Cambridge English
Teaching Framework

How and why the framework was developed

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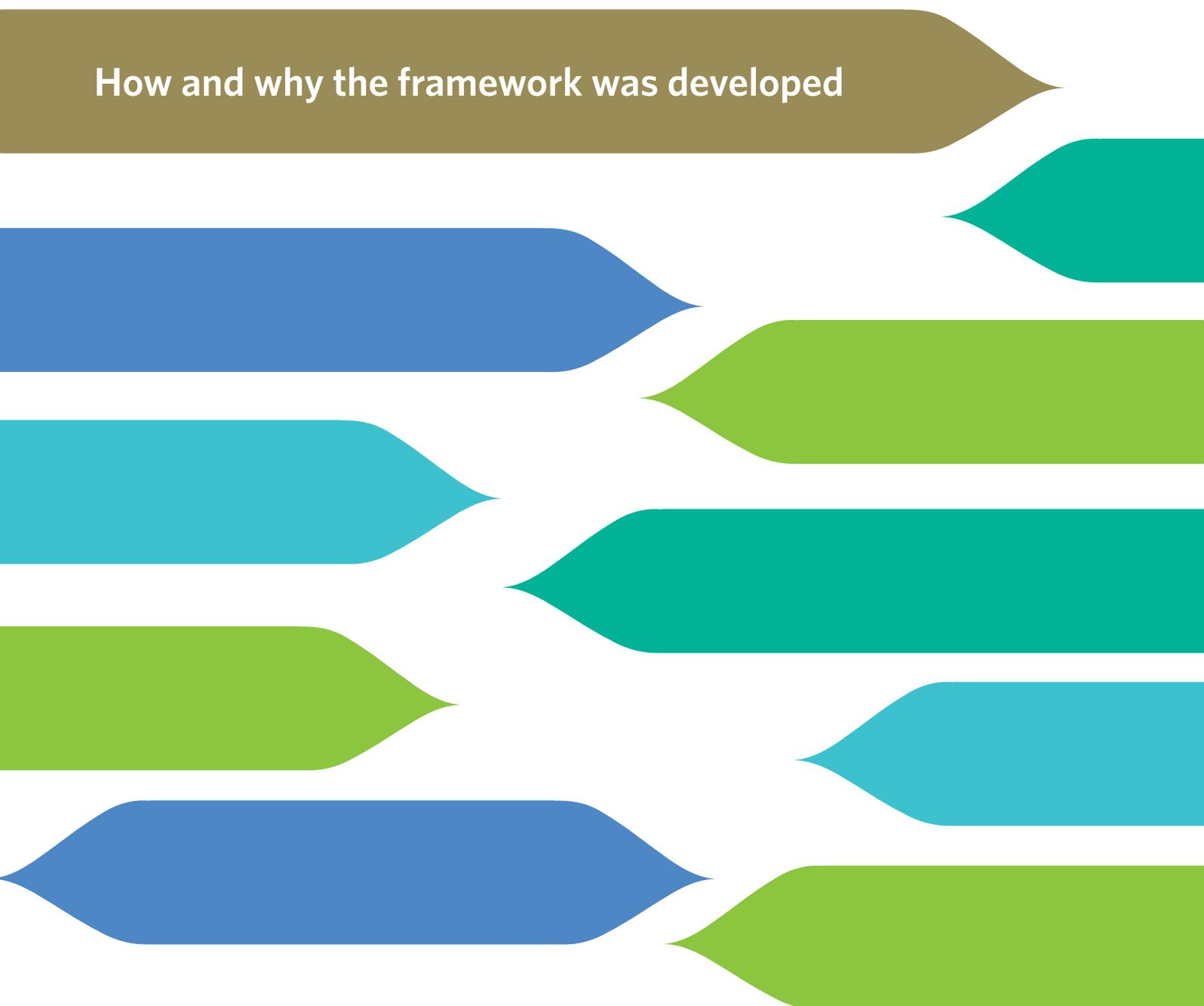
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Cambridge English Teaching Qualifications have achieved wide recognition and acceptance by constantly evolving to reflect and encourage good practice in language teaching and teacher training. As part of that evolution, this framework has been developed to help explain clearly to teachers and their employers how our teaching qualifications map onto a core syllabus of competencies and how teachers are supported by our increased range of professional development opportunities.

Aim of the framework

The Cambridge English Teaching Framework has been designed to encapsulate the key knowledge and skills needed for effective teaching at a variety of levels and in different contexts. It aims to:

- help teachers to identify where they are in their professional career
- help teachers and their employers to think about where to go next and identify development activities to get there.

The framework describes teacher competencies across four stages, and five aspects of teacher knowledge and skill (categories), and is a profiling grid rather than a performance assessment tool (see North 2009). It is intended to show stages of a teacher's development at any one point in time, rather than provide a description of 'a good teacher'. This approach recognises that teachers' development over time is not predictable or defined by years of experience only, and that most teachers' development will be 'jagged' (Rossner 2009:5), in that, across the categories, teachers will be at different stages at any one time. As their professional needs change, the profile will help them to identify their development priorities.

Rationale for the categories

The framework is underpinned by evidence from the extensive written records of teacher assessments from around the world to which Cambridge English Language Assessment has access. These include assessors' reports of lesson observations on pre-service (*CELTA*) and in-service (*ICELT* and *Delta*) courses, as well as detailed background documents in the form of assignments (*CELTA* and *ICELT*) and portfolios of work (*ICELT* and *Delta*) which demonstrate the processes that teachers go through when planning and reflecting on their teaching. This unique resource has provided us with detailed descriptions of classroom practice at different stages of teachers' careers. Equally importantly, these assessment reports reflect the realities of teaching and learning in many different contexts, which are in turn reflected in the design of the framework. The development of the framework has also been informed by theory, in particular a wide-ranging review of current teacher education literature, as well as input by external consultants. This research-based approach has been complemented by the parallel development of an edited volume on assessment in teacher education *Assessing language teachers' professional skills and knowledge* in the series 'Studies in Language Testing' (Wilson and Poulter, forthcoming). The levels and categories of the framework have also been informed by a review of the *CELTA*, *ICELT* and *Delta* syllabuses, which are themselves supported by a substantial body of information

about their application in practice from the statistical analysis of both candidate information and examination results, and the detailed annual reports by the Chief Assessors and Chief Moderators for each qualification.

The framework has five main categories, with each of these categories broken down further, making a total of 36 framework components. The framework is also organised according to four stages of teacher competency: *Foundation; Developing; Proficient; Expert*. Evidence from the assessment reports and candidate feedback to which Cambridge English Language Assessment has access shows that, despite the lack of agreement as to what constitutes the knowledge base for language teaching (see e.g., Ellis 2009, Freeman & Johnson 1998, Graves 2009, Johnson 2009), teachers themselves, along with their employers, understand the importance of enhancing their professional knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- *1. Learning and the Learner*: Ellis (2009) and Graves (2009) emphasise the importance of knowledge of the principles of second language acquisition (SLA) and general theories of learning and of application of this knowledge to the teaching context (see also Popko 2005).

- *2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment*

  - *2.1 Planning language learning*. Lesson planning (individual and series of lessons) is a key teaching competency, and is included in most teacher training programmes. At higher levels of teacher development, this will involve reasoning skills and decision-making during the lesson (Roberts 1998), which are likely to be 'deliberate practice' (Tsui 2003) as teachers develop more sophisticated routines from experience. Both Graves (2009) and Roberts (1998) also emphasise the need for teachers to understand principles of curriculum, syllabus and course planning.

  - *2.2 Using language learning materials and resources*. The importance of evaluating, selecting, adapting and using learning materials is well documented (see Tomlinson 1998), and is included in most practical teaching guides (e.g., Ur 1991, Harmer 2007).

  - *2.3 Managing language learning*. Classroom, or interaction, management, is widely recognised as a crucial aspect of effective teaching, and is given prominence in practical teaching guides and teacher training syllabuses. Here this includes: 'creating and maintaining a constructive learning environment', 'using differentiation strategies', 'setting up and managing classroom activities' and 'correcting learner language'. Error correction is viewed as essential in language teaching (see e.g., Ellis 1994, Lightbown & Spada 2006).

  - *2.4 Teaching language systems*. It is widely recognised that second/foreign language learning in the classroom is enhanced by explicit attention to language systems (Batstone & Ellis 2008, Ellis 2006, Spada & Lightbown 2008).

  - *2.5 Teaching language skills*. It is generally accepted that language use is best promoted by skills development, and that knowledge of language systems alone is not sufficient (Skehan 1998; Spada & Lightbown 2008).

  - *2.6 Assessing language learning*. 'Assessment literacy' (Stiggins 1995), the conscious understanding of principles of assessment, as well as the necessary skills to design, mark and give feedback on effective tests, is recognised as a vital competency, and both Coombe, Al-Hamsy and Troudi (2009) and Harmer (2007) see it as a key component of in-service language teacher education.

- *3. Language Ability:* It is acknowledged that a certain level of language ability is required in order to teach language effectively, as well as to communicate with other professionals as appropriate; however, any minimum language level required of the teacher is likely to vary depending on the teaching context and language levels of the group of learners being taught

(see CEFR levels[1] for guidance on language proficiency). A teacher's linguistic competence and their language awareness are separate constructs (Andrews 2007) and one does not necessarily presuppose or predict the other; such that a teacher with high-level linguistic proficiency may have basic language awareness, and vice versa.

- *4. Language Knowledge and Awareness:* As well as linguistic competence, Freeman, Orzulak and Morrisey (2009) see knowledge about how language is used as vital to effective language teaching. Andrews (2007) and Bartels (2009) also emphasise the importance of knowledge about language (KAL), an important aspect of which has been shown to be teachers' knowledge of terminology for describing language (Andrews 1997, Andrews & McNeil 2005, Borg 1999).

- *5. Professional Development and Values:* Professional development is widely viewed as creating a platform for teacher learning (Harmer 2007), and it is generally accepted that reflective skills are key in enabling teachers to evaluate their teaching and identify areas for improvement (Korthagen 2001, Richards & Farrell 2005, Russell 2005). Recent work on teacher cognition (Borg 2006) also suggests that conscious and guided reflection on teacher beliefs is an essential tool for promoting teacher learning (Richards, Gallo & Renandya 2001). 'Practitioner knowledge' (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler 2002; Johnson 2009) has been legitimised by the following: reflective teaching (Wallace 1991; Farrell 2007), action research (Burns 2009), experimental teaching (Allwright & Hanks 2009) and teacher research (Freeman 1998) – and is now seen as a key element of the knowledge base of teacher education (Borg 2006; Barduhn & Johnson 2009). A range of these different research activities has also been shown to be valuable in promoting teacher learning (Borg 2013; Wallace 1996). The role of a teacher in the 21st century is increasingly seen as involving the ability to work in a team and collaborate with colleagues and also to work within an institution taking on different roles and responsibilities where necessary (Darling-Hammond 2006; Freeman et al 2009; Leung 2009).

  While factors such as specific qualifications obtained, training undertaken, number of hours/years of formal teaching experience or degree of language proficiency are all important, they may not necessarily be directly related to a particular level of competence and are, therefore, not specified in the framework as such.

Stages in the framework

There is no support in the literature on teacher expertise for a *definite* number of stages or levels of teacher development; indeed, it is widely accepted that learning to teach is ongoing and there is no 'terminal competence' (Graves 2009). However, the four stages identified for the framework – Foundation, Developing, Proficient and Expert – map a 'discernible developmental trajectory' (Graves 2009) and reflect the career development of many teachers as well as their self-assessments of their own competence. Despite the lack of consensus as to what defines different stages of teacher development (Katz & Snow 2009, Murray 2001), research into 'teacher expertise' does suggest noticeable differences between 'novice' and 'expert' teachers: with 'novice' being more concerned with control, while 'experts' have more developed routines (Tsui 2003, 2009). Studies of 'novice' and 'expert' teachers suggest that teacher expertise involves the development of schemata/routines based on extensive experience of classrooms and learners, which 'expert' teachers rely on unconsciously for much of their instructional decisions (Bereiter & Scardamalia 1993; Tsui 2003).

A central point to emerge from recent teacher cognition research is that teachers' thinking and behaviour are guided by a set of personal, practical, systematic, dynamic and often unconscious beliefs (Borg 2006). This suggests that 'the process of learning to teach is not a linear accrual of various

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[1] http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/cefr

aspects of teaching, but rather a gradual process of proceduralising aspects of formal and experiential knowledge gained from teacher education and classroom experience mediated by beliefs and contextual constraints' (Phipps 2010:23). In this framework, the four stages represent bands of increasing competence, which can be characterised by a gradual increase in understanding, applied with more and more sophistication, using a wider range of techniques across a more complex range of situations and contexts. A detailed teacher profile has been developed to exemplify each of the levels across each of the four categories and 36 components of the framework.

Relation to existing frameworks

During the past 10 years a number of continuing professional development (CPD) frameworks have been developed in both general education and language education. The first stage in the development of this framework was a literature review of existing CPD frameworks in the field. These serve a range of different purposes and are used by teachers, teacher educators, managers and accreditation bodies. There are also various sets of performance standards used in language education, such as the TESOL/NCATE Standards (TESOL 2002), but these are not discussed here. The following four frameworks are used in general education:

- *Professional Standards for Teachers (PST), Dept. for Education, UK*. This framework, used for inspection and performance management purposes in the primary/secondary sector, no longer refers to different levels (Department for Education 2013).

- *Competency Framework for Teachers (CFT), Dept. of Education and Skills, Western Australia*. This aims to describe dimensions of effective teaching as 'a reference point for professional reflection, discussion and action' (Department of Education and Skills 2004:iii), although it is also used for performance management purposes, and distinguishes between three different 'phases' of teachers' career development.

- *Framework for Teaching, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), USA*. This 'identifies those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning' (Danielson 2008), is organised according to four levels of teacher competence, and is intended to be used for self-assessment and reflection by teachers.

- *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST), Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Australia*. This is 'a public statement of what constitutes teacher quality' (APST 2011), is organised according to four levels and is also intended to be used for self-reflection purposes.

The following five frameworks were specifically designed for language education:

- *CAELA Framework for Professional Development, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, DC*. This was produced in 2010 to help 'improve the provision of teacher education programmes and facilitate learner progress through a systematic, coherent, and sustainable professional development effort' (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition 2010:6). There is no reference to different levels of teacher competence.

- *National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), USA.* This framework was developed for all subjects including 'English as a New Language', which targets 'early adolescence through young adulthood', namely ages 11–18 (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards 2010). It is used mainly for inspection purposes, but also includes space for teachers to conduct their own reflection prior to inspection, and does not distinguish between different levels of teacher competence.

- *BALEAP Competency Framework for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes, UK.* This was designed in 2008 in order to: 'support the professional development of EAP teachers within institutions; accredit individual teacher portfolios as evidence of professional achievement; EAP teacher recruitment; course design for teacher training in EAP; and course accreditation for teacher training in EAP' (BALEAP 2008:2). There are no levels of teacher competency, but it is underpinned by a theoretical background (see Alexander 2010).

- *British Council CPD Framework for Teachers of English, UK.* This has been developed in order to help teachers to plan their own career development and choose the most appropriate professional development activities to suit their needs (British Council 2011), and outlines a series of teacher competencies across six distinct levels. Further background rationale is provided (British Council 2012) which attempts to define the different levels, and provides guidance to teachers in how best to define their own level.

- EAQUALS' (Evaluation and Accreditation of Quality in Language Services) Profiling Grid was intended to be used prior to inspections and accreditation visits to enable managers within an organisation to profile their teachers (Rossner 2009). The successor to this grid, the European Profiling Grid (EPG), which was developed and validated as part of an EU co-funded project involving 11 partner organisations in 10 countries, outlines a range of descriptors for language teachers across six phases of teacher development (European Profiling Grid 2013). The development of the framework has clearly been informed by theory (see North & Mateva 2005, North 2009, Rossner 2013), and is by far the most elaborate and comprehensive of all the frameworks reviewed here. Moreover, it is intended to apply to teachers of any European language, and is available in 11 as well as in Chinese. An interactive version of the EPG, the e-Grid, is available online. It is complemented by the more detailed *Eaquals Framework for Language Teacher Training and Development* (Eaquals 2013).

Guide for users

An important feature of this Cambridge English Teaching Framework is the provision of guidance to teachers in how to self-assess their CPD needs and how to improve their own competencies by selecting appropriate CPD activities. Self-assessment is an important element of professional development (Freeman et al 2009, Katz & Snow 2009), so it is important to provide guidance and training to intended users of the framework in how to use it for their own professional development. This guidance will be provided initially by a questionnaire, which teachers will be able to complete online, in order to establish their current level of competencies with regard to this framework.

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