

# Study on the Significance and Strategies of European Common Language Standards in Foreign Language Teaching

Zhengyi Guo

*The Chinese-German College for Intelligent Production of the Shanghai Dianji University, Shanghai 201306, China*

**ABSTRACT.** *At present, there is no uniform standard for the evaluation of different language examinations in China, but in Europe, there is already a common language standard system: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. This standard, referred to as the “European Standard”, has been used in foreign language teaching in European countries in recent years. From the aspects of the background and indicators of the European Standard, assessment tests, etc., the significance of applying the European Standard will be explained, and specific teaching strategies will be proposed to provide reference for similar research.*

**KEYWORDS:** *European common language standard, Foreign language teaching, Applied significance*

## 1. European Common Language Standard

“European Standard” is not just to classify our language skills into different levels. It is also to provide learners with a reference learning goal, including some non-European countries. This set of language reference standard system has six levels of language level from entry to mastery of atmosphere, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2, among which A1 to B1 are elementary levels, B2 to C1 are intermediate levels, and C2 is advanced levels [1]. This set of language systems lists the language proficiency requirements and key areas that need to be mastered at each level, and targets most foreign languages often used in Europe, such as English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, etc. It is not mainly for educational purposes, but for all social life. It can be applied to all assessment and identification standards that require foreign language proficiency evaluation, which also means its recognition very high.

Take Germany as an example. German middle schools and universities offer foreign language courses. Their foreign language courses are set according to this standard. Their graded exams, textbooks, and study indicators have been “European standards” [2]. Students are already familiar with this. The standard of study, and the high degree of mutual recognition between schools, greatly facilitates students’ inter-school exchange activities. European Erasmus is an exchange student exchange program across Europe. Its language requirements are in accordance with European standard system requirements. The unification of education has been greatly strengthened. The language standard for foreigners applying for naturalization in Germany is also based on this system, which is basically A1 or A2. In addition to the first time, foreign language requirements of foreign employees or domestic employees are also established in accordance with the European standard system. It can be seen that the European Common Language Reference Standard has been widely used.

## 2. Necessity of Applying the Common European Standard for Foreign Language Teaching

### 2.1 “European Standard” and “New Standard” in China - Similarities and Differences

The Chinese New English Curriculum Standards set standards for students’ English proficiency in elementary to high schools in 2011, and set specific requirements for nine levels of language skills, language knowledge, emotional attitude, learning strategies, and cultural awareness. From the perspective of language ability, “European Standard” focuses more on the requirements of language knowledge ability, while China’s “New Curriculum Standard” puts forward higher requirements on the use of language forms. From the perspective of discourse competence, “European Standard” puts forward higher requirements for dialogue ability, while “New

Curriculum Standard” emphasizes understanding of different discourse structures. From the perspective of language use ability, “European Standards” attaches more importance to language functions, while “New Curriculum Standards” pay more attention to language applications. From the perspective of socio-linguistic competence, “European Standards” focuses on the mastery of language skills, while “New Curriculum Standards” put forward higher requirements for understanding different language cultures [3]. From the perspective of language strategy, “European Standards” more cultivates students’ learning ability, while China’s “New Curriculum Standards” pays more attention to students’ pragmatic strategies. The existence of this feature is mainly due to the neglect of cultivating students’ oral English ability in foreign language teaching, and the failure to connect well with elementary, junior, and high school levels, coupled with the large population base in China, the failure to truly study, teach, the assessment forms a whole. It is more a test of students’ reading ability and grammar mastery. In addition to the lack of a standard English test system, the final test results are not international and universal.

### ***2.2 Impact of “European Standards” on “New Curriculum Standards”***

Each level of “European Standard” uses the “can do statements” description method to give specific standards from the perspective of language skills and strategies required for language communication. This is called the global scale [4]. And this specific standard has a profound impact on the language proficiency description of the new curriculum standard in China. In addition, “European Standard” describes the language level of each level in more detail from different aspects of language ability and language strategy. China’s curriculum also puts forward more detailed requirements from different aspects of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

## **3. European Common Language Standards Applied to Foreign Language Teaching Strategies**

### ***3.1 European Standard Package for Teachers and Students***

From a student’s perspective, the European Common Language Standard not only helps learners understand their learning goals at each stage of learning, but also helps them become familiar with the learning goals of different aspects of the target language they are learning.

From the teacher’s perspective, first of all, teachers can better understand different language levels. Whether it is a national, local, or school-based curriculum, teachers can have a clearer understanding of standardized language levels. Secondly, by understanding the European Common Language Standards, teachers can better evaluate teaching. Unified curriculum standards can effectively help teachers conduct teaching evaluations at the end of the semester and test students’ mastery. Finally, teachers can better design curriculum. Unified curriculum standards can help teachers organize the teaching content and homework completion of each lesson. Of course, teachers do not need to compile a textbook by themselves. They only need to choose a suitable textbook and supporting syllabus to match their own teaching.

### ***3.2 Selection of Foreign Language Teaching Materials***

Combined with feedback from teachers, students, and teaching effects, data analysis was conducted. At present, foreign language majors focus on adopting authentic language, writing textbooks with diverse forms and rich cultural content in foreign languages. The development is basically based on scenario-based and topic-based teaching. The advantage of this is that it enables students to take the initiative to learn [5]. It is a driving force that motivates students to participate in the actual situation, so as to truly use the acquired knowledge. However, when choosing textbooks, it is necessary to pay attention to whether the textbooks lack systematic training on grammar. As a teacher, in this case, you should grasp the teaching direction that conforms to the European standard reference from the source, and use the set of “Modern Foreign Language” to help students lay a good foundation for grammar.

### ***3.3 Changes in Teaching Methods***

At present, the foreign language teaching we adopt is still a teacher-led traditional teaching method, which cannot stimulate learners’ leading role in the language learning process. Introduce “European Standard” for teaching, so that learners can master self-assessment methods during the learning process, conduct

self-assessment, and can change learning methods at any time to promote foreign language learning. The method of reforming classroom teaching arrangements can be adopted to strengthen students' leading role. Suitably increase students' thinking space in ordinary classroom teaching, leaving about 30% of class time for students to digest and ask questions on the spot, encourage students to actively participate in foreign language oral training, create a good foreign language oral atmosphere, and overcome the passive situation of dumb foreign languages. Teachers only need to give guidance when there are deviations in the general direction, and minor language errors can arrange students to cooperate with each other to learn [6].

### ***3.4 Cultivating Learners' Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages***

In the current foreign language teaching in China, it is not difficult to find that the use of communicative teaching methods and practice-oriented teaching models can always stimulate learners' interest. The most prominent value of the "European Standards" is the greater emphasis on language communication skills. It divides communication tasks into two categories: real or teaching communication tasks. In the real and fictional communication environment, learners' communicative competence is developed by completing communication tasks.

Therefore, teachers can use different teaching behaviors in the process of foreign language teaching. Teachers can introduce the teaching concept of communicative tasks into foreign language classrooms, and design communicative tasks that are consistent with the level of students and teaching purposes. Each task specifies specific task goals. By completing tasks, students learn language expressions, allowing students to clearly associate their knowledge with tasks that they can complete, fully mobilize students' enthusiasm, and cultivate students' true communicative ability. First-year students, who are new to foreign language learning, are very curious, can play role-playing, shopping games, etc.; second-year students already have a certain foreign language foundation, can fully express sentences, can perform foreign language drama performances, Poetry recitations in foreign languages; third-graders already have the ability to express their thoughts and opinions, and can compete in foreign language speech contests and foreign language debates. Foreign language cultural exchange festivals and guided tours of western languages can also be carried out outside the classroom, so that learners can use foreign languages to express and communicate in and out of the classroom, creating a whole foreign language communication environment.

### ***3.5 Modularization of Assessment Form***

Whenever an exam is approaching, there will always be students asking: What is the focus and scope of the exam? The reason for this problem is that the current foreign language examination mode is relatively simple, and most of them are final examinations, and they do not pay enough attention to the role of formative examinations. There has always been such a general contradiction in foreign language teaching in China: Although the teaching objectives clearly put forward the content that learners should know and should be able to do, the classroom teaching content is only for language knowledge, and there is little training for language communication ability. The ideal state is that what learners learn and practice in the classroom is exactly from the real communicative tasks in daily life, and also just in line with the expectations of teaching objectives [7]. "European Standard" divides four foreign language abilities, understanding, expression, interaction, language intermediation, and subdivides each ability into six levels of A1-C2. In the practice of foreign language teaching, the modular ability description method can show the real language level of foreign language learners in detail. The communicative competence indicators in the "European Standard" can be used in various ways for students' self-assessment and teachers' classroom assessment. Based on the scale of language ability provided by the "European Standard" of shared participation, teachers can design a test and evaluation system that matches the courses they teach.

## **References**

- [1] Liu Jun, Fu Rong (2008). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment [M]. Beijing, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, pp.23-26.
- [2] Brooks-Lewis K A (2014). Adult Learners' Perceptions of the Significance of Culture in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning [J]. Journal of Education & Training Studies, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 9-19.
- [3] Seker M (2015). The use of self-regulation strategies by foreign language learners and its role in language achievement [J]. Language Teaching Research, vol. 20, no. 5, pp. 36-38.
- [4] Gérard M (2017). Willems. Communication strategies and their significance in foreign language teaching[J].

- System, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 351-364.
- [5] Han Baocheng, Chang Haichao (2011). Foreign Language Proficiency Scales in China and Abroad: A Comparative [J]. *Foreign Languages in China*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 39-54.
- [6] Larzén-stermark, Eva (2019). Language teacher education in Finland and the cultural dimension of foreign language teaching-a student teacher perspective[J]. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, vol. 32, no.4, pp.401-421.
- [7] Liang Dandan, Song Jue (2018). The implications of “the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” for foreign language teaching and evaluation in China. *Proceedings of the 15th China Standardization Forum*, pp.1085-1090.