



Language learning

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Today: The communicative approach and „other” ways of learning and teaching grammar and vocabulary

- Approaches and methods compared
- Characteristics of materials using a communicative approach
- Inductive, implicit, intentional and incidental learning
- CEFR levels and criteria



IMPORTANT POINTS OF LAST WEEK'S LECTURE

- Approachs and methods
- Direct (natural) approach
 - *Audio-lingual method*
 - *Army method*
 - *ASSIMIL*
 - *Berlitz method*
 - ...
- Formal approach
 - *Grammar-translation method*

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING: SOME POINTS FOR COMPARISON

How were these questions answered by the natural and the formal approach?

1. What does language learning include?
What is the goal of language learning?
What does it mean to „know” a language?
2. Is there a difference between acquisition and learning? Is a second language acquired or learned?
3. Is second language learning similar to first language acquisition or (completely) different? Should the classroom imitate natural language acquisition?

4. What is the role of **metalinguistic knowledge** and explicit **grammar rules** in language learning?
5. What are the **essential processes/actions** in learning a language? (For example: imitating, repeating models, understanding rules, applying rules, practising patterns, translating...)

How is grammar learned (aquired)? How is vocabulary learnt (acquired)?

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH (from 1970s), LEARNER CENTERED APPROACHES

- The **goal** of language learning is **communicative competence** – the ability to use a language, **to act with/in a language**, in different situations and with different intentions.

Learners' may have different goals/needs => different courses and text books, different rating of success

- Successful SLA: both **learning and acquisition**; learning can lead to acquisition
- First and second language acquisition differ.

- **Metalinguistic knowledge** may be helpful to some degree.
- Imitation is not important. For acquiring a language it is essential that learners be **creative** with the language and try to express their **own thoughts** in their own way.

"A communicative approach does not consider knowledge of the language – however desirable this may be – as an end in itself. Its goal is the ability to use language, to do with language the kind of things one needs or wants to do with it."

(Threshold 1990, 23)

"The starting-point of the specification of our objective, then, is a list of the kind of things people may *do* by means of language. These are things such as **describing, enquiring, denying, thanking, apologizing, expressing feelings**, etc. We refer to these things as '**language functions**' and we say that in saying, for instance, '*I'm sorry*' people fulfil the language function of apologizing or of expressing regret."

(Threshold 1990, 23)

TYPICAL FEATURES OF TEXTBOOKS THAT FOLLOW A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

Example: «Colloquial Lithuanian», Ramonienė & Press 1996

- Special attention is paid to **pragmatics** (greetings, how to ask someone's name) and **real world situations** (understanding announcements, reading advertisements, filling out forms...)
- Grammar is presented from a functional perspective (function -> form), e.g. "Place where": the locative case; "commands": imperative mood

- thematic organization of the book
- several speech genres and text types are presented: dialogues and reading texts; letters, email, advertisements, historical texts... [difference to «natural approach»]
- authentic texts are used from an early stage on
- context and non-verbal cues are used to help learners get the meaning (example: dialogue in the street)
- interesting, varied exercises
- learners are informed what they will learn
- autonomous learning is encouraged [difference to «natural approach»]



DIFFERENT WAYS, OR DIFFERENT ASPECTS, OF LEARNING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY

- Inductive learning
 - *from examples to rules*
- Implicit learning
 - *without knowing (awareness of) what is learnt*
- Intentional learning
 - *by choosing what to learn*
- Incidental learning
 - *learning something without intention, while learning/doing something else*

EXAMPLE: LEARN A BIT OF FINNISH!

talossa 'in a house'

kirjeessä 'in a letter'

autossa 'in a car'

järvessä 'in a lake'

perheessä 'in a family'

vuodessa 'in a year'

tunnissa 'in an hour'

kielessä 'in a language'

unessa 'in a dream'

jäässä 'in ice'

maassa 'in a land'

metsässä 'in a wood'

kuu 'month' – 'in a month?'

juna 'train' – 'in a train?'

pää 'head' – 'in a/the head?'

talossa 'in a house'
autossa 'in a car'
tunnissa 'in an hour'
vuodessa 'in a year'
unessa 'in a dream'
maassa 'in a land'

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kirjeessä 'in a letter'
järvessä 'in a lake'
perheessä 'in a family'
kielessä 'in a language'
jääessä 'in ice'
metsässä 'in a wood'

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TEACHING MAY BE...

- explicit and intentional:
the teacher (or the textbook) informs the students about what s/he/ (it) intends them to learn
- implicit and intentional:
the teacher does not inform the students about what s/he intends them to learn
- implicit and incidental:
students learn something from the teacher's or the textbooks input (examples) that the teacher did not intend them to learn

EXAMPLE: LET'S LEARN A BIT OF GERMAN

Explicit & intentional: German cases for **subject** and **object**

Der Hund ist hungrig. Der Mann füttert **den** Hund.

The dog is hungry The man feeds the dog.

Die Katze ist hungrig. Die Frau füttert **die** Katze.

The cat is hungry. The woman feeds the cat.

Das Kaninchen ist hungrig. Das Kind füttert **das** Kaninchen.

The rabbit is hungry. The child feeds the rabbit.

Implicit and intentional: gender, articles

Implicit and incidental (and misleading): Word order S V O (as in English)

MORE VARIED EXAMPLES HELP AVOID WRONG INCIDENTAL LEARNING

***Der Mann** füttert **den Hund** fast jeden Tag.*

The man feeds the dog almost every day.

*Aber heute füttert **die Frau** **den Hund**.*

But today (it is) the woman (who) feeds the dog.

***Das Kaninchen** füttert **der Mann** nie.*

The man never feeds the rabbit.

***Das Kaninchen** füttert immer **das Kind**.*

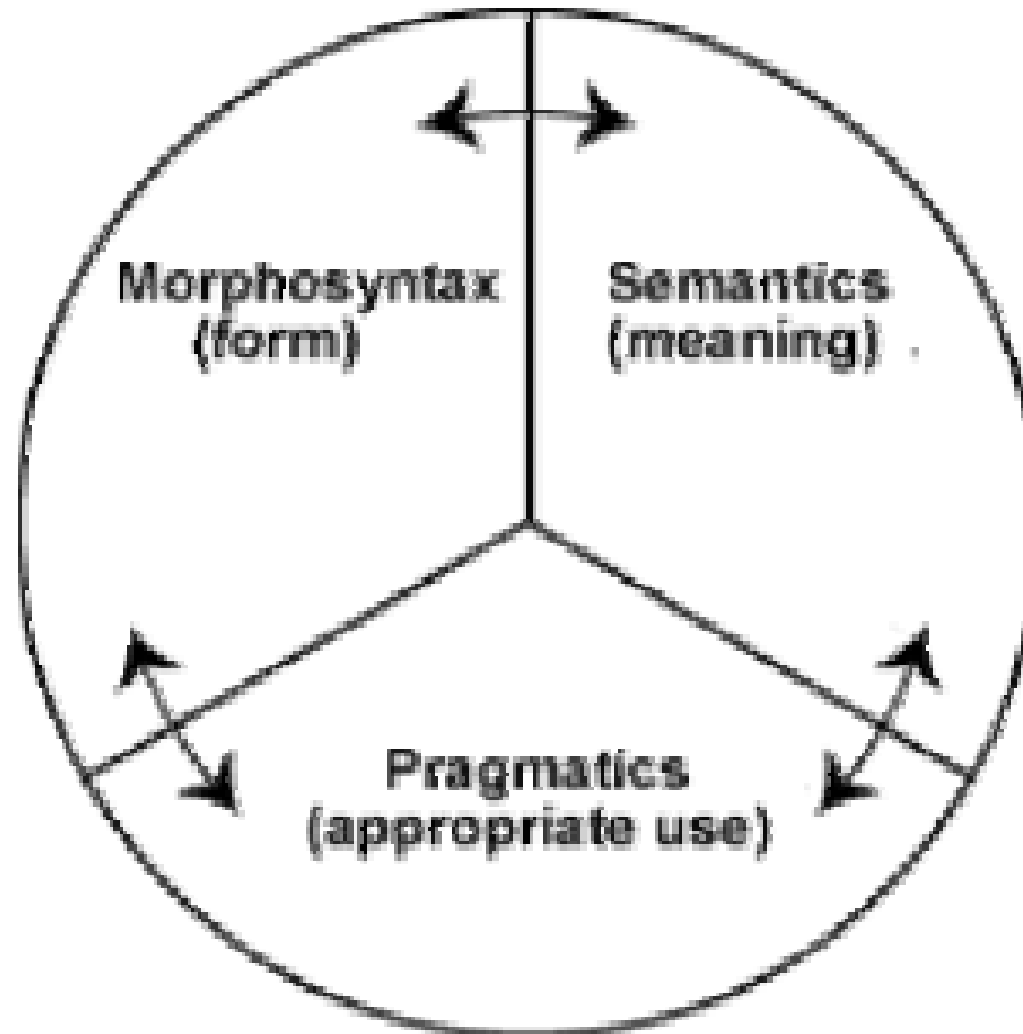
(It is) the child (who) always feeds the rabbit.

SOME BASIC IDEAS ABOUT GRAMMAR (FOR A COMMUNICATIVE / LEARNER-CENTRED APPROACH)

(compare Larsen-Freeman 1995)

- Grammar **can be taught** and learned (not only acquired).
“The basic assumption of schooling is that nature can be improved on by artifice.”
(Widdowson 1992, cited after Larsen-Freeman 1995: 136)
- Grammar has three dimensions: **form, meaning, use** (function)
(not acquired in the same way and at the same time)

Three aspects of grammar (Larsen-Freeman)



- Grammar is **concrete** (occurs in texts, is connected to vocabulary)
- Grammar is **complex** and **systematic** (grammar forms a complex system)

(structures are connected, rules are not arbitrary, interlanguage is systematic, grammar acquisition is not linear, a structure is acquired gradually over time)

"The acquisition of structures is interdependent and not a matter of simple aggregation."

"Language acquisition is not a matter of steadily accumulating structural entities."

TWO EXAMPLES FROM MY FAVORITE BOOK ABOUT TEACHING GRAMMAR:

Scott Thornbury

Uncovering grammar.

Oxford 2001

First example: the meaning of the passive voice

Second example: where to use the passive voice and other constructions

1 Choose the sentence that goes with the picture.



- a) The man bit a snake.
- b) The man was bitten by a snake.



- a) The elephant frightened the mouse.
- b) The elephant was frightened by the mouse.



- a) The mother fed the child.
- b) The mother was fed by the child.



- a) The detective followed the woman.
- b) The detective was followed.

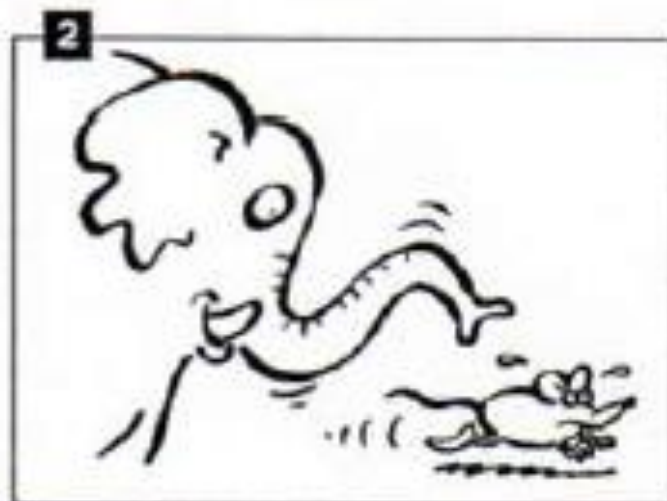


- a) The professor drove to the university.
- b) The professor was driven to the university.



- a) This dog bites!
- b) This dog was bitten!

2 Now, write sentences to go with these pictures.



Grammar in use

1. How many sentences can you make with the following elements, in any order, adding grammatical words only?
Kim dog cure vet
2. Which of the following sentences fits best into each of the 'mini-contexts' below? (next slide)
 1. Kim's dog was cured by the vet.
 2. It was the vet that cured Kim's dog.
 3. The vet cured Kim's dog.
 4. It was Kim's dog that was cured by the vet.

"Mini-contexts"

- a) Kim has two neighbours: a doctor and a vet.

The doctor took out Kim's appendix.

- b) Two of Kim's pets were ill last week.

His hamster recovered by itself.

- c) I was wrong in thinking that Jane's cat had been cured.

Jane's cat is still sick.

- d) For years Kim thought that his father had cured his dog.
_____.His father simply took it to the clinic.

Now write short contexts for these sentences:

1. The Queen was given flowers by the children.
2. The children gave the Queen flowers.
3. It was the children that gave the Queen flowers.
4. It was the Queen who was given flowers by the children.



LEVELS OF SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

WITHIN A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH TO LEARNING

Council of Europe: *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR)*, 2001

„It was designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency. It is used in Europe but also in other continents.” Available in 40 languages.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages>

... for example, in Turkish 😊

DİLLER İÇİN AVRUPA ORTAK BAŞVURU METNİ - ÖĞRENME - ÖĞRETME – DEĞERLENDİRME

The following quotes are taken from:

CEFR_PrefatoryNote_UserNote_EN.doc

Objectives

1. To encourage practitioners of all kinds in the language field, including language learners themselves, to reflect on such questions as:

- what do we actually do when we speak (or write) to each other?
- what enables us to act in this way?
- how much of this do we need to learn when we try to use a new language?
- how do we set our objectives and mark our progress along the path from total ignorance to effective mastery?
- how does language learning take place?
- what can we do to help ourselves and other people to learn a language better?

....

Given these fundamental aims, the Council encourages all those concerned with the organisation of language learning to base their work on the needs, motivations, characteristics and resources of learners. This means answering questions such as:

- What will learners **need to do** with the language?
- What do they **need to learn** in order to be able to use the language to achieve those ends?
- What makes them **want to learn**?
- What sort of people are they (age, sex, social and educational **background**, etc.)
- What knowledge, skills and experiences do their **teachers** possess?
- ...
- **How much time** can they afford (or are willing, or able) to spend?

History and related initiatives

- *Threshold level* (from 1975 on)

European Centre for Modern Languages

<http://www.ecml.at>

Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

- „Can-do statements” (1992-2002)

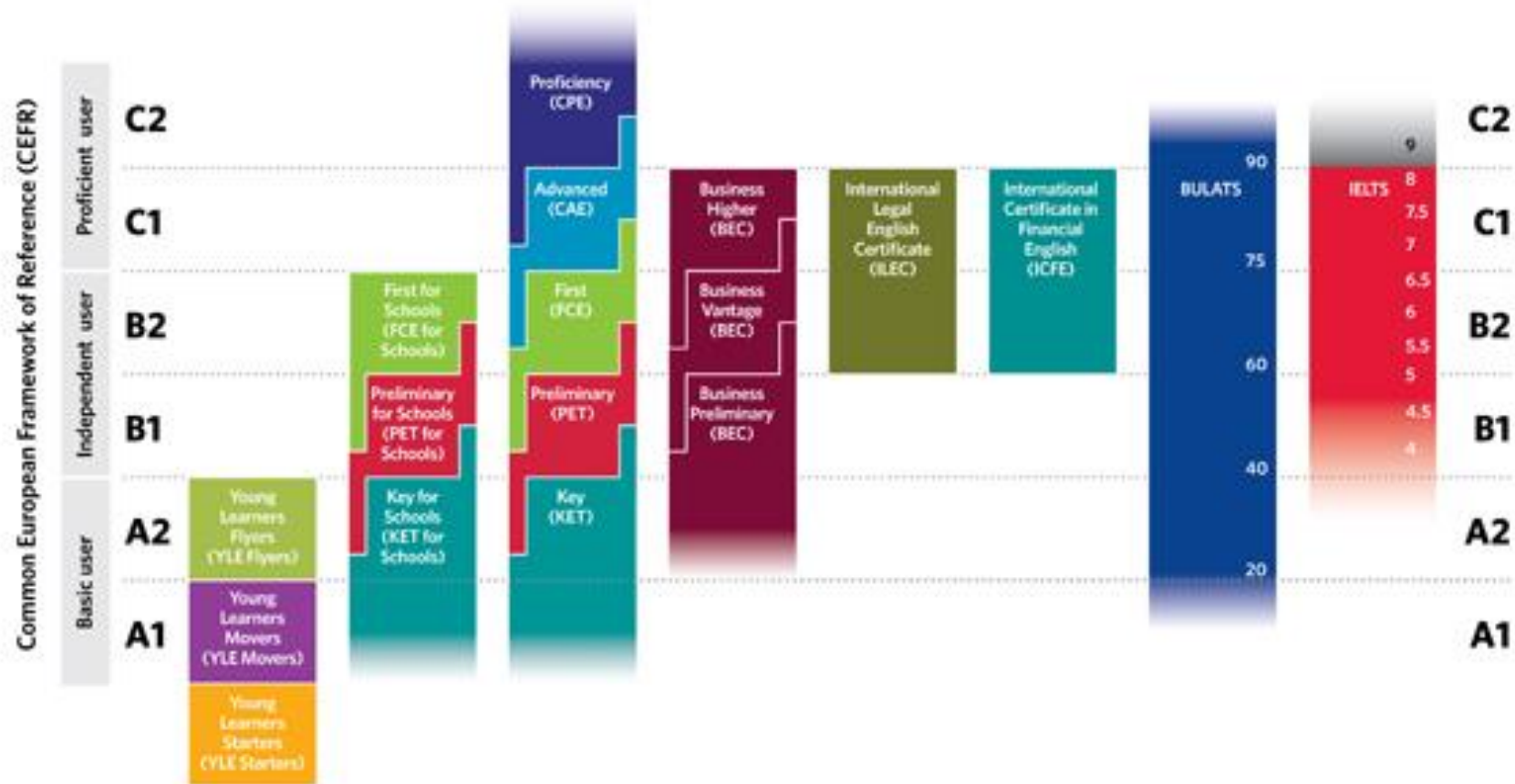
<https://www.alte.org/Materials>

The CEFR levels

A Basic User	A1	Breakthrough
	A2	Waystage
B Intermediate User	B1	Threshold
	B2	Vantage
C Proficient User	C1	Effective proficiency
	C2	Mastery

Cambridge English

A range of exams to meet different needs



From: <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/cefr.html> (in 2013)

References and recommended reading

Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1995 (?). Grammar and its teaching:
Challenging the myths

(text can be found on the Internet at various sites)

DeKeyser, Robert. 2003. Implicit and explicit learning. In: Doughty & Long (eds.) *The handbook of second language acquisition*, 319-348.