cé go bhféadfadh torthaí foghlama an churaclaim agus na tascanna measúnaithe a bheith ag leibhéal faoi leith (m.sh. B1 nó B2), d'fhéadfadh foghlaimoirí a bhfuil

It is important to note that while the learning outcomes/ curricular goals and tasks may be pitched at a particular level (e.g. B1 or B2), learners of various

cúlraí éagsúla nó leibhéil éagsúla chumais acu feidhmiú os cionn an leibhéil sin nó faoina bhun i dtascanna nó i scileanna áirithe. D'fhéadfadh sé tarlú, mar sin, go mbainfeadh gráid éagsúla scrúdaithe le leibhéil nó foleibhéil éagsúla ar an FTCE. Mar a mhínítear i gcéim 5 den lámhleabhar ailínithe, is féidir samplaí ón bpíolótú a úsáid le teacht ar chomhaontú maidir leis an íoschaighdeán nó grád a theastaíonn sa scrúdú lena rá go bhfuil foghlaimeoir ag leibhéal faoi leith den FTCE. Is féidir na samplaí céanna sin a úsáid ina dhiaidh sin, mar shamplaí tagarmharcála le tacú leis an oiliúint agus leis an gcaighdeánú, mar a mhínítear sa lámhleabhar.

backgrounds and levels of ability may perform below or above that level in specific tasks. Different achievement grades may therefore demonstrate different CEFR levels or sub-levels. The process of standard-setting, step 5 of the alignment handbook, can be carried out with performance samples from the pilot in order to build consensus regarding the minimum performance standard or cut-score needed in order to say that a learner is at a particular CEFR level. These performance examples may also be used as benchmark samples for future training and standardisation activities, as detailed in the handbook.

### 2.3.7 Bailíochtú agus doiciméadú/ Validation and documentation

Ar mhaithe leis an trédhearcacht, tá sé fíorthábhachtach go ndéanfaí doiciméadú ar na céimeanna ar fad thuas agus go míneofaí cén chaoi a bhfuil an curaclam ailínithe leis an FTCE. Ní leor a rá go bhfuil sé ailínithe a bheag nó a mhór le B2, nó a leithéid. Ní mór an ceangal a mhíniú agus a léiriú go soiléir sa chomhthéacs.

For the sake of transparency, it is important to document all of the steps above and to clearly explain how the curriculum is aligned to the CEFR. Use of a label such as 'broadly aligned with B2' is not sufficient but should be explained and illustrated in the given context.

### 2.3.8 Cur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim: teagasc, acmhainní agus oiliúint/ Curriculum enactment: teaching, resources and training

#### Teagasc agus foghlaim:

Nuair atá torthaí foghlama agus córas measúnaithe an churaclaim forbartha, ní mór cúrsaí teagaisc agus foghlama a phleanáil dá réir, ionas go mbeidh an teagasc ag teacht go dlúth leis an measúnú agus leis an gcur chuige gníomhdhírthe. Sna dréachtsonraíochtaí curaclaim do Ghaeilge na hArdteiste, moltar úsáid a bhaint as punann foghlama, nach gcuirfí san áireamh sa ghrád deiridh, ach a bheadh lárnach sa mheasúnú leanúnach agus mar chuid den phlé sa scrúdú béil. Nuair a bhaintear úsáid as punann tascanna nó tionscadal gníomhdhírthe mar chuid den teagasc, cruthaítear deiseanna do na foghlaimeoirí féinmheasúnú agus machnamh a dhéanamh, aiseolas a fháil, agus feachtas agus scileanna foghlama a fhorbairt. Is cur chuige é sin atá ag teacht go dlúth le haidhmeanna an FTCE. Ní mór míniú soiléir a thabhairt sa churaclam, áfach, maidir le ról agus aidhm na punainne, na cineálacha tascanna agus modhanna oibre a bhainfidh léi, lena chinntiú go mbainfear úsáid aisti ar bhealach atá ag teacht le torthaí foghlama an churaclaim agus leis an measúnú suimitheach. Caithfidh sé a bheith soiléir do na daltaí go

#### Teaching and learning:

Once the curriculum learning outcomes and assessments have been developed, the final step of the backward design approach is to plan teaching and learning activities to closely mirror assessment tasks, based on the action-oriented approach. The draft specifications for LC Irish propose the use of a learner portfolio that would not be assessed as part of the final grade but would be central to formative assessment and would be discussed as part of the oral exam. A portfolio of action-oriented tasks or projects, with opportunities for self-assessment, feedback and reflection, would be very much in line with the CEFR approach, and could contribute greatly to the development of learner autonomy, self-awareness and language learning skills. The curriculum documents should clearly outline the role of the portfolio, however, and the kind of tasks and approach involved, to ensure clear alignment with the learning outcomes and summative assessment tasks. Students must be able to see that the portfolio tasks prepare them for similar tasks in summative assessments and in real-world contexts, to ensure that they engage fully with it.

gcabhróidh tascanna na punainne leo na scileanna cuí a fhorbairt le go mbeidh siad in ann tabhairt faoi thascanna den chineál céanna sa scrúdú agus sa ghnáthshaol.

D'fhéadfaí treoirlinnte mionsonracha ar fáil do mhúinteoirí i gcáipéis ar leith, ach b'fhiú roinnt moltaí a dhéanamh sa chuid de na sonraíochtaí a bhaineann le Foghlaim agus Teagasc maidir le modhanna teagaisc atá oiriúnach don FTCE; ina measc, an cur chuige gníomhdhírthe agus foghlaiméoir-lárnach, an leas ba cheart a bhaint as an sprioctheanga agus as ábhair nó téacsanna dílse sa seomra ranga, an deisteangachas, ról na punainne, an féinmheasúnú agus an machnamh.

#### **Treoirlinnte, oiliúint agus tacaíochtaí do mhúinteoirí:**

Braithfidh rath an churaclaim, mar a chuirfear i bhfeidhm é, cuid mhór ar an oiliúint agus treoir a thabharfar do mhúinteoirí maidir leis an gcur chuige teagaisc, chomh maith leis na hacmhainní a chuirfear ar fáil le tacú leo an curaclam a chur i bhfeidhm. Is pointe é sin a bhfuil béim curtha air maidir le hathfhorbairt na Sraithe Sinsearaí go ginearálta (NCCA, 2022; 2024), agus i gcomhthéacsanna eile ina bhfuil curaclaim teanga ailínithe leis an FTCE. Tá an méid seo a leanas le rá, mar shampla, ag Nagai agus O'Dwyer (2011: 146) bunaithe ar a gcuid taithí féin sa tSeapáin:

*To adapt the CEFR to the entire language program, teachers must share its basic philosophy and ideas. The amalgam of top-down and bottom-up implementation with a strong leadership is necessary.*

Seans go mbeadh athrú meoin i gceist le curaclam bunaithe ar an FTCE a chur i bhfeidhm ag leibhéal na hArdteiste, mar gheall ar an mbéim a bhí ar an bhfoghlaim de ghlanmheabhair sa chomhthéacs sin go dtí seo, agus ní mór tacú le múinteoirí agus iad a chumasú chun an t-athrú sin a dhéanamh. B'fhiú deiseanna agus am a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí forbairt leanúnach a dhéanamh ar a gcuid scileanna teanga agus muiníne féin, agus páirt a ghlacadh i bpobail chleachtais, ionas gur féidir leo smaointe, nuálaíochtaí, taithí agus acmhainní a roinnt. D'fhéadfadh an lámhleabhar ailínithe a luadh thuas, chomh maith le hacmhainní eile [Chomhairle na hEorpa](#) agus an [ECML](#), a bheith an-úsáideach mar áiseanna oiliúna agus tacaíochta do mhúinteoirí.

While detailed teaching guidelines may be provided separately to the core curriculum documents, key recommendations could be made in the Learning and Teaching section of the specifications, regarding pedagogical approaches compatible with the CEFR. This may include reference to a learner-centred, action-oriented approach, the importance of teaching through the target language, and the use of authentic materials and texts in the classroom, plurilingualism and the role of the portfolio, learner self-assessment and reflection.

#### **Guidelines, training and support for teachers:**

The success of curriculum delivery (the 'enacted curriculum') may depend largely on the training and guidance offered to teachers regarding the proposed teaching approach, as well as the quality of resources provided to support implementation. This point has been emphasised in relation to the Senior Cycle redevelopment more generally (NCCA, 2022; 2024), as well as by other who have been involved in the implementation of CEFR-based programmes. Nagai and O'Dwyer (2011: 146), for example, state the following, based on their experience of curriculum implementation in Japan:

The introduction of a CEFR-based curriculum at LC level, where rote-learning has previously been a dominant feature, could require a shift in mindset in some contexts, and teachers must be empowered and supported to bring about that change. This support may include opportunities and time for some teachers to further develop competence and confidence in their own Irish-language skills, or to be involved in communities of practice to share innovations, ideas, experience and resources. The alignment handbook referenced above, as well as other [Council of Europe](#) and [ECML](#) resources may also be useful for teaching training and support.

### 3. Cé na buntáistí a bhainfeadh le curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an FTCE?/ What are the advantages of aligning the LC Irish Curriculum to the CEFR?

I gCuid 2 thuas, rinneadh plé ar na gnéithe den FTCE a bhféadfaí curaclam Gaeilge a ailíniú leo agus na céimeanna a bhainfeadh leis an bpróiseas. Breathnóidh muid anois ar na cúiseanna arbh fhiú é a dhéanamh. Cé na buntáistí a bhainfeadh leis agus arbh fhiú an tairbhe an trioblóid? Creidim féin go bhféadfadh cur chuige an FTCE dul i ngleic le roinnt laigí agus dúshláin shuntasacha a bhaineann le cúrsa reatha Gaeilge na hArdteiste, mar a phléifidh mé thíos.

Section 2 discussed the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of aligning the LC Irish curriculum to the CEFR. Now let’s focus on the question ‘why’? What are the potential advantages of CEFR alignment, and would it be worth the effort involved? I believe that the CEFR approach has the potential to address a number of significant weaknesses and challenges associated with the existing LC Irish programme. I will discuss these below.

#### 3.1 Daltaí a chumasú le bheith ina n-úsáideoirí teanga/ Enabling learners to become language users

Luaitear i siollabas reatha Gaeilge na hArdteiste go bhfuil sé mar aidhm ag an gcúrsa deis a thabhairt do na scoláirí an Ghaeilge a shealbhú de réir a n-acmhainne, ionas go mbeidh siad ábalta páirt ghníomhach a ghlacadh i saol dátheangach na tíre (An Roinn Oideachais & Eolaíochta, 2010: 1). Níl ach 15% de mhuintir na hÉireann ábalta Gaeilge a labhairt go maith nó go han-mhaith, áfach, agus ní labhraíonn ach 3.6% den phobal í go laethúil nó go seachtainiúil taobh amuigh den chóras oideachais (CSO, 2023). Tugann na figiúirí seo le fios nach bhfuil ag éirí leis an gcuraclam reatha scoile an aidhm thuas a bhaint amach, ainneoin go gcaitheann an chuid is mó den phobal 14 bliana ag foghlaim na Gaeilge.

A stated goal of the existing LC Irish syllabuses is that students acquire Irish according to their ability, in order to enable them to actively participate in a bilingual society (An Roinn Oideachais & Eolaíochta, 2010: 1). Only 15% of the Irish population claim to be able to speak Irish well or very well, however, and only 3.6% speak it daily or weekly outside the education system (CSO, 2023). These figures suggest that the existing school curriculum is not achieving the aim above, despite the fact that the majority of the population study Irish for 14 years up to LC level.

Is é príomhspríoc an FTCE an foghlaim a chumasú mar úsáideoir inniúil teanga, rud atá ag teacht go dlúth leis an aidhm thuasluaite. Cuireann an FTCE agus an cur chuige gníomhdhírthe uirlisí praiticiúla ar fáil, áfach, chun an aidhm sin a bhaint amach agus athrú meoin a chothú maidir le Gaeilge na hArdteiste.

The central philosophy of the CEFR – to enable the language learner to become a competent language user – is very much in line with the aim stated above; however, the CEFR’s action-oriented approach offers a practical toolkit to successfully achieve this aim and has the potential to bring about a much-needed paradigm shift in relation to LC Irish.

#### 3.2 Sainiú níos soiléire ar na torthaí foghlama/ Clearer articulation of learning outcomes

Deir Priestly (2019: 9) gurb é atá i gceist le torthaí foghlama ná “*brief, clear, specific statements of the knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes, which it is expected students will be able to demonstrate as a result of the learning associated with the specification.*” Ceann de na téamaí ba mhó a tháinig chun cinn sa chomhairliúchán poiblí a rinneadh faoi dhréachtsonraíochtaí Gaeilge na hArdteiste in 2021, áfach, ná go raibh easpa soiléire ag baint leis na torthaí foghlama sa dá

Priestly (2019: 9) defines learning outcomes as “brief, clear, specific statements of the knowledge, understandings, skills, values, and attitudes, which it is expected students will be able to demonstrate as a result of the learning associated with the specification.” According to the consultation report on the 2021 draft specifications for LC Irish, however, “a consistent theme in consultation feedback was that there is a lack of clarity in the learning

shonraíocht, rud a chruthódh deacrachtaí maidir le cúrsaí teagaisc agus foghlama a phleanáil (NCCA, 2023a). Tá an easpa soiléire sin le feiceáil sna torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis an ‘Labhairt’, i ndrúchtsonraíochta T1 agus T2, áit a ndeirtear gur “chóir go mbeadh ar chumas an scoláire ... Gaeilge labhartha shaibhir chruinn a úsáid go héifeachtach agus go muiníneach ar réimse leathan ábhar”, “foghraíocht agus fuaimeanna na Gaeilge a úsáid go cruinn” agus “forbairt a dhéanamh ar a theanga labhartha.” Sna torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis an ‘Léamh’, deirtear gur “chóir go mbeadh ar chumas an scoláire ... leas a bhaint as réimse leathan téacsanna dílse neamhliteartha agus litríochta chun cur lena chumas teanga” agus “téacsanna a léamh a thugann léargas níos leithne ar an duine agus ar an saol mór” (NCCA, 2021a: 32; 2021b: 31).

Meabhraíonn Priestly (2019: 6) dúinn nár cheart do thorthaí foghlama a bheith róshainiúil. Má bhíonn an iomarca mionsonraí ag baint leo, bíonn an baol ann go gcaithfeadh daoine leo mar “*tick-boxes for assessment or simply completion*”. Bíonn cothromaíocht le baint amach, áfach, idir an tsainiúlacht agus an easpa sonraí, go háirithe nuair a dhéantar measúnú seachtrach ar na torthaí foghlama sin mar chuid de scrúdú stáit a bhfuil cuid mhaith i ngeall leis. Ní mór do na torthaí foghlama a bheith soiléir go leor le gur féidir tuiscint a bhaint astu maidir le príomhspríocanna an tsíollabais agus an caighdeán atá ag teastáil chun na spríocanna sin a bhaint amach. Cén caighdeán saibhris nó cruinnis atá i gceist, mar shampla, leis na torthaí foghlama thuas a bhaineann leis an Labhairt? Ar cheart a bheith ag súil leis an gcaighdeán céanna ó dhaltaí T1 agus T2? Cé na cumais teanga atá le forbairt ag daltaí ó bheith ag léamh téacsanna dílse? Agus cén sórt léargais ar an duine agus ar an saol mór ba cheart dóibh a fháil óna gcuid léitheoireachta? Mura bhfuil i dtorthaí foghlama ach cnámha loma, tá an baol ann gur faoi lucht scríofa na scrúduithe agus na dtéacsleabhar a bheidh sé a léamh féin a dhéanamh ar an gcuraclam agus feoil a chur ar na cnámha, rud a imreoidh tionchar mór ar an teagasc agus ar an bhfoghlaim ag deireadh an lae.

Mar a léiríodh i gCuid 1 agus 2 thuas, d’fhéadfadh scéimre cumais an FTCE ár dtuiscint ar an inniúlacht teanga agus ar úsáid na teanga a leathnú, a shaibhriú agus a bheachtú go mór. D’fhéadfaí na scálaí tuairiscíní a bhaineann leis na

outcomes in both draft specifications, and that this would pose problems when planning for teaching and learning” (NCCA, 2023b: 41). This lack of clarity is evident in learning outcomes for ‘Oral Language’, included in both the L1 and L2 draft specifications, which state that students should be able to “use rich and accurate Irish in an effective and confident manner in a wide range of subjects”, “accurately use Irish pronunciation and sounds” and “develop their spoken language.” Similarly, learning outcomes for ‘Reading’ state that students should be able to “use a wide range of authentic literary and non-literary texts to develop their language capabilities” and to “read texts that provide a broader insight to humans and to life in general” (NCCA, 2021c: 31; 2021d: 28).

Priestly (2019: 6) cautions that over-elaboration of learning outcomes “can have unintended consequences with them becoming tick-boxes for assessment or simply completion.” There is a balance to be struck, however, between under- and overspecification, particularly when learning outcomes are assessed externally through a high-stakes state exam. Learning outcomes must include sufficient detail to adequately and meaningfully communicate the main goals of the syllabus, and the depth or level at which those goals should be achieved. What level of richness or accuracy is expected in LC students’ spoken Irish, for example? Is the expectation the same for L1 and L2 contexts? In what ways should students develop their spoken language? Which language capabilities might they develop through their reading of authentic texts? And what kind of “insight to humans and to life in general” might they be expected to glean from their reading of texts? If learning outcomes are too vague, they will be interpreted and fleshed out by test developers and textbook writers, who will ultimately determine the ‘enacted curriculum’, i.e. what is actually taught and learned.

As illustrated in the preceding sections, the CEFR’s rich descriptive scheme has the potential to both **sharpen and broaden** our understanding of language use and language competence. Its 67 descriptor scales for language activities and strategies could support clearer conceptualisation and articulation of the

gníomhaíochtaí agus straitéisí cumarsáide teanga a úsáid chun na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis an gCumarsáid (snáithe 1 de na dréachtsonraíochtaí) a athshamhlú agus a bheachtú, gan róshainiú a dhéanamh orthu. Seans go bhféadfaí leas a bhaint as an gcur síos ar an idirghníomhaíocht agus ar an idirghabháil le solas a chaitheamh ar scileanna tábhachtacha cumarsáide nach bhfuil aon aird tugtha orthu go dtí seo i gcuraclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste, rud a d'fhéadfadh nuálaíocht a chothú i gcúrsaí teagaisc, foghlama agus measúnaithe. B'fhiú breathnú go háirithe ar léamh na litríochta trí lionsa na hidirghabhála, mar lón machnaimh ar na scileanna a bhíonn i gceist le téacsanna litearthachta a ionramháil.

Tá easpa soiléire agus leanúnachais le haithint freisin sna critéir mheasúnachta a bhaineann le béaltriail reatha Ghaeilge na hArdteiste (Ní Ghloinn et al., le foilsiú). D'fhéadfadh na scálaí a bhaineann leis na hinníúlachtaí teanga san FTCE a bheith an-úsáideach le sainiú níos soiléire a dhéanamh ar scileanna éagsúla teanga (m.sh. líofacht, cruinneas, réimse na teanga nó an smacht fóineolaíoch) sna torthaí foghlama agus mar chritéir mheasúnachta.

learning outcomes for 'Communication' (strand 1 of the draft specifications), without overspecification. The descriptor scales related to interaction and mediation, could be particularly useful to identify or highlight important communicative skills that have not previously been a focus in LC Irish curricula, providing a potential catalyst for innovation in teaching, learning and assessment. The scales related to 'mediating texts' may be helpful in stimulating reflection on the skills relevant to the study of literature in a language learning context, as well as mediation skills often needed in a bilingual context.

Furthermore, recent analysis of the current LC Irish oral exam highlighted a lack of clarity and consistency in the definition of assessment criteria used in the LC Irish oral exam (Ní Ghloinn et al., forthcoming). Learning outcomes based on CEFR scales for communicative language competences could also be used to address this issue, by supporting clearer definition of constructs such as fluency, accuracy, range and phonological control.

### 3.3 Ailíniú tógachaíoch agus cúltionchar dearfach/ Constructive alignment and positive washback

Is dócha gurb é an laige is mó a bhaineann le cúrsa reatha Gaeilge na hArdteiste ná an mhír éir atá ann idir na scileanna a theastaíonn chun grád maith a fháil sa scrúdú (m.sh. freagraí réamhullmhaithe a chur de ghlannmheabhair) agus na scileanna a theastaíonn chun cumarsáid spontáineach a dhéanamh sa ghnáthshaol (Nic Eoin, 2017a; Ó Laoire, 2017). Is é an toradh a bhíonn ar an mír éir seo ná go mbíonn cúltionchar diúltach ag an scrúdú ar chúrsaí foghlama, mar go ndíríonn múinteoirí agus daltaí ar na scileanna is mó a chabhróidh leo sa scrúdú, seachas na cinn a theastaíonn chun an Ghaeilge a úsáid sa ghnáthshaol (Ní Ghloinn, et al., le foilsiú).

Bíonn sé deacair an cúltionchar a sheachaint nuair a bhíonn impleachtaí móra ag baint le scrúdú, mar a bhíonn i gcás na hArdteiste (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Má bhíonn brú mór ag baint leis an scrúdú agus méid teoranta ama agus fuinnimh ar fáil, tá sé intuigthe go ndíreodh daltaí agus múinteoirí ar an gcineál ullmhúcháin is mó a mbeidh toradh air sa scrúdú. Is é an ról atá ag lucht deartha na measúnuithe

Perhaps the most significant weakness of the existing LC Irish programme is the apparent discrepancy between the skills required to succeed in the LC exam (e.g. memorisation and recall of preformulated answers) and those needed to communicate spontaneously in real-world situations (Nic Eoin, 2017b; Ó Laoire, 2017). This mismatch leads to a negative washback effect, as students and teachers focus on the skills most likely to lead to exam success, rather than those related to authentic Irish language use (Ní Ghloinn, et al., forthcoming).

Washback effect is difficult to avoid in the context of high-stakes exams such as the LC (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Under significant pressure and with limited time and energy, students and teachers will understandably focus their efforts on the kind of exam preparation most likely to deliver results. The job of those responsible for assessment is to ensure that there is constructive alignment between the learning outcomes of the syllabus, the skills assessed and those

ná a chinntiú go bhfuil ailíniú tógachaíoch nó dlúthcheangal idir torthaí foghlama an tsiollabais, na scileanna a dhéantar a mheas, agus na scileanna a theastóidh sa saol i ndiaidh an scrúdaithe, ionas gur tionchar dearfach seachas diúltach a bheidh ag baint leis an measúnú. Sampla maith den ailíniú tógachaíoch é an scrúdú tiomána. Cé gur sampla sách simplí é, léiríonn sé an bealach ar féidir le measúnú a bheith ag teacht le riachtanais na bhfoghlaimoirí i ndiaidh an scrúdaithe. Is annamh a cháintear teagascóirí tiomána as a bheith ag ‘teagasc de réir na tástála’, ós rud é go ndéanann an t-ullmhúchán sin foghlaimoirí a chumasú le bheith muiníneach ar an mbóthar.

De réir chur chuige an FTCE, moltar curaclaim a dhearadh droim ar ais (féach cuid 2 thuas) le cur leis an ailíniú tógachaíoch agus leis an gcúltionchar dearfach a imríonn an scrúdú ar an bhfoghlaim. Bheadh a leithéid ag teacht le haidhmeanna an athbhreithnithe ar an tSraith Shinsearach, agus d’fhéadfadh sé a bheith an-úsáid i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge, le dul i ngleic leis na laigí sa chúrsa reatha.

### 3.4 Leanúnachas, trédhearcacht agus dul chun cinn/ Continuity, coherence and progression

Mar gheall go mbaintear úsáid as leibhéil an FTCE ar fud an domhain, bíonn trédhearcacht ag baint le cáilíochtaí atá ceangailte leis na leibhéil sin. Tuigeanann múinteoirí, foghlaimoirí, institiúidí tríú leibhéal agus fostóirí céard is brí le cumas A2 sa Fhraincis, nó le cáilíocht B1 sa Ghearmáinis. Cuireann sé leis an leanúnachas ó chúrsa go cúrsa, ó theanga go teanga agus ó leibhéal amháin sa chóras oideachais go dtí an chéad leibhéal eile, nuair a bhíonn gach cúrsa agus cáilíocht ceangailte leis an gcóras céanna.

I lár na 2000í, thug an Roinn Oideachais, i gcomhar le Comhairle na hEorpa, faoi athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar staid reatha an oideachais maidir le teangacha in Éirinn. Ceann de na laigí ba mhó a tháinig chun solais san athbhreithniú sin ná an easpa leanúnachais nó dul chun cinn a bhí le feiceáil sna torthaí foghlama a bhí le baint amach sna teangacha ar fad ag gach leibhéal den chóras oideachais, m.sh. ón mbunscoil go dtí an mheánscoil, ón tSraith Shóisearach go dtí an tSraith Shinsearach agus ón Ardteist go dtí an tríú leibhéal agus bunchúrsaí oiliúna do mhúinteoirí. Le dul i ngleic leis an bhfadhb sin, moladh go ndéanfaí gach curaclaim agus measúnú teanga ag gach leibhéal den chóras oideachais a ailíniú le leibhéil an FTCE feasta, agus go mbainfí úsáid as an FTCE i bpolasaithe náisiúnta maidir le teagasc teangacha,

needed for authentic communication beyond the exam, so that exam-focused preparation might yield a positive washback effect in real-life contexts beyond the exam. I often use the example of the driving test when discussing this concept of constructive alignment. While it is a somewhat simplistic analogy, it is a useful example of an assessment closely aligned with learners’ needs beyond the test. Driving instructors are seldom criticised for ‘teaching to the test’ because exam practice effectively enables learner drivers to become competent and confident road users.

The CEFR approach to curriculum development, through backward design (as outlined in section 2 above), is intended to promote constructive alignment and the positive washback effect of assessments. This is in line with recommendations made in the Senior Cycle Review advisory report and could be very useful in addressing specific weaknesses of the existing LC Irish exam.

The widespread use of CEFR levels internationally contributes to the transparency of qualifications attached to those levels. Teachers, learners, third level institutions and employers understand what it means for a learner to be at A2 level in French, or for a qualification to be at B1 level in German. The alignment of all courses and qualifications to the same common benchmarks supports continuity from course to course, from language to language and from one level in the education system to the next.

A comprehensive review of language education in Ireland conducted in the mid-2000s by the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, found that one of the weaknesses of the system at that time was a lack of continuity and progression in the learning outcomes defined for all languages, including Irish, at various stages of the formal education system, e.g. from primary to secondary level, from Junior to Senior cycle, from Leaving Certificate to third level, and onwards to teacher education. In order to tackle this issue, a recommendation was made that future curricular documents and assessments for all languages at each level of the education system be aligned with the levels of the CEFR, and that more use

m.sh. chun bunriachtanais inniúlachta a shainiú do mhúinteoirí teanga (Council of Europe & Department of Education and Science, 2008). Rinneadh an moladh sin a threisiú in *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* (Department of Education and Skills, 2017: 20), mar seo a leanas:

*To support a greater understanding and transparency of language competence across all levels of the education and training system, as part of the implementation of this Strategy, all examinations of foreign languages will be aligned with the CEFR.*

Cé nach raibh an Ghaeilge mar chuid den dréacht deireanach den straitéis sin, tá go leor de na beartais atá luaite sa pholasaí do na teangacha iasachta á gcur i bhfeidhm i gcás na Gaeilge le roinnt blianta anuas. Mar shampla, maítear go bhfuil sonraíochtaí nua Gaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí “ailínithe, a bheag nó a mhór, leis na tuairiscíní atá le fáil i mbandaí A2–B1 ... den FTCE” i gcás scoileanna T2 (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna 2017a: 3), agus le leibhéal B2 i gcás scoileanna T1 (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna 2017b: 4). Idir 2008 agus 2011, dearadh siollabas nua comónta don bhunchéim sa Ghaeilge, mar chuid de mheitheal náisiúnta idir-institiúideach. Beartaíodh go mbeadh an siollabas bunaithe ar leibhéal B2 den FTCE, ag dul i dtreo C1 faoi dheireadh Bhliain 3 den chúrsa (Walsh & Nic Eoin, 2010).

Tá úsáid bainte as an FTCE freisin le bunchaighdeáin a leagan síos do mhúinteoirí bunscoile agus meánscoile. Ó 2019 i leith, caithfidh iarrthóirí ar an Máistir Gairmiúil san Oideachas (Bunmhúinteoireacht) ar a laghad 65% a bhaint amach i scrúdú béil TEG B1 sular féidir leo iarratas a dhéanamh ar an gcúrsa oiliúna féin. Tá scrúduithe TEG ag leibhéal B1 agus B2 in úsáid ag roinnt institiúidí eile tríú leibhéal freisin mar chuid den phróiseas iontrála a bhaineann le cúrsaí san oideachais. Ó 2017 i leith, caithfidh múinteoirí nuacháilithe Gaeilge ag leibhéal na meánscoile fianaise a chur ar fáil go bhfuil a gcuid Gaeilge ag leibhéal B2.2 (B2+), ar a laghad, sular féidir leo clárú leis an gComhairle Mhúinteoireachta.

Cé go bhféadfaí athbhreithniú, beachtú agus bailíochtú a dhéanamh ar chuid de na tagairtí reatha don FTCE i múineadh agus i measúnú na Gaeilge, d'fhéadfadh buntáistí móra a bheith ag baint le torthaí foghlama agus riachtanais chumais ag céimeanna éagsúla den chóras oideachais a cheangal le creat amháin cumais, le cur

be made of the CEFR in national language education policy, for example, to define minimum proficiency standards for language teachers (Council of Europe & Department of Education and Science, 2008). That recommendation was reiterated in *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* (Department of Education and Skills, 2017: 20):

While Irish was not included in the final version of that strategy, the practice of defining Irish language proficiency and learning outcomes in CEFR-terms has become commonplace in the intervening years. For example, current specifications for Junior Cycle Irish claim that learning outcomes within the three strands of the L2 specification are “broadly aligned with the descriptors in bands A2-B1” of the CEFR (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, 2017a: 3), while the L1 specification claims broad alignment with B2 level (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, 2017b: 4). A common syllabus for undergraduate level Irish, which was designed as part of a collaborative inter-institutional project from 2008-2011, includes learning outcomes based on B2, moving towards C1 by the end of the BA programme (Walsh & Nic Eoin, 2010).

The CEFR has also been used to define minimum Irish-language proficiency standards for primary and post-primary teachers. Since 2019, the Department of Education has set a minimum standard of 65% in the Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (TEG) B1 oral exam as a pre-requisite for application to the Postgraduate Master in Education (Primary). TEG exams at B1 and B2 levels are also used as part of entrance processes for a number of other third-level programmes in education. Since 2017, those wishing to register with the Teaching Council of Ireland as post-primary level Irish teachers must provide evidence of a minimum language proficiency of B2.2 on the CEFR, or equivalent.

While further work may be needed to review, refine and validate some of the existing references to the CEFR in Irish-language education, the principle of aligning learning outcomes and proficiency requirements at various educational stages to a single framework has the potential to contribute greatly

leis an trédhearcacht agus leis an gcomhleanúnachas atá ann ó chéim go céim. Is dá bharr sin, is dócha, go bhfuil sé luaite mar aidhm shonrach i [gClár an Rialtais](#), a foilsíodh i mí Eanáir 2025, go ndéanfaí curaclaim Ghaeilge ag leibhéil éagsúla den chóras oideachais a ailíniú leis an FTCE. Mura gcuirtear curaclaim na hArdteiste san áireamh ansin, is eisceacht shuntasach a bheidh ann sa chóras, rud a fhágfaidh go mbeidh míréir idir sin agus na céimeanna a thagann roimpi agus ina diaidh, agus easpa soiléire maidir leis an leibhéal cumais a bhaineann leis mar cháilíocht.

to transparency, coherence and continuity across the entire system. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the current [Programme for Government](#) published in January 2025 states that the government will work towards aligning Irish-language curricula at various stages of the education system with the CEFR. If the LC Irish curriculum is not included in this alignment, it will be a conspicuous exception to the examples above, potentially leading to inconsistency with the courses preceding and following it within the education system, as well as ambiguity regarding the level of proficiency associated with the qualification.

### 3.5 Leanúnachas le polasaithe stáit i leith na Gaeilge/ Coherence with national Irish-language policy

Ní féidir cainteoirí Gaeilge a fhorbairt taobh istigh den chóras oideachais amháin. Caithfidh foghlaimeoirí an Ghaeilge a fheiceáil agus a chloisteáil taobh amuigh den seomra ranga, agus caithfear deiseanna a chruthú dóibh an teanga a úsáid i ndiaidh na hArdteiste. B'fhiú, mar sin, an oiread nasc agus is féidir a chruthú idir foghlaim na Gaeilge ar scoil agus úsáid na Gaeilge mar theanga phobail. Tá forbairtí suntasacha déanta le blianta beaga anuas ar an bpolasaí náisiúnta teanga, le cur le feiceálacht agus le húsáid na Gaeilge, agus le líon na seirbhísí poiblí atá ar fáil i nGaeilge. Chun na haidhmeanna sin a bhaint amach, tá sprioc uailmhianach leagtha amach in Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2021 go mbeadh 20% de na daoine a earcófar san earnáil phoiblí inniúil sa Ghaeilge faoin mbliain 2030, agus baintfeadh úsáid as leibhéil an FTCE chun an inniúlacht sin a shainiú. Dá mbeadh an Ardteist ailínithe leis an FTCE ar bhealach trédhearcach, agus córas bailí, éifeachtach measúnachta ag baint léi, chruthódh sé nasc tábhachtach idir an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais agus úsáid na teanga i bhfíor-chomhthéacsanna cumarsáide. D'fhéadfadh nasc mar sin tacú go mór leis an obair phleanála teanga atá ar siúl ar fud na tíre. Buntáiste a bheadh ann don dalta freisin, dá mbeadh ceangal soiléir idir Gaeilge na hArdteiste agus deiseanna gairmiúla, sóisialta agus eile taobh amuigh den chóras oideachais.

The education system alone cannot create Irish-language speakers. Learners need to see and hear Irish outside of the classroom, and to know that there are opportunities for its use beyond the LC exam. It would be beneficial, therefore, to create links between Irish learning in school and Irish-language use among the wider public. Significant developments in national language policy and planning in recent years are attempting to increase the visibility and widespread use of Irish, including access to public services through the medium of Irish. In order to do this, the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021 has set an ambitious target that 20% of new recruits to the public sector will be competent in Irish by 2030, and that competence will be defined according to the CEFR. If the LC were aligned with the CEFR in a transparent manner, with a valid, effective system of assessment, it could create a much-needed link between the Irish language in the education system and language use in real-world communicative contexts. This kind of joined-up thinking could greatly support national efforts for language planning and maintenance, but it could also be of practical benefit to students, establishing a clear link between LC Irish and professional, social and other opportunities outside of formal education.

### 3.6 Curaclam ionchuimsitheach seachas díolúintí / Inclusive alternative to exemptions

Dúshlán faoi leith atá tar éis teacht chun solais i gcomhthéacs foghlaim na Gaeilge le roinnt blianta anuas ná an claonadh atá ann díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge a thabhairt do dhaltá a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise foghlama acu maidir leis an litearthacht. [Tuairiscíodh le déanaí](#) gur bheartaigh 22.5% de dhaltá Ardteiste 2024 gan tabhairt faoin scrúdú Gaeilge. Is cosúil go raibh díolúintí ó foghlaim na Gaeilge

A particular challenge that has emerged in Irish language education in recent years has been the tendency to offer exemptions from the study of Irish to students with additional learning needs in relation to literacy. [Recent reports](#) show that a record number (22.5%) of students opted out of the LC Irish exam in 2024. It appears that many of those received exemptions from the study of

ag sciar maith de na daltaí sin, ainneoin nach bhfuil aon fhianaise eolaíoch ann nach féidir le daltaí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise litearthachta acu teanga eile a fhoghlaim, agus ainneoin go mbíonn cuid de na daltaí sin ag déanamh staidéar ar theangacha eile. Maíonn Andrews (2019) gur leatrom atá i gcóras na ndíolúintí, a chuireann srian leis na deiseanna fostaíochta agus oideachais atá ar fáil do dhaltaí i ndiaidh na hArdteiste. Seachas díolúintí a thabhairt do dhaltaí, ní mór teacht ar bhealach le freastal ar a gcuid riachtanas mar chuid de chóras ionchuimsitheach oideachais. Ós rud é go n-aithníonn an FTCE próifílí éagsúla cumais sna scileanna éagsúla, d'fhéadfadh sé creat solúbtha a chur ar fáil a bheadh ina bhunús do churaclam ionchuimsitheach Gaeilge, a thabharfadh deis do dhaltaí an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim agus a léiriú céard is féidir leo a dhéanamh, ag an leibhéal cuí agus taobh istigh de na scileanna cuí dá gcuid riachtanas agus cumas féin.

### 3.7 Catalyst for quality improvement/ Spreagadh chun feabhais

Bíonn fiúntas faoi leith ag baint le curaclam nó measúnú a ailíniú le slat tomhais seachtrach, ós rud é go gcothaíonn an próiseas ailínithe féin anailís chriticiúil a d'fhéadfadh feabhas a chur ar an gcuraclam nó ar an measúnú. Is mar gheall ar thogra ailínithe in 1995 a cuireadh feabhas mór ar scrúduithe Cambridge Assessment, dar le Taylor (2011, xi):

*“While ostensibly looking at the comparison between Cambridge’s First Certificate in English (FCE) and the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), offered by Educational Testing Service (ETS), in order to establish an empirical link between the level systems of each examination, this study actually ended up providing an in-depth critique of the Cambridge approach... Significant issues in relation to reliability and validity emerged for Cambridge tests which were addressed vigorously with the 1996 release ...”.*

Tá an taithí chéanna agam féin i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge. Rinneadh taighde inmheánach in Ollscoil Mhá Nuad roinnt blianta ó shin, le hiarracht a dhéanamh gráid de chuid na bunchéime sa Ghaeilge a cheangal ar bhealach bailí le gráid ar scrúduithe TEG. Ba é an toradh ab fhiúntaí a bhí leis an obair sin, dar liom, ná gur caitheadh solas ar roinnt gnéithe de chóras measúnachta an BA a bhféadfaí athbhreithniú a dhéanamh orthu agus iad a athrú chun feabhais.

Irish, even though there is no empirical basis for the assumption that those with additional literacy needs are unable to acquire another language, and despite reports that some students with an exemption from Irish continue to study other languages. As Andrews (2019) argues, exemptions are in fact a form of exclusion, limiting the professional, educational and social opportunities available to students after LC level. Rather than offer exemptions, we must find a way to cater for the needs of all students within an inclusive Irish-language programme. This kind of inclusivity is one of the ‘guiding principles’ for the redeveloped Senior Cycle (NCCA, 2022: 23). The CEFR’s recognition of uneven proficiency profiles across language skills might offer a flexible framework for the provision of an inclusive Irish-language curriculum, that could allow students to engage with Irish and to discover what they ‘can do’, at a level, and within a skill profile, appropriate to their needs.

The process of aligning a curriculum or assessment to an external benchmark can in itself be a powerful catalyst for reflection, critical analysis and quality improvement. Taylor (2011, xi) attributes major reform in assessment practices in Cambridge Assessment to such a project in 1995:

This has also been my experience in the context of Irish. Unpublished internal research carried out in Maynooth University to establish a link and validate claims for the alignment of undergraduate grades in the BA Irish programme to the CEFR-related TEG exams highlighted a number of opportunities for quality improvement and reform within the BA assessment system.

## 4. Ceisteanna coitianta/ Frequently-asked questions

Sa chuid seo, tabharfaidh mé aghaidh ar chuid de na míthuiscintí agus ceisteanna coitianta a bhíonn ag daoine maidir le hoiriúnacht an FTCE do chomhthéacs Ghaeilge na hArdteiste.

In this section I will address some common questions and misconceptions I have encountered regarding the CEFR and its suitability for the context of LC Irish.

### 4.1 An bhfuil an FTCE oiriúnach do dhaltai iar-bhunscoile? / Is the CEFR suitable for post-primary school students?

Is le foghlaimeoirí fásta a shamhlaítear an FTCE go minic agus ardaítear ceisteanna uaireanta faoina oiriúnacht do dhaltai ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile. Tugann duine d'údair an FTCE, an Dr Brian North, freagra ar an gceist seo sa leabhar *The CEFR in Practice* (North, 2014: 230):

The CEFR is often associated with adult learners, and some have questioned its suitability for post-primary school students. This issue is addressed by one of the authors of the CEFR, Brian North, in his very useful book, *The CEFR in Practice* (North, 2014: 230):

“One of the enduring fallacies about the CEFR is the very idea that it was developed for adult learners. It is often said that the young learners who are now taking centre stage in formal language learning are conspicuous by their absence in the CEFR; the CEFR is not appropriate for the younger learner context. This is a misunderstanding. The CEFR, with its action-oriented approach, is concerned with the nature of real world language use. ... the CEFR descriptors in their published form are not age appropriate for very young learners, but they can be unzipped into micro-descriptors, simplified, exemplified etc. in a way appropriate to context.”

Níl sé fíor, mar sin, nach féidir an FTCE a úsáid i gcomhthéacs na scoile; is creat solúbtha é agus is féidir é a chur in oiriúint do chomhthéacsanna éagsúla.

It is not true, therefore, that the CEFR cannot be used in a school context; it is a flexible framework and can be adapted to any context.

Mar a mhíníonn Little (2025), tá sé seo déanta cheana féin i gcás mhúineadh an Bhéarla mar theanga bhreise ag leibhéal na bunscoile in Éirinn. D'fhorbair Little agus foireann [Integrate Ireland Language and Training](#) (IILT) táscairí cumais do dhaltai bunscoile, trí thuariscíní cuí ó leibhéal A1 go B1 a roghnú, agus iad a chur in oiriúint d'aoisghrúpa na ndaltai agus do phríomhthéamaí an churaclaim (Féach IILT, 2006).

As Little (2025) outlines, this has already been done in the context of language support for English as an additional language (EAL) in primary schools in Ireland. Little and colleagues at [Integrate Ireland Language and Training](#) (IILT) developed English language benchmarks for primary-school children, by selecting appropriate CEFR descriptor scales from levels A1 to B1, and reformulating them to make them age-appropriate and to embed them within the context of key curricular themes (See IILT, 2006).

Tá tuilleadh tuairiscíní d'foghlaimeoirí óga ag aoisghrúpaí éagsúla forbartha agus curtha ar fáil ó shin mar chuid de [bhanc tuairiscíní breise](#) ar shuíomh gréasáin Chomhairle na hEorpa. Tugtar léargas i gcuid de na hacmhainní sin (m.sh. Szabo & Goodier, 2018) ar chuid de na ceisteanna, ar nós forbairt chognaíoch agus shóisialta na bhfoghlaimeoirí, a bhí le cur sa mheá agus na tuairiscíní á gcur in oiriúint.

Further descriptors have since been adapted for young learners of various age-groups and made available in the [Bank of Supplementary Descriptors](#) on the Council of Europe website. Some of these resources (e.g. Szabo & Goodier, 2018) include useful discussion of issues, such as the cognitive and social maturity of the learners, which need to be considered during the adaption process.

## 4.2 An bhfuil an FTCE oiriúnach do chomhthéacsanna L1?/ Is the CEFR suitable for L1 contexts?

Pointe eile a ardaítear go minic ná gur dearadh an FTCE d'*fhoghlaimeoirí* teanga seachas do chainteoirí dúchais agus go mb'fhéidir nach bhfuil sé oiriúnach, mar sin, do dhaltai arb í an Ghaeilge a gcéad teanga nó T1. Tá dhá phointe ar leith a chaithfear a thuiscint maidir le húsáid an FTCE i gcomhthéacs cainteoirí dúchais Gaeilge:

### (a) Bunscoilcanna cumarsáide idirpheasanta v. ardscoilcanna acadúla teanga:

Tá scileanna áirithe teanga a shealbhaíonn cainteoirí dúchais ón gcliabhán, de ghnáth, agus nach gá dóibh iad a 'fhoghlaim' dá bharr, m.sh. cumas foghraíochta, tuiscint ar an teanga labhartha, scileanna comhrá agus an idirghníomhaíocht labhartha a bhaineann leis an ngnáthshaol laethúil. Ach bíonn an-éagsúlacht i measc cainteoirí dúchais i ngach teanga maidir le réimse an stóir focal, an cumas smaointe casta a chur in iúl go héifeachtach, cur i láthair a thabhairt, anailís a dhéanamh ar théacsanna casta liteartha nó sa scríbhneoireacht chruthaitheach.

Chum an teangeolaí Jim Cummins (1979) na téarmaí 'BICS' (Bunscoilcanna cumarsáide idirphearsanta) agus 'CALP' (Inniúlacht chognaíoch agus acadúil teanga) le cur síos a dhéanamh ar dhá ghné éagsúla den chumas teanga. Rinne Hulstijn (2011) forbairt bhreise ar na coincheapa seo, ach thug sé 'Basic Language Cognition' (BLC) agus 'Higher Language Cognition' (HLC) orthu. Bíonn na bunscoilcanna cumarsáide (BICS nó BLC) ag gach gnáthchainteoir dúchais, dar le Hulstijn, ach caithfidh gach duine (cainteoirí T1 agus T2) na hardscileanna teanga (CALP nó HLC) a fhoghlaim, agus braitheann an fhorbairt sin go mór ar éirim an duine, ar an gcuimhne, ar an leibhéal oideachais atá bainte amach aige/aici agus ar an taithí saoil agus ghairmiúil. Is é an bunchumas cumarsáide is mó a theastaíonn le feidhmiú go héifeachtach sa ghnáthshaol ach teastaíonn CALP/HLC le go mbeadh rath ar dhuine i gcúrsaí oideachais, agus i réimsí áirithe gairmiúla.

Tugtar mionchur síos ar 67 gníomhaíocht agus straitéis chumarsáide san FTCE. Mar a mhíníonn North (2014: 21), baineann cuid de na gníomhaíochtaí sin leis na bunscoilcanna cumarsáide (m.sh. na scálaí a bhaineann le scileanna comhrá, plé neamhfhoirmiúil le cairde, nó teacht ar earraí agus ar sheirbhísí) agus is é tuairim North go bhféadfadh leibhéal C2+ a bheith ag an ngnáthchainteoir dúchais sna

Another relevant question in the Irish context is whether a CEFR-based curriculum might be appropriate for native speakers or students for whom Irish is their first language or L1. There are two points that need to be understood to address this question:

### (a) Basic interpersonal communication v. advanced academic language skills:

There are certain language skills that most native speakers acquire naturally in their mother tongue, without a need for conscious 'learning'. These may include pronunciation, comprehension of spoken language, and the skills needed for conversation and spoken interaction in everyday situations. Native speakers of all languages vary considerably, however, in the range of their vocabulary, their ability to articulate complex ideas eloquently, deliver presentations, analyse complex literary texts or write creatively.

Linguist, Jim Cummins (1979) coined the terms 'Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills' (BICS) and 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP) to describe these two different aspects of language proficiency. Hulstijn (2011) developed these concepts further, using the terms 'Basic Language Cognition' (BLC) and 'Higher Language Cognition' (HLC). He claims that all native speakers acquire basic communicative skills but that every person, native speakers and learners alike, must learn higher language skills, and that development depends on aptitude, memory, educational level and professional and life experience. Basic communicative skills may be sufficient to function effectively in most everyday situations but CALP/HLC are required for success in academic and some professional contexts.

The CEFR describes 67 communicative language activities and strategies, some of which relate to basic interpersonal communication (e.g. 'Conversation', 'Informal discussion (with friends)', or 'Obtaining goods and services'), and others that could be categorised as higher-level academic or professional language skills (e.g. 'Addressing audiences', 'Explaining data' or 'Analysis and Criticism of creative texts (including literature)'. North (2014) suggests that

scileanna sin. Tá gníomhaíochtaí eile ann, áfach, a bhaineann leis na hardscileanna acadúla/cognaíocha (m.sh. an chaint phoiblí, sonraí a mhíniú, nó anailís chriticiúil a dhéanamh ar théacsanna liteartha, srl.), agus is iomaí cainteoir dúchais nach mbainfeadh B2 amach sna réimsí áirithe sin. Fágann sé sin go bhféadfadh cúrsa teanga atá dírithe ar na hardscileanna cumarsáide, acadúla, cognáíocha agus litearthachta, go háirithe ó leibhéal B2 ar aghaidh, a bheith an-oiriúnach ar fad don ghnáthchainteoir dúchais agus don fhoghlaimeoir cumasach teanga araon, ós rud é gur scileanna iad sin a bhíonn le foghlaim acu beirt.

### **(b) Cás na mionteanga**

Anuas ar an méid atá thuas, ní mór a aithint go bhfuil an scéal níos casta arís i gcás mionteanga, de bharr rheiméan an tsealbhaith neamhiomláin nó easnamhaigh, atá coitianta go leor i measc cainteoirí dúchais mionteangacha, mar gheall ar an easpa deiseanna a bhíonn ann an teanga a úsáid i réimsí áirithe den saol (Montrul 2013, Ó Curnáin 2009, Lenoach 2014). Bíonn an-éagsúlacht i measc cainteoirí óga dúchais na Gaeilge ó thaobh an méid teagmhála a bhíonn acu leis an teanga taobh amuigh den scoil, agus bíonn tionchar aige seo ar na próifílí cumais a bhíonn acu. Aithnítear an dúshlán seo sa Pholasáí don Oideachas Gaeltachta 2017-22, áit a luaitear gur mionlach anois na daltaí i scoileanna Gaeltachta atá á dtógáil le Gaeilge sa bhaile (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, 2016: 6). Fiú na daltaí a labhraíonn Gaeilge sa bhaile, d'fhéadfaís a bheith níos láidre sa Bhéarla ná sa Ghaeilge i gcuid de na scileanna teanga (Péterváry et al., 2014). D'fhéadfadh cur chuige an FTCE a bheith an-oiriúnach don chomhthéacs seo, mar gheall ar an aitheantas a thugann sé do phróifílí éagsúla cumais. D'fhéadfaí leas a bhaint as scéimre cumais an FTCE le hanailís a dhéanamh ar riachtanais na bhfoghlaimeoirí, agus a gcuid buanna agus laigí i scileanna agus réimsí éagsúla a aithint. Mar chuid den chur chuige gníomhdhírthe, cuirtear an-bhéim ar úsáid bharántúil na teanga, agus d'fhéadfadh an cur chuige sin a bheith an-éifeachtach le tacú le foghlaimeoirí ceangal a dhéanamh idir an curaclam Gaeilge agus úsáid na Gaeilge taobh amuigh den scoil sa ghnáthshaol sóisialta, gairmiúil agus pearsanta.

while an average native speaker may demonstrate C2+ in basic interpersonal skills, many native speakers may not reach B2 level in advanced academic language and literacy skills. This means that language programmes that focus on higher-level communicative, academic and literacy skills, particularly at B2 level or above, could be well-suited to both native speakers and competent language learners alike, as those particular skills are not acquired naturally but must be learned and developed by all speakers through education and experience.

### **(b) The minority-language context**

In addition to the above, we must acknowledge that the situation is even more complex in the context of a minority language, such as Irish. The phenomenon of incomplete acquisition (Montrul 2013, Ó Curnáin 2009, Lenoach 2014) is common among native speakers of minority languages, due to the limited opportunities available for some to use the language in a wide range of domains. Young native speakers of Irish vary greatly in their contact with the language outside of school and this may impact their proficiency profiles. This issue is highlighted in the Policy for Gaeltacht Education 2017-22, which states that only a minority of students in Gaeltacht schools are now raised with Irish (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, 2016: 6). Even those who speak Irish at home and have a high level of fluency may be dominant in English in certain language skills, such as accuracy and vocabulary range (Péterváry et al., 2014). The CEFR-based approach could be very appropriate in this context, due to its recognition of uneven proficiency profiles. Its descriptive scheme may provide a useful heuristic to help analyse learners' needs and identify their strengths and weaknesses across various skills and domains. The action-oriented approach, with its emphasis on authentic target-language use, could also be effective in supporting students' use of Irish outside of school, by helping them to draw connections between the curriculum and real-life Irish language use in social, professional and community contexts.

### 4.3 An FTCE agus an Creat Náisiúnta Cáilíochta/ Compatibility with the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

Ceann de na ceisteanna a ardaítear go minic sa chomhthéacs seo ná an Creat Náisiúnta Cáilíochtaí (NFQ). Cén fáth ar cheart curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis an FTCE nuair atá sé ceangailte cheana féin leis an gcreat náisiúnta? Nach leor an ceangal leis an NFQ leis an leanúnachas agus an dul chun cinn a chinntiú taobh istigh de churaclam Gaeilge na scoile? An féidir an dá chreat a úsáid le chéile? Spéisiúil go leor, forbraíodh an FTCE roimh an NFQ agus bhí tionchar ag an gcéad chreat ar an dara ceann. Cé go bhfuil cosúlachtaí áirithe idir an dá chreat, tá difríochtaí tábhachtacha eatarthu freisin. Dearadh an NFQ le caighdeán a shainiú do cháilíochtaí. Mar a míníodh thuas, is uirlis níos leithne agus níos solúbtha atá san FTCE. Ní slat tomhais amháin atá ann, ach lionsa agus compás; chomh maith le caighdeán cáilíochtaí a shainiú, is féidir é a úsáid mar threoir le curaclaim agus acmhainní éifeachtacha a fhorbairt. Is uirlis iltoiseach atá ann, agus is féidir é a úsáid le cur síos a dhéanamh ar phróifíilí éagothroma cumais sna scileanna éagsúla. Murab ionann agus an NFQ, dearadh é go sonrach ar mhaithe le hoideachas teangacha, agus tá sé an-oiriúnach don chomhthéacs sin mar sin. Mar a deir MacLaren (2007: 3)

*The NFQ indicators / descriptors are therefore not intended for direct use by teachers, trainers or learners. They define expected outcomes to be achieved as the end result of a learning process and their generic and field-neutral features render them of little direct practical use within the learning process.*

Luadh seo arís i [bpáipéar glas le QQI ar chúrsaí measúnaithe](#) (2018: 42): “Using NFQ levels to define standards for language proficiency can be problematic.” Rinneadh plé níos cuimsithí ar an ábhar seo i [bpáipéar teicniúil ar an NFQ](#) a d’fhoilsigh QQI sa bhliain 2020, inar luadh na pointí seo a leanas:

*The NFQ grid of level indicators is not designed to provide meaningful indicators for constructing foreign language proficiency scales... While there may be advantages to assimilating the CEFR scales into an expanded NFQ, whether or not it becomes part of an NFQ, the CEFR scales (and associated dimensional indicators) can and should be used when specifying foreign language proficiency standards.*

One of the questions often raised in this context relates to the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Why should we align the LC Irish curriculum to the CEFR when it is already aligned to the national framework? Is the NFQ not sufficient to ensure consistency and progression within the Irish-language curriculum? Are the two frameworks compatible? Readers might be interested to note that the CEFR preceded, and influenced the development of, the NFQ (MacLaren, 2007: 5). While the two frameworks are similar in certain ways, there are important differences between them. The NFQ was designed to describe the standards of specific qualifications. As outlined above, the CEFR is a broader and more flexible instrument. It is not just a yardstick, but also a lens and a compass; it can be used to guide the development of effective curricula and resources, not just to standardise or describe qualifications. It is multidimensional and allows for the description of uneven learner proficiency profiles across various language skills. Unlike the NFQ, it was designed specifically for language education and is therefore much more suited to that context. As MacLaren (2007: 3) states:

A [Green paper on assessment](#) published by QQI (2018: 42) stated that “Using NFQ levels to define standards for language proficiency can be problematic.” This issue was discussed in more detail in a [QQI technical paper](#) (QQI, 2020), which concluded that:

#### 4.4. Cén Leibhéal?/ Which level(s)?

Má dhéantar curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a bhunú ar an FTCE, beidh cinneadh tábhachtach le déanamh maidir leis an leibhéal/ na leibhéil lena mbeidh sé ailínithe. Ar cheart go mbeadh na leibhéil chéanna i gceist do chomhthéacsanna T1 agus T2, nó do na sonraíochtaí ag an Ardleibhéal, Gnáthleibhéal, agus Bonnleibhéal? Ar cheart go mbeadh na leibhéil chéanna den FTCE luaite le gach scil sna sonraíochtaí? Agus machnamh á dhéanamh ar na ceisteanna thuas, ní mór cuimhneamh ar na pointí seo a leanas:

- Seans go mbeidh próifílí éagothroma cumais ag foghlaimeoirí áirithe sna scileanna éagsúla (m.sh. an teanga ó bhéal v. an teanga scríofa) nó i réimsí éagsúla (m.sh. bunchumarsáid idirphearsanta v. teanga acadúil nó ghairmiúil). D'fhéadfaí sin a chur san áireamh sa churaclam.
- Ba cheart idirdhealú a dhéanamh idir na leibhéil a bhaineann le spriocanna foghlama an churaclaim agus an réimse leibhéal a bhaintear amach i ndáiríre, nó an t-íoschaighdeán atá riachtanach le pas a fháil sa scrúdú.
- Ba cheart idirdhealú a dhéanamh freisin idir an cumas a léiríonn daltaí ar thascanna réamhullmhaithe (m.sh. freagraí atá curtha de ghlanmheabhair do scrúdú scríofa nó labhartha) agus an cumas atá acu cumarsáid a dhéanamh as a seasamh. Mar a pléadh in Ní Ghloinn et al. (le foilsiú) tá difríocht an-mhór idir na scileanna teanga agus cognaíocha a bhaineann leis an dá chomhthéacs sin. Ní mór curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste a ailíniú leis na leibhéil chuí, chun fíorscileanna cumarsáide a chothú agus bac a chur ar straitéisí scrúdaithe a dhéanann fíorchumas an dalta a cheilt.
- Ba cheart cuimhneamh gur creat iltoiseach atá san FTCE; is féidir le foghlaimeoirí dul chun cinn a dhéanamh maidir le réimse na ngníomhaíochtaí cumarsáide atá siad in ann a chur i gcrích taobh istigh de leibhéal faoi leith, chomh maith le dul chun cinn a dhéanamh ó leibhéal go leibhéal.
- Agus curaclam Gaeilge na hArdteiste á ailíniú leis an FTCE, ní mór cuimhneamh ar an mórfhictiúr – na leibhéil chumais atá luaite leis an nGaeilge ag céimeanna eile den chóras oideachais (féach 3.4 thuas). Ní mór cuimhneamh, áfach, gur íoschaighdeán atá i gcuid de na leibhéil sin agus gur spriocanna ardaidhmeannacha atá i gceist le cinn eile. Is fiú a lua freisin nach ailíniú cuimsitheach bailí atá i gceist le cuid de na samplaí sin, agus beidh gá le

If the revised LC Irish curriculum is based on the CEFR, an important decision will need to be made regarding the level(s) to which it should be aligned. Will this be the same for L1 and L2 contexts, or for specifications at various levels (Higher, Ordinary, Foundation)? Should the same level be referenced for each skill in the specifications? When considering the question of levels, it will be important to remember the following:

- Certain learners may have uneven proficiency profiles across various skills (e.g. oral v. written) or domains (e.g. basic interpersonal communication v. academic or professional language). This could potentially be reflected in the alignment of the curriculum.
- A distinction should be made between the levels set as aspirational targets for learning and the range of actual achievement levels, including minimum standards required to pass the exam.
- A distinction must also be made between learner performance on pre-rehearsed tasks (such as preformulated answers that are memorised and reproduced in oral or written exams) and their ability to communicate spontaneously. As discussed in Ní Ghloinn et al. (forthcoming), the cognitive and linguistic skills required in those two types of performance are very different. The LC Irish curriculum and assessments should be set at an appropriate level to foster authentic communication and prevent reliance on exam strategies that obscure students' actual ability in Irish.
- It is important to remember that as the CEFR descriptive scheme is multidimensional, progress can be seen in the broadening of learners' communicative repertoire in relation to language activities and strategies within a particular level, as well as in a movement upwards through the levels.
- Alignment of the LC Irish curriculum to the CEFR must also take account of the bigger picture, i.e. standards and levels of attainment at other stages of the education system. As noted in section 3.4 above, the CEFR has already been referenced in other areas of Irish-language education; however, it must be acknowledged that some of these references relate to minimum standards while others are aspirational targets.

hathbhreithniú agus coigeartú a dhéanamh ar chuid acu. Ar mhaithe leis an leanúnachas agus an dul chun cinn sa chóras ina iomláine, ba cheart leibhéil de chuid an FTCE a leagan amach i bpolasaí don Ghaeilge ag gach céim den chóras oideachais. Tá Conradh na Gaeilge tar éis aird a tharraingt le roinnt blianta anuas ar an ngá atá le polasaí dá leithéid, agus tá tacaíocht léirithe ag eagraíochtaí éagsúla a bhfuil baint acu le teagasc na Gaeilge, chomh maith le ceardchumann na múinteoirí agus aontais na ndaltaí agus na mac léinn tríú leibhéal. Má dhéantar polasaí dá leithéid a fhorbairt, beidh sé fíorthábhachtach plean gníomhaíochta agus amlíne an-soiléir a leagan amach lena chur i bhfeidhm.

- Má dhéantar curaclam, measúnú nó riachtanas teanga ar bith a ailíniú leis an FTCE, ní mór sin a dhéanamh ar bhealach bailí trédhearcacht, mar a pléadh i gcuid 2 thuas.

Beidh tuilleadh taighde ag teastáil le cuid de na ceisteanna thuas a fhiosrú. Tús maith a bheadh ann anailís a dhéanamh ar shainriachtanais chumarsáide na ndaltaí bunaithe ar thuairiscíní an FTCE, mar a pléadh i gCuid 2 thuas. D'fhéadfaí anailís a dhéanamh freisin ar fheidhmíocht na ndaltaí i dtascanna dílse scríofa agus labhartha, le léargas a fháil ar an réimse leibhéal agus próifíilí cumais a bhíonn acu. D'fhéadfaí scrúdú seachtrach, ar nós TEG, a úsáid freisin le léargas breise a fháil ar leibhéil chumais na ndaltaí.

Furthermore, some references to the CEFR may be largely superficial and in need of review or adjustment. CEFR levels should ideally be set out in a unified policy for Irish-language education, to ensure coherence and progression across the entire system. The need for such a policy has been highlighted by Conradh na Gaeilge in recent years, and supported by several organisations and institutions involved in Irish-language education, as well as teachers' and students' unions at second and third level. If this much-needed policy is developed, it will be important to put an action plan and clear timeline in place for its implementation.

- If any Irish-language curriculum, assessment or language proficiency requirement is aligned to the CEFR, it must be done in a transparent and valid way, as mentioned in Section 2.2.5 above.

Further research will be required to address some of these questions. This should include analysis of the communicative needs of learners based on CEFR descriptors (as described in Section 2 above), as well as analysis of learner performance in authentic speaking and writing tasks to investigate the range of achievement levels and proficiency profiles common among LC students from different backgrounds. Reference to an external exam, such as TEG, could also provide additional insight into learner proficiency profiles.

## 5. Focal scoir/ Conclusion

Cuireann leibhéil an FTCE slat tomhais agus téarmaíocht chomónta ar fáil, atá an-úsáideach le cur síos a dhéanamh ar an gcumas teanga. Cuireann sé sin leis an leanúnachas agus leis an trédhearcacht a bhaineann le cúrsaí agus cáilíochtaí teanga ar fud an domhain. Mar a míníodh sa pháipéar seo, áfach, níl sna leibhéil ach gné bheag amháin den chreat. Tugann cur chuige gníomhdhírthe an FTCE lionsa dúinn a thugann orainn breathnú ar bhealach úrnua ar an bhfoghlaim teanga, ar an bhfoghlaim teanga agus ar an gcumas teanga. De réir an dearcaidh seo, ní hé sprioc an oideachais teanga daltaí a ullmhú do scrúdú, ach iad a chumasú le bheith in ann an teanga a úsáid taobh amuigh den seomra ranga. Is athrú suntasach meoin é sin atá ag teastáil go géar i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge.

Anuas air sin, is féidir le scéimre cumais an FTCE an tuiscint atá againn ar an gcumas cumarsáide teanga a leathnú agus a bheachtú go mór. Cuireann sé béim, go háirithe, ar an idirghníomhaíocht, ar an gcomhoibriú agus ar an ngné shóisialta atá ag croí na fíorchumarsáide. Is féidir an scéimre seo a úsáid le hanailís a dhéanamh ar riachtanais na bhfoghlaimoirí, agus le tacú le forbairt torthaí foghlama, tascanna measúnaithe agus gníomhaíochtaí teagaisc agus foghlama. Ní mór, áfach, na tuairiscíní cumais a roghnú agus a chur in oiriúint, de réir mar is cuí, do chomhthéacs teangeolaíoch agus sochtheangeolaíoch na Gaeilge.

Coincheap atá ag croí an FTCE ná an t-ailíniú tógachaíoch; is é sin, an comhleanúnachas idir riachtanais chumarsáide na bhfoghlaimoirí sa saol mór, an curaclam, an teagasc agus an measúnú. Aithníonn an FTCE go mbíonn tionchar mór ag an measúnú ar an teagasc agus ar an bhfoghlaim, go háirithe nuair a bhíonn cuid mhaith ag brath ar an measúnú sin. Seachas sin a chásamh, áfach, moltar curaclam a dhearadh ‘droim ar ais’ lena chinntiú go bhfuil an measúnú ag teacht go dlúth leis na torthaí foghlama agus le riachtanais na bhfoghlaimoirí, ionas gur dea-thionchar seachas drochthionchar a bheidh ag an measúnú ar an bhfoghlaim.

The CEFR levels provide a very useful yardstick and common currency for measuring and describing language proficiency, in order to increase the transparency and coherence of language courses and qualifications internationally; however, as emphasised in this paper, these levels are just one dimension of the framework. The CEFR’s action-oriented approach offers a new lens with which to view language the language learner, language learning, and language proficiency. Viewed through this lens, the key goal of language education is not just to prepare students for an exam, but to enable them to become competent language users beyond the classroom. This represents a paradigm shift much needed in the Irish context.

Furthermore, the CEFR’s multidimensional descriptive scheme has the capacity to both broaden and sharpen our understanding of communicative language proficiency, and of the interactive, collaborative and social nature of authentic language use. This scheme can provide a very useful heuristic or framework to support needs analysis, the development of learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and teaching and learning activities. The can-do descriptors should be selected and adapted as necessary, however, for the linguistic and sociolinguistic context of Irish.

A key concept in the CEFR is that of constructive alignment – coherence between the real-world communicative needs of the learners, the curriculum, teaching and assessment. It acknowledges that in a high-stakes environment, assessment often drives learning. Rather than deny or bemoan that fact, it proposes a backward design approach to curriculum development, to ensure that assessment is fully aligned with learning outcomes and the authentic communicative needs of the learners, so that teaching which is focused on the assessment results in a positive rather than negative washback effect on learning.

Is féidir leis na prionsabail thuasluaite treoir an-luachmhar a chur ar fáil, leis an dea-chleachtas i múineadh teangacha a chur chun cinn, agus le dul i ngleic le roinnt laigí suntasacha a bhaineann le curaclam reatha Gaeilge na hArdteiste.

Chun go mbeadh an dea-thionchar sin ag baint leis an FTCE, áfach, ní leor tagairt a dhéanamh do na leibhéil amháin; ní mór dul i ngleic le fealsúnacht agus le cur chuige iomlán an FTCE, agus sin a chur i bhfeidhm i ngach cuid den churaclam – an measúnú agus an teagasc san áireamh. Beidh tuilleadh machnaimh agus taighde le déanamh, go háirithe, maidir leis na leibhéil nó na próifílí cumais ab oiriúnaí mar spriocanna foghlama do dhaltáí Ardteiste a bhfuil cúlraí agus riachtanais éagsúla foghlama acu. Beidh sé fíorthábhachtach a chinntiú go mbeidh comhleanúnachas ag baint le húsáid an FTCE ag céimeanna éagsúla den chóras oideachais, agus sna bunriachtanais chumais a éilítear ó mhúinteoirí. Leis sin a chinntiú, beidh radharc agus plé ag teastáil ar an mórfhictiúr taobh amuigh de chomhthéacs na hArdteiste, agus seans go mbeidh coigeartú ag teastáil sna tagairtí a dhéantar do leibhéil an FTCE ag pointí eile den chóras oideachais. Ba cheart, i ndáiríre, na caighdeáin sin a leagan síos i mórfholasaí don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais, lena chinntiú go mbeidh leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn sa chóras ó céim go céim.

Ag deireadh an lae, braithfidh rath an churaclaim úir cuid mhór ar na deiseanna oiliúna agus ar na hacmhainní tacaíochta a chuirtear ar fáil do mhúinteoirí, chomh maith leis an ról a ghlacann siad féin mar pháirtneirí lárnacha i bhforbairt agus i gcur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim. Beidh sé sin riachtanach le hathrú ar bith a dhéanamh ar an gcuraclam, áfach, agus ní rud é a bhaineann leis an FTCE amháin.

Am cinniúnach é seo don Ghaeilge; tá forbairtí suntasacha á ndéanamh maidir leis an bpolasaí agus reachtaíocht náisiúnta teanga, agus tá an teanga faoi bhláth i gcúrsaí ceoil, scannánaíochta agus sna meáin idirnáisiúnta. Bíonn tionchar mór ag an Ardteist ar chumas agus ar dhearcadh an phobail ar an nGaeilge, agus seans nach mbeidh deis eile mar seo ann arís leis an gcuraclam a athrú chun feabhais, lena chinntiú gur dea-thionchar a bheidh i gceist leis. Cuireann an FTCE compás agus uirlis ar fáil le hathrú den chineál sin a chur i bhfeidhm. Ach an oiread le huirlis ar bith, áfach, ní mór é a úsáid i gceart agus na treoracha a léamh go cúramach.

Together, the principles above can act as a compass for quality in language education, and have the potential to address a number of significant weaknesses in the current LC Irish curriculum.

In order to realise the positive impact of the CEFR, however, alignment must go beyond superficial reference to the levels and must engage fully with the philosophy and approach of the CEFR, and with all aspects of the curriculum, assessment and delivery. Further thought and research must be focused on the question of the levels or skill profiles most appropriate as learning targets for LC students of various backgrounds and educational needs, bearing in mind the need for coherence in CEFR-use at various stages of the education system, including proficiency standards required of teachers. Discussions on the appropriate levels for LC Irish may therefore need to go beyond the LC context, and some refinement or adjustment of levels previously referenced in other parts of the education system may be required. These standards should ideally be set in an overarching policy for Irish with the education system, in order to ensure coherence and progression from each stage to the next.

Ultimately, successful enactment of a new curriculum for LC Irish will depend on the training and development opportunities, and resources provided to support teachers, and to engage with them as key partners in curriculum development and implementation. This will be a key requirement for the success of any curricular innovation, however, and is not unique to a CEFR-based approach.

With significant developments underway in terms of national language policy and legislation, as well as growth in the visibility and success of Irish in film, music and mainstream media, we are at an important threshold for the future of the language. The impact of the LC Irish curriculum on competence and attitudes to Irish should not be underestimated, and there may not be another opportunity like this to introduce innovations and change that ensure its impact is a positive one. The CEFR offers a compass and toolkit to bring about such change, but like any tool, its effectiveness will depend on appropriate use, and users are encouraged to read the manual carefully.

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