Unit 1

The framework: history and politics

Have a look at the cartoon. On the basis of your own experience, think about problems of teaching and learning English.

STUDY QUESTION: BOOK PAGE 1

Sample Student Answers

- Lack of time and resources on the part of teachers
- Teachers not being fair: e.g., preferences for certain students, subjective factors impeding fair grading
- Too much teacher talk time
- Unstructured lessons
- Teaching objectives not transparent
- Old teachers may not be able to relate to learners
- Lack of foreign language competence: teaching in German
- Lack of interesting topics
- Lack of a variety of methods
- Lack of appropriate media use: e.g., films being watched without further reflection or discussion (“just a treat before the holidays or a lesson filler”)
- Lack of school resources: equipment, media, infrastructure
What are the most important historical models of language teaching and learning, and what are their major features? Can you identify tasks you used to learn or teach a FL that fit these models? How effective were these?

Sample Student Answers

- (1) The instruction of foreign language as a system
- Grammar-Translation Method
- Sample (Latin) sentences
- Words and rules of grammar explained in detail
- Taught in native language

- (2) Learning a modern foreign language for communicative purposes
- Holistic style of learning (ganzheitliches Lernen)
- Multilingual textbooks with pictures and stories
- Learning made motivational
- From simple to complex, from content to form
- Study of modern languages abroad, today called immersion
Imagine you are participating in a meeting of the Standing Commission of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder (Kultusministerkonferenz KMK) and are involved in a discussion on FL teaching. Find pros and cons of why English as a first FL should be complemented or even replaced with Spanish, Russian, or Chinese. In a group of four, one group member defends English against others who advocate one other language each. What are the most important reasons for/against English as the first FL in schools?

**Sample Student Answers**

- **Pros: complementing English**
  - Plurilingual speakers of English have advantages over monolingual English speakers
  - Plurilingual speakers can converse and work in more regions of the world

- **Cons: not complementing or replacing English as FL1**
  - English as lingua franca is most useful worldwide
  - English has the most prestige
  - Confusion and stress of learning many languages

- Difficulty in mastering the diverse languages may lead to blending, e.g. Spanglish

- **Replacing English as FL1**
  - Learning more difficult languages first is better because more time is needed to acquire proficiency
  - China will be the biggest economy in the future: Chinese (Mandarin Chinese) as FL1 will improve job opportunities
Discuss reasons for/against learning standard British or American English according to the native-speaker norm.

**Sample Student Answers**

**For**
- Standard English forms: cultural capital (knowledge and education)
- Social capital (esteem and status)
- Economic capital (job opportunities)

**Against**
- For intelligibility, some features and rules of standard English are not needed
- E.g. pronunciation of /th/
- E.g. inflection of third person verb (he walks)
- E.g. double ‘would’ in if-clauses (*if she would come, I would be there)
- Simplified language increases speed of learning
- Simplified grammar is more attractive and easier to learn
Unit 1: The Framework – History and Politics

The framework: history and politics

Compare the overview of competences postulated in the CEF and the KMK competence frameworks. List the major similarities and differences of the two and discuss the significance of what the KMK left out: see book, figs. 1.5 and 1.6 (pp. 10-11).

Sample Student Answers

- **Similarities**
  - Reading, writing, listening, speaking,
  - grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and intonation, orthography
  - Text production, interaction

- **Differences**
  - CEF: few methodical competences
  - KMK: no reference levels
  - CEF reference levels allow learners to evaluate their language abilities
  - KMK: learner strategies relevant
  - KMK: media literacy: very important
Download the curriculum for the level and type of school you want to teach at. Which goals, contents, and methods does the curriculum propose? How interesting do you find the content and the tasks? How can they contribute to developing communicative skills and intercultural competence? To what extent do the tasks contribute to general education, the development of learner strategies, and methodical competences addressed in the German educational standards?

**Sample Student Answers**

- **Grammar School (Gymnasium) - Grade 12**
  - **Goals:** Competence in English at level B2/C1
  - **Contents:** Adolescence, Living in a multi-faceted society/world, Politics and economy, Environment, science and technology, Media
  - **Methods:**
    - Multidisciplinary learning
    - Use of multilingual/multicultural media
    - Working independently

- **Spontaneous/free speaking practice in class**
- **Use of original/authentic information sources**
- **Relevant/up-to-date topics**
- **Contribution:**
  - Differentiation and appreciation of different cultures
  - Free speaking practice/communicative skills
  - Multidisciplinary learning and wide range of topics
  - Independent learning/working