

## II. ARTICLES

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### **Towards a framework for developing and assessing pre-service EFL teachers' classroom English proficiency**

**ABSTRACT.** Although EFL teachers' classroom language proficiency constitutes a core component of teacher expertise and a crucial dimension of effective teaching, it still remains an elusive concept, as it is too complex to be fully conceptualised. The article elaborates on the procedure for designing a learning-oriented English-for-teaching purposes assessment (ETPA) implemented at a North Macedonian university to enhance and assess pre-service English teachers' classroom English proficiency through teacher, peer and self-assessment. First, it provides a brief review of the relevant studies on EFL teachers' language proficiency as English for specific purposes (ESP) and the literature on learning-oriented assessment (LOA). Next, it describes the process of operationalising the instructional, regulative and dialogic function of teacher talk in the criteria of accuracy, fluency, interaction, stimulating the development of ideas and addressing audiences customised from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The results of a survey of students' perceptions of the assessment tool revealed that they were mostly positive, with few suggestions for improvement. Finally, conclusions are drawn regarding the potential of the proposed framework to inform future research despite its limitations.

**KEYWORDS:** pre-service EFL teachers, classroom language proficiency, learning-oriented assessment, English-for-teaching purposes assessment instrument.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Teaching English as a foreign language differs from teaching other subjects in a number of ways, the most significant being the fact that in the EFL classroom the language serves as both the medium and the goal of instruction (Long 1983). In other words, teachers of English perform a dual role of providing a language model for their learners and employing their language ability to facilitate student language learning.

This specificity is marked by the distinctiveness of the classroom as “a social situation in its own right” (Trappes-Lomax & Ferguson 2002: 12) in which, teachers and learners co-construct classroom discourse through classroom interactions (Thornbury 2002, after Trappes-Lomax & Ferguson 2022: 12). This, in turn, generates a need for requisite discourse skills to be developed by EFL teachers in addition to content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge and ability (Richards 2017).

To understand these discourse-related language skills, it should be understood that teacher verbal behavior is goal-oriented and defined by the demands of the classroom discourse setting (Walsh 2002). Consequently, apart from general language ability, teachers need to utilize specific language competences in order to respond to the requirements of different classroom situations. Issues such as the construct of this specialized teacher language proficiency, its inter-relatedness with other teacher competences, as well as assessment design questions have been dealt with by a small number of studies (Sešek 2005, 2007; Bondi & Poppi 2007; Sokolova 2012; Freeman et al. 2015; Richards 2017; Wang 2021; Rütli-Joy 2022; Nikolovska et al. 2023). These studies explore teacher language proficiency through the lens of English-for-specific purposes (ESP) as they center on language use in the professional domain of language teaching.

Taking an ESP stance toward developing teacher language proficiency calls for a Language-for-specific purposes (LSP) approach to assessing it. Furthermore, unlike general proficiency tests which are poor predictors of teachers’ future performance as they overlook context-specific issues (Elder 2001; Bondi & Poppi 2007), assessment of teachers’ classroom English aligned with course objectives and embedded in coursework has been found to increase teacher professional confidence (Freeman & LeDrèan 2017).

In this context, the aim of this paper is to describe the process of designing a CEFR-based learning-oriented assessment framework for developing pre-service EFL teachers’ classroom language competences at a North Macedonian university. A brief review of the relevant literature precedes the elaboration of the process of developing the assessment.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. An ESP perspective on developing teacher language competences**

It has been widely acknowledged that the multidimensionality of the construct of teacher language competence renders it challenging to define and operationalize (Rütli-Joy 2022). In addition to the CEFR-related self-reflection tools

such as the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (Council of Europe 2007) and the European Profiling Grid (EAQUALS 2013), which foster language teachers' awareness of various competences to be attained including language competences, a limited number of studies have attempted to elucidate the complex nature of this construct from the perspective of teaching as a profession (Elder 1994, 2001; Bondi & Poppi 2007; Sešek 2005, 2007; Richards 2017; Freeman et al. 2015).

In her seminal work, Elder (1994: 9) points out the following abilities necessary for effective teaching:

the ability to use the target language as both the medium and target of instruction;  
the ability to modify target language input to render it comprehensible to learners;  
the ability to produce well-formed input for learners and the ability to draw learners' attention to features of the formal language.

Further, effective classroom delivery necessitates flexibility and fluency of expression, mastery of specific linguistic features including directives and questioning techniques (Elder 1994) as well as strategies such as repetitions, slower rate of speech and using pauses (Chaudron 1988).

Among the first comprehensive attempts to describe EFL teachers' language competences was the creation of a Certificate of English for Primary Teachers (CEPT), adapted from the CEFR B1 and B2 level descriptors and aimed at self-evaluation of primary EFL teachers' language competences in the areas of: classroom management, professional self-development and language awareness (Bondi & Poppi 2007).

The CEFR was also used as a framework for defining the language needs of EFL teachers in Slovenia (Sešek 2007). The needs analysis demonstrated deficiencies in teachers' sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, particularly in their ability to adapt metalanguage to learners' needs, elicit a specific language item, respond to errors, etc.

In a systematic literature review, Sokolova (2012) concludes that the construct of teacher language competence consists of: general language competence, language awareness and classroom language competence, which entails using teacher talk both in classroom and out-of-classroom settings. She also accentuates the need for introducing specific classroom language assessment formats in addition to assessment of general language competences.

Freeman et al. (2015) proposed an English-for-Teaching construct which makes it possible to teach and assess classroom language. These authors argue that particular language exemplars can be used to execute EFL classroom tasks which belong to one of these functional areas: managing the classroom, under-

standing and communicating lesson content, assessing students and giving feedback.

The English-for-Teaching (EfT) construct was the basis for the ELTeach project in Vietnam (Freeman & Le Dreaan 2017) directed towards designing a self-access online course in classroom English in alignment with the TEFT (Test of English-for-Teaching). According to the study findings, pursuing classroom language proficiency as a goal by coordinating instruction and assessment resulted in improved teacher professional confidence.

Richards (2017) suggests a long list of language acts and activities that require specialized discourse skills to be employed before, during, and after lesson delivery. Some of these skills are related to: giving instructions, asking questions, giving explanations, providing corrective feedback, building on and developing students' responses, etc.

A recent study in this area is Rütli-Joy's (2022) research into the relevance of the profession-related competence profiles (PRLCP) and the associated assessment rubric (PRLC-R) devised to describe the language needs of foreign language teachers in Switzerland. More precisely, she investigates the usability of these instruments in fostering the language-specific aspects of teachers' oral feedback to lower secondary school students. Despite the highly elaborate nature of both tools, Rütli-Joy concludes that defining teacher language competence comprehensively is still a distant goal.

The abovementioned studies cast light on different aspects of EFL teacher language competence as a profession-related construct, i.e. as English for specific purposes. They are almost unanimous in claiming that, in addition to general language proficiency, foreign language teachers require specialized classroom language competences to deal with a variety of classroom contexts. In other words, effective teaching necessitates use of specific functional language to carry out a range of classroom tasks. Among these tasks are: providing and modifying input for language acquisition, giving explanations and instructions, managing classroom interaction and routines, giving feedback and assessing students, etc.

As Freeman et al. (2015) note, this ESP approach can be applied in designing learning materials, teacher training programs, and assessments to cater for teachers' classroom-related language needs.

Considering the fact that teacher language proficiency has generally been found to be unsatisfactory, it has been highlighted that more attention should be focused on teacher language improvement in teacher training programs (Sešek 2007; Gu & Papageorgiou 2016).

Taking into account that the assessment tool discussed here is posited in a learning-oriented assessment (LOA) framework, what follows next is a short overview of the essential tenets of LOA.

## 2.2. Learning-oriented assessment

LOA has been defined as: “[...] assessment where a primary focus is on the potential to develop productive student learning processes” (Carless 2014: 964). Demystifying the traditional distinction between formative and summative assessment, Carless contends that all assessment can be learning-oriented provided it enhances the quality of student learning processes through teacher, peer feedback and self-evaluation. LOA can be implemented to measure student achievement and increase students’ motivation, involvement, metacognitive and social skills (Zeng et al. 2018).

Next, it is important to emphasize that LOA is characterized by three main components. First of all, assessment tasks are authentic real world learning tasks contextualized within real-life disciplinary situations (Carless 2014). Moreover, they are aligned with curriculum objectives in a way which maximizes learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang 2007).

The second characteristic, known as “evaluative expertise”, is related to student active involvement in the assessment process through peer and self-assessment (Carless 2014). It implies student familiarization with the assessment criteria prior to their engagement with the assessment process in order to build their awareness of the required performance standards (Hamp-Lyons 2017). Applying the assessment criteria for self- and peer assessment enables learners to take control of their learning by reflecting on it and taking specific steps towards their progress.

The third component refers to dialogic feedback processes (Carless 2014) which encompass peer review, internal feedback to the self and feedback from the teacher. Effective feedback as a “mechanism for promoting learning” (Hamp-Lyons 2017: 90) entails timeliness, comprehensibility, and the capacity to feed-forward into future work (Duncan 2007).

The recent surge of interest in integrating LOA into language education is attributed to its supportive role in language learning (Zeng et al. 2018; Estaji & Safari 2023). Research has reported positive effects on students’ overall language proficiency (Keppell et al. 2006), their oral proficiency (Hamp-Lyons 2017), pronunciation (Navaie 2018), writing skills (Estaji & Safari 2023) and both on the quantity and quality of learner-teacher interactions (Carless 2014).

In spite of the abovementioned benefits of LOA, its implementation has been hindered by challenges such as insufficient alignment among the components of the curriculum, teachers’ lack of assessment literacy and resistance to innovation (Jalilzadeh & Coombe 2023), and the heavy workload for the students (Estaji & Safari 2023).

In light of the potential of LOA to optimize student learning outcomes through teacher, peer feedback and self-assessment, it seemed as an appropriate platform for the assessment framework elaborated here as it suited the project aims outlined below.

### 3. THE CONTEXT: STUDY BACKGROUND AND DESIGN

The basic professional competences of English language teachers in North Macedonia (Law for Primary and Secondary School Teachers 2015) encompass professional values, knowledge, beliefs and skills in the following areas: subject matter knowledge and knowledge of the educational system; learning and teaching; creating a favourable learning environment; social and educational inclusion; communication and cooperation with the family and the community as well as professional development and cooperation. That being so, target language proficiency, as a component of subject matter knowledge, constitutes a crucial dimension of EFL teachers' professional competence and, therefore, calls for due attention in pre-service teacher education.

It should be noted that at Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia pre-service teachers' general language proficiency is continuously being developed through the four-year teacher training curriculum, which consists of language, literature and specialized teacher-training courses including the Teaching Practicum, while assessment generally comprises a combination of traditional achievement tests and alternative assessments (Filološki fakultet 2018). Although classroom English is assessed through performance assessments such as microteaching and classroom teaching, a prominent need was felt for additional opportunities for honing students' classroom language competences and teaching skills (Nikolovska 2017).

To this end, a number of project initiatives have been undertaken by Blaže Koneski Faculty of Philology. A project titled *Developing Pre-service English Teachers' Language Competences with the CEFR* was implemented in 2019 in order to improve pre-service teachers' ETP competences and ensure a C1 exit proficiency level, taking into consideration that the minimum requirement for entry into initial EFL teacher education in North Macedonia is B2 level. Likewise, C1 is the exit proficiency level for English majors in many European countries (Cardenas & Chaves 2013). An earlier paper (Nikolovska et al. 2023) details the project design and outcomes with a focus on the impact of formative assessment on student-teachers' classroom proficiency and teaching skills.

The assessment framework presented here builds on a needs analysis survey carried out by the author in 2017 for the purpose of exploring, among other issues,

novice EFL teachers' (n = 30) perceptions of the extent to which their English-for-teaching purposes (henceforth – ETP) is developed during initial teacher education (Nikolovska 2017). It transpired from the study that the participants were generally satisfied with their ETP training as they felt they could function successfully in the EFL classroom. Still, a demand was expressed for more teaching opportunities to increase novice teachers' confidence, particularly in regard to their discourse skills with an emphasis on fluency. At the same time, self- and peer assessment, whose potential has been proved in different courses in the teacher-training curriculum, were suggested as a possible avenue for improving trainees' language competences.

Therefore, an assessment instrument was created by a research team including the author in order to develop and assess pre-service teachers' ETP proficiency (henceforth English-for-teaching purposes assessment – ETPA). In short, the ETP competences of each of the fourth-year teacher-trainees (n = 15) who taught three English lesson segments to lower-year students were assessed by their mentor and five peers on the criteria of *accuracy, fluency, interaction, stimulating the development of ideas* and *addressing audiences* customized from the CEFR (Council of Europe 2018). The assessment tool was also utilized for self-assessment and as a basis for the feedback sessions following each of the three observed classes.

In the next section the process of developing the assessment instrument is briefly described.

## 4. DEVELOPING THE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

### 4.1. The LOA principles as a foundation

In accordance with the socio-constructivist perspectives of teacher education (Johnson 2006, Burns & Richards 2009), the main aim of the assessment was to support developmental teacher learning (*learning as a process*) “negotiated through learners' experiential and lived practices” (Freeman & LeDrean 2017: 90) rather than *learning as a product* measured for accountability purposes. Promoting learner autonomy, an important LOA element (Hamp-Lyons 2017) and students' critical thinking skills were among the subsidiary aims of the assessment. Involving students in reflecting on their learning through peer and self-assessment, and acting upon the feedback received was expected to contribute both to developing students' evaluative expertise and their capacity to self-regulate learning.

Pertaining to the LOA principle of designing assessment tasks as learning tasks, microteaching seemed as the most appropriate assessment format the



pre-service teachers had already been exposed to as a learning task. Despite its artificiality, related to reducing the teaching situation in scope, as compared to the teaching situation of fully-trained professionals, microteaching is a useful technique which provides opportunities for safe experimentation and professional reflection (Wallace 1991).

As Hamp-Lyons (2017) points out, assessment tasks should encourage students to participate in learning activities, and assist them in developing the skills they will need to function in the real world. In this respect, microteaching is, undoubtedly, a technique which facilitates the development of an array of professional competences and skills. Among these competences, classroom language takes a key position.

For this reason, microteaching three lesson segments of Contemporary English language and ELT Methodology classes lasting between 15 and 20 minutes to lower year peers, seemed as real-world tasks with high authenticity reflecting the curriculum objectives (Filološki fakultet 2018).

#### **4.2. The CEFR as a reference point**

Another pillar on which the proposed assessment framework was constructed was the CEFR as the most influential general language proficiency framework (Council of Europe 2001, 2018). With its action-oriented approach, the CEFR is a crucial factor in determining the language competences of English teachers necessary for effective teaching (Bondi & Poppi 2007; Sešek 2005, 2007; Freeman et al. 2015; Freeman & Le Drèan 2017; Rütli-Joy 2022). The action-oriented approach in this study context implied that teacher-learners should be encouraged to act in real-life situations through collaborative tasks characterized by negotiation of meaning by teachers and learners.

In addition, the potential of the CEFR to promote self-regulated learning by employing can-do-statements for self-reflection (Council of Europe 2018) resonated with the project aim to develop teacher language competences, critical thinking and learner autonomy by formative assessment. As research has revealed, can-do statements play an important role in goal-setting, maximizing learning outcomes and facilitating independent learning (Ziegler 2014; Moeller et al. 2012).

Similarly, the can-do statements of the ETPA form an inventory of learning objectives to be attained. They provide a framework for monitoring learning progress, establishing individual goals, and improving performance regarding trainees' classroom language proficiency. Simultaneously, they heighten student-teachers' awareness of the intrinsic liaison between teaching, learning and assessment.



### 4.3. Development of the scales

Fundamental in defining the assessment construct was the conceptualization of classroom English as performing three language functions: *instructional* (Bernstein 1990 after Richards 2017), *regulative* and *dialogic* (Alexander 2008 after Richards 2017; Thornbury 2002, after Trappes-Lomax & Ferguson 2002). As explained below, these functions of teacher talk were implemented using the following criteria: *accuracy*, *fluency*, *interaction*, *stimulating the development of ideas* and *addressing audiences* (see Appendix). The selection of these criteria was informed by the findings of the aforementioned needs analysis study (Nikolovska 2017), which highlighted the necessity for enhancing teacher-trainees' fluency, critical thinking skills and interactional competence.

To begin with, the *instructional function* is related to teacher's role in providing input and developing learners' subject matter knowledge and skills in line with the syllabus objectives (Walsh 2002). This function is also realized when teachers mediate input from other learners and instructional materials, and adapt it to match learner needs (Andrews 2007).

The *regulative function* is associated with the language employed to organize and regulate classroom activities and language behaviors (Hall & Walsh 2002). More precisely, it is primarily related to teacher's role in setting up and facilitating classroom interaction.

As Alexander highlights (after Arend & Sunnen 2016), the *dialogic function* reflects the sociocultural nature of language learning. It indicates the capacity of teacher talk to stimulate, probe and extend learner talk, which is paramount in promoting thinking and learning (Thornbury 2002, after Trappes-Lomax & Ferguson 2002).

In the present study, the instructional function of teacher talk was primarily implemented through the *accuracy* and *fluency* scales, customized from the scales for qualitative features of spoken language (Council of Europe 2018). As Richards (2017) emphasizes, the capacity to communicate in English fluently and accurately is an important aspect of teachers' discourse skills. Furthermore, according to Richards et al. (2013), accurate modelling of the target language, which is characteristic of high language proficiency, facilitates the process of providing input and giving feedback.

The main concepts operationalized in the *accuracy* scale are grammatical, lexical and phonological control with a focus on intelligibility. One reason for incorporating intelligibility as a crucial aspect of phonological competence was the widely accepted belief that it should be pursued as a goal in teaching pronunciation rather than native-like proficiency (Celce-Murcia et al. 2010). Another reason was the finding that, apart from listening and fluency, phonological

competence is the most underdeveloped area of Non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs') language proficiency and the most overlooked aspect of language training in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs (Pasternak & Bailey 2004).

Following the CEFR-CV *accuracy* scale (Council of Europe 2018), progression up the corresponding ETPA scale proceeds from a comparatively high level of language control with occasional errors which may interfere with understanding at B2, through consistently keeping a high level of accuracy with rare errors difficult to notice and normally self-corrected at C1. By C2 the user can "maintain a consistent control of complex language [...] even while attention is otherwise engaged" (Appendix).

The *intelligibility* part of the phonology component of the qualitative descriptors of spoken language (Council of Europe 2018) was integrated in the ETPA *accuracy* scale almost in its original form (Appendix). At C1 and C2 level, intelligibility is not affected by features of foreign accent, whereas at B2 level it may occasionally be affected by some features of foreign accent.

Fluency, "a thorny issue in assessing speaking" (Luoma 2004: 88), is the second criterion in the ETPA. Identically to the CEFR-CV *fluency* scale (Council of Europe 2018), the key concepts incorporated are: spontaneity and naturalness of expression.

The ETPA C2 and C1 level descriptors for *fluency* were adopted in their original form from the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe 2018) *fluency* descriptors which constitute a component of the qualitative features of spoken language, while the descriptor for B2 level was slightly shortened to reduce reading (see Appendix 1).

With regard to the *addressing audiences* scale, it was mostly adapted from the spoken production scale of *addressing audiences* (Council of Europe 2018). It embodies the instructional function of teacher talk, more specifically, the language competences necessary to provide comprehensible input suitable to learners' age and level of proficiency. Hence, this ETPA scale covers aspects such as presenting complex topics and concepts and modifying metalanguage in accordance with learners' needs, as well as introducing lesson topics, task instructions and transitions (Appendix).

Although using appropriate metalanguage entails a range of modifications such as reduced speech rate, pauses, linguistic simplifications, repetition, and additional information to ensure comprehensibility (Wulf 2001, after Rütli-Joy 2022), these aspects were not explicitly listed in the ETPA descriptors to avoid overtaxing.

The ETPA scale for *addressing audiences* also represents the regulative function as the descriptors were expanded with the following concepts related to lesson delivery: *introducing lesson topics, task instructions and transitions*. Thus, this

scale highlights the complex nature of teacher language pertinent to delivery of classroom content, which is intertwined with establishing classroom procedures and routines.

The ETPA descriptor for C2 level was customized from the following CEFR-CV C2 descriptor for *addressing audiences*: “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” (Council of Europe 2018: 74) by shortening it and adding the *metalinguage* aspect. It was, then, adapted for the lower levels by grading the language to express variation in the outlined abilities. Accordingly, at C1 the user can mostly successfully introduce complex topics and concepts modifying metalanguage to suit learners’ needs, whereas at B2 they “can present complex topics and concepts with relative ease”, while metalanguage can be adapted “to meet learners’ needs most of the time” (Appendix).

Correspondingly, the descriptors focusing on *introducing lesson topics, task instructions and transitions* show gradation of ability by employing specific adverbs such as: *effortlessly* (at C2), *almost effortlessly* (at C1) and *not always clearly* (at B2).

The regulative function of teacher talk is also implemented in the ETPA *interaction* scale, which was adapted from the scales for *managing interaction* and the *interaction* scale as part of the qualitative features of spoken language (Council of Europe 2018).

*Managing interaction* is one of the two descriptor scales under *establishing conditions*, which according to the CEFR-CV, “focus on building and maintaining positive interactions and do not deal directly with access to new knowledge and concepts.” (Council of Europe 2018: 118). Nevertheless, it acts as a necessary catalyst in developing knowledge.

Central concepts incorporated in the ETPA *interaction* scale include the following: setting up, facilitating interaction and performing different roles to scaffold student-student and student-teacher communication. Another aspect is related to intervening tactfully to redirect talk if necessary (see Appendix). This scale also represents the dialogic function of teacher talk because it requires skills for initiating and moderating instructional conversation.

The *interaction* scale proceeds from managing interaction with certain effort at B2, then almost effortlessly at C1 to initiating and facilitating interaction with ease and skill at C2. Next, while at B2 the trainee can help the discussion on familiar ground and occasionally interfere without tact to draw attention to the task, at C1 they can assume various roles as necessary and notice digression in communication. Then, by C2 the trainee can take on different roles, give individualized support and redirect talk if necessary (see Appendix).

The creation of the ETPA scale for *stimulating the development of ideas*, which reflects the dialogic function of teacher talk, was influenced by the *encouraging*

*conceptual talk* scale which operationalizes these concepts: “asking questions to stimulate logical reasoning (dialogic talk)” and “building contributions into logical, coherent discourse” (Council of Europe 2018: 120).

The concepts applied in this ETPA scale comprise: asking questions which stimulate critical and creative thinking, giving feedback that encourages speakers to support their reasoning with arguments and stimulating learners to ask challenging questions (for C2 level) (Appendix). The rationale for the inclusion of this criterion was the belief that fostering critical and creative thinking skills is a top priority in language education for the twenty-first century, and a cornerstone of lifelong learning (Gales et al. 2020). It also ensued from the previously mentioned needs analysis study (Nikolovska 2017) that developing trainees’ critical thinking in initial teacher training is of prime importance.

Moreover, effective questioning and scaffolding techniques are crucial features of LOA as they facilitate the development of students’ interaction skills (Hamp-Lyons 2017). Lastly, the ability to ask targeting questions, more precisely, question formation, has been emphasized as a vital aspect of language teachers’ grammatical competence and one of the problem areas for novice teachers of English (Sešek 2007).

The scale begins with questioning techniques and feedback which don’t consistently promote critical and creative thinking at B2 (Appendix 1). Then, at C1 the improvement of these abilities is expressed by removing “not always” from the descriptor. By C2 the trainee can ask targeting questions and give feedback that successfully generates higher-order thinking. They can also stimulate students to ask challenging questions.

Taking into consideration that students’ perceptions about assessment largely determine their attitudes toward learning (Struyven et al. 2005), in order to gain an insight into student-teachers’ perceptions of the ETPA, a short survey was carried out, whose results will briefly be summarized in the next section.

#### **4.4. Pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the assessment instrument**

Both the student-teachers’ and student-assessors were asked to reflect on the ETP scales, more precisely on whether: a. there were any other aspects of ETP proficiency that needed to be developed / assessed apart from *accuracy, fluency, interaction, stimulating the development of ideas* and *addressing audiences*, and b. how clear and easy to use were the descriptors.

Overall, the data analysis indicated positive results. Virtually all of the student-teachers (14 of the 15 respondents) and all of the student-assessors

(n = 19) considered the ETP scales sufficiently representative of the ETP aspects that should be developed in initial teacher training. The question on students' perceptions of the clarity and usability of the descriptors yielded generally positive answers. That is to say, 11 out of 15 student-teachers and 11 out of 19 student-assessors perceived the descriptors as *significantly clear and easy*, while 4 student-teachers and 8 student-assessors thought the descriptors were *partly clear and easy*. There were no answers in the last category (*unclear and difficult*).

The student-assessors were additionally asked to describe their experience in using the ETP scales for assessing their peers' speaking proficiency and specify whether they had had any difficulties in applying the assessment criteria. Most of them admitted that they had been quite confident in implementing the scales because "they were easy to work with", "the instructions were clear" and they were trained in using them. Nonetheless, a couple of students found it difficult to place their peers in the right level as "they had varying characteristics of two levels" and acknowledged having "difficulties distinguishing some minor details" in the scales, which to their mind, were caused by lack of assessment experience. On the whole, the survey confirmed the need to further improve some of the descriptors and make them more user-friendly by defining the levels of attainment more precisely.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The article has made an original contribution to the relatively scant literature on developing and assessing EFL teachers' language proficiency as a case of ESP by describing an assessment instrument created and implemented at a North Macedonian university. The ETPA framework illustrates how the CEFR can be contextualized to suit a particular educational context and more specifically, students' learning needs. The assessment was designed to promote learning by involving students in self- and peer assessment and by feed-forwarding feedback into their future performance on LOA tasks.

The ETP construct proposed here operationalizes the instructional, regulative and dialogic function of teacher talk in the scales for *accuracy, fluency, interaction, stimulating the development of ideas* and *addressing audiences* adapted from the CEFR-CV (Council of Europe 2018) using a three-level rating method. The ETPA can-do descriptor scales were intended not only to hone trainees' classroom language skills but also to foster reflection, learner autonomy and professional awareness as essential life-long professional development goals.

As student-teachers' perceptions of the ETPA reveal, there is room for refining the descriptors to reach both a higher level of clarity and comprehensibility.

Clearly, the ETPA is far from an exhaustive inventory of classroom language competences. In fact, despite its limitations, the proposed framework can be envisaged as an initial step toward building a more comprehensive construct of teacher language competence which seeks empirical validation. By showcasing innovation in assessment, the study can initiate future research in the field of developing EFL teacher language proficiency at pre-service and in-service level with the potential of informing curricula, syllabus and materials design.

Further, if the profiling and assessment of teacher language competences is viewed from the perspective of LSP, then the problems inherent in designing LSP tests need to be addressed. These problems include the specificity of the domain of teacher language proficiency, the issue of task authenticity and the inseparability of linguistic from non-linguistic factors such as teaching skills (Elder 2001).

Finally, experimentation with conceptualizing and assessing teacher language competences is bound to be based on needs analyses aimed at exploring pre-service teachers' professional needs in order to respond to them appropriately in line with the context specifics.

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## APPENDIX

*English-for teaching purposes assessment scales**ACCURACY*

C2

Maintains consistent control of complex language (grammatical, lexical and phonological), even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in monitoring others' reactions to the content presented). Intelligibility is not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s).

C1

Consistently maintains a high degree of accuracy (grammatical, lexical and phonological); errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur. Some features of accent retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, but they do not affect intelligibility most of the time.

B2

Shows a relatively high degree of language control (grammatical, lexical and phonological). Occasionally makes errors which may cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of their mistakes. Some features of accent retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, which occasionally affect intelligibility.

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*FLUENCY*

C2

Can express themselves spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or back-tracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.

C1

Can express themselves fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult (unfamiliar) subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.

B2

Can produce stretches of language fairly smoothly; although they can be hesitant as they search for patterns and expressions, there are few noticeably long pauses.

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*INTERACTION*

C2

Can initiate and facilitate interaction with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues effortlessly.

Can take on different roles to support student-student and student-teacher interaction (resource person, mediator, supervisor, etc.) and provide appropriate individualized support.

Can recognize undercurrents (digression) in interaction and can intervene diplomatically in order to redirect talk, prevent one person dominating or to confront disruptive behavior.

C1

Can initiate and facilitate interaction almost effortlessly.

Can take on different roles to support student-student and student-teacher interaction (resource person, mediator, supervisor, etc.) most of the time.

Can recognize undercurrents (digression) in interaction and can intervene tactfully most of the time in order to redirect talk if necessary.

B2

Can manage interaction with certain effort.

Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in etc.

Can intervene with occasional lack of tact in order to focus people's attention on the task.

### STIMULATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

C2

Can effectively stimulate critical and creative thinking by asking targeting questions.

Can stimulate students to ask challenging questions.

Can give appropriate feedback that encourages speakers to expand on their thinking and elaborate on their reasoning (e.g. hypothesizing, inferring, analyzing, justifying, and predicting).

C1

Can stimulate critical and creative thinking by asking targeting questions.

Can give feedback that encourages speakers to expand on their thinking and support their ideas with facts.

B2

Can formulate questions which not always stimulate critical and creative thinking.

Can give feedback that *not* always encourages speakers to expand on their thinking and justify their opinions.

### ADDRESSING AUDIENCES

C2

Can present complex topics and concepts confidently and articulately, fully adapting metalanguage to meet learners' needs.

Can introduce lesson topics, task instructions and transitions effortlessly.

C1

Can mainly successfully present complex topics and concepts adapting metalanguage to meet learners' needs.

Can introduce lesson topics, task instructions and transitions almost effortlessly.

B2

Can present complex topics and concepts with relative ease.

Can adapt metalanguage to meet learners' needs most of the time.

Can introduce lesson topics, task instructions and transitions not always clearly.

Source: current study.

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**Ramy rozwoju i oceny kompetencji językowych przyszłych nauczycieli języka angielskiego  
w kontekście zawodu nauczyciela**

**ABSTRAKT.** Biegłość nauczycieli języka angielskiego jako języka obcego (EFL) w klasie jest kluczowym elementem ich kompetencji, jednak pozostaje trudna do jednoznacznego zdefiniowania ze względu na swoją złożoność. Artykuł przedstawia proces projektowania i wdrażania narzędzia oceny języka angielskiego dla celów nauczania (ETPA) na uniwersytecie w Macedonii Północnej. Celem narzędzia jest rozwój i ocena biegłości językowej przyszłych nauczycieli poprzez ocenę nauczycielską, rówieśniczą i samoocenę. Na wstępie omówiono badania dotyczące biegłości językowej nauczycieli języka angielskiego w kontekście specjalistycznym (ESP) oraz koncepcję oceny zorientowanej na naukę (LOA). Następnie opisano proces operacjonalizacji funkcji instruktażowej, regulacyjnej i dialogicznej wypowiedzi nauczyciela, opierając się na kryteriach dokładności, płynności, interakcji, rozwijania idei i dostosowania przekazu do odbiorców, zgodnie z Europejskim Systemem Opisu Kształcenia Językowego (CEFR) (Rada Europy 2001, 2018). Analiza ankiety dotyczącej percepcji narzędzia przez studentów wykazała w większości pozytywne opinie, z kilkoma sugestiami dotyczącymi ulepszeń. W podsumowaniu omówiono potencjalne zastosowania opracowanych ram w przyszłych badaniach, uwzględniając ich ograniczenia.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** przyszli nauczyciele języka angielskiego jako języka obcego, znajomość języka w klasie, ocenianie ukierunkowane na uczenie się, instrument oceny języka angielskiego do celów dydaktycznych.

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