

# **Language Learning: Methods and Media**

**Prof. Nicole Nau, UAM 2016**

**Sixth lecture (21.03.2016)**

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


**Important points of last week's lecture**



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?

## **Approaches to language learning and teaching: some points for comparison**

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

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

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- 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.

**The communicative approach,**  
**learner centered approaches**

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- **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.
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"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)

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"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)*


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- 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

**Typical features of textbooks following a communicative approach**

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- thematic organization of the book
  - several speech genres and text types are presented: dialogues and reading texts; letters, email, advertisements, historical texts...
  - authentic texts are used from an early stage on
  - context is 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
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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 and is now available in 39 languages.”

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp)

**Levels of second language proficiency  
within a communicative approach to learning**

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DİLLER İÇİN AVRUPA ORTAK  
BAŞVURU METNİ - ÖĞRENME -  
ÖĞRETME – DEĞERLENDİRME  
**... for example, in Turkish** 😊


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The following quotes are taken  
from:

CEFR\_PrefatoryNote\_UserNote\_EN.doc

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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?

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## **Objectives**

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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?



- *Threshold level* (from 1975 on)

European Centre for Modern Languages

<http://www.ecml.at>

Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

- „Can-do statements” (project started 1992)

<http://www.alte.org/>

## **History and related initiatives**

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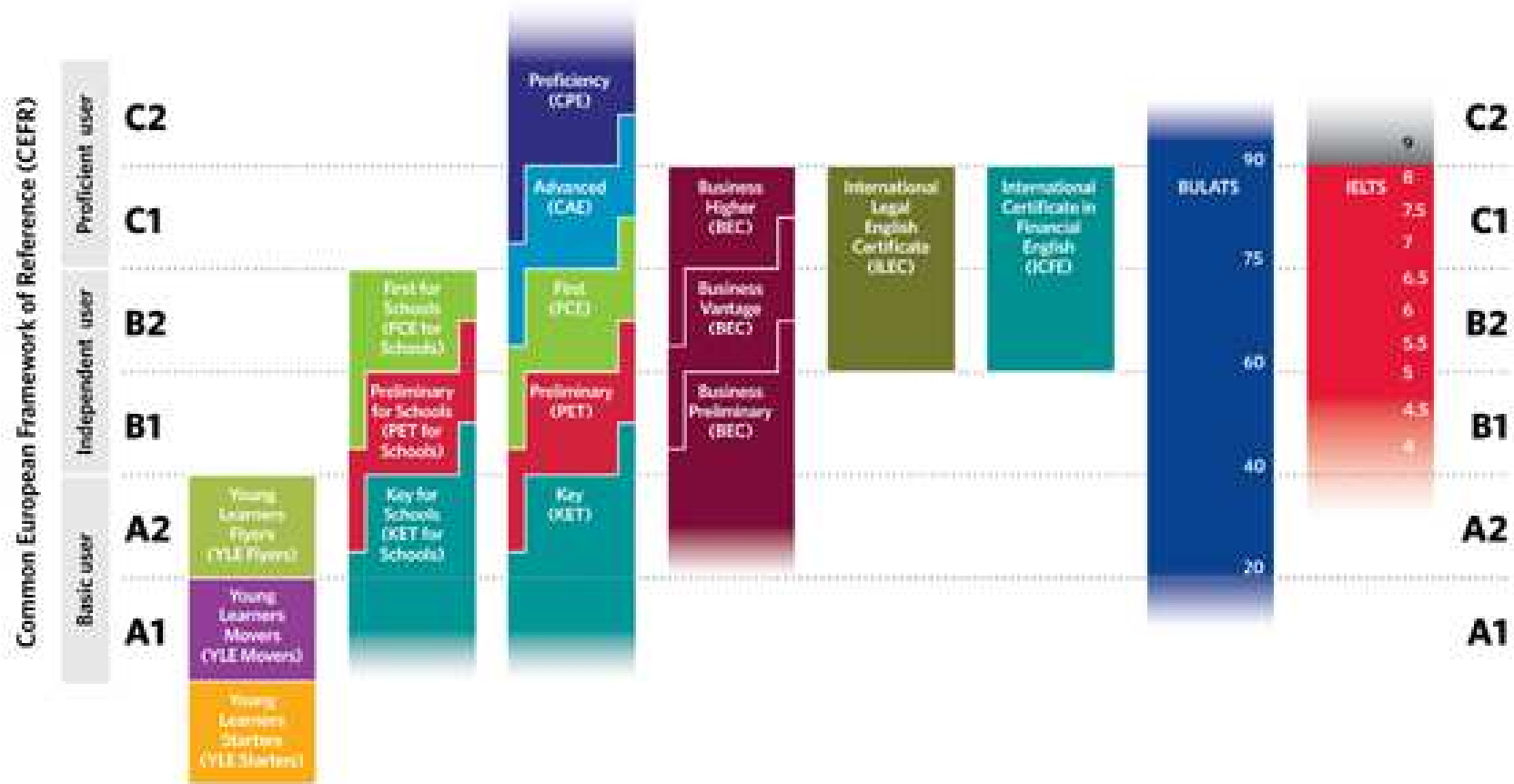
# The CEFR levels

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)

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(*Threshold* 1990, 23)

**Background, ideology: recall...**



- **linguistic competence**  
(knowing words and structures)
- **sociolinguistic competence**  
(using language appropriately in a context)
- **discourse competence**  
(e.g., distinguishing main and secondary points)
- **strategic competence**
- **socio-cultural competence**  
(knowing values and attitudes)
- **social competence** (knowing social rituals)

(van Ek 1986, cited after van Ek & Trim 1998, *Threshold* 1990)

**What does communicative ability include?**



# Level descriptions: What CAN you DO?

- **ALTE Breakthrough Level:** a basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way.  
*Example: CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers.*
- **ALTE Level 1 (Waystage User):** an ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts.  
*Example: CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics.*
- **ALTE Level 2 (Threshold User):** an ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non-routine information.  
*Example: CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward.*



- **ALTE Level 3 (Independent User):** the capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics.

*Example: CAN show visitors round and give a detailed description of a place.*

- **ALTE Level 4 (Competent User):** an ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriacy, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics.

*Example: CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently.  
CAN get and hold on to his/her turn to speak*

- **ALTE Level 5 (Good User):** the capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding, and to use language to good effect, at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker.

*Example: CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.*



- 18.04. ? who is bold enough?
- 25.04.  
(no classes 02.05. and 09.05.)
- 16.05.
- 23.05.
- 27.05.
- 06.06.  
(last class 13.06. – time for review and certificates)

**Time for YOUR presentations!**

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- Regular active attendance
- Oral presentation
- NEW: written analysis of a method/material according to a given scheme, about 3 pages (print out)  
= no test!

**Requirements for this class (updated)**

- Short general description of M. (= method/material)
- Level according to CEFR
- Approach(es) – formal, direct or communicative?  
(includes discussion of several points)
- Learner autonomy?
- Executive motivation (how does M. motivate to go on?)
- Strategies learners (and teachers) may use with M.
- Learning styles that agree with M.
- Conclusion: for whom and when is M. good?

**Toward a sheme for analysis (not ready yet)**

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## METHODS

- Army-method,
- Sugestopedia,
- DOGME,
- Total physical response
- Task based language learning ...

## MATERIALS

- a text book/ package to be used in classes
- material for self-studying
- own material developed with a tool such as Anki

## **Possible topics**

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## PLATFORMS, web-based learning

- a web-site with material, e.g. podcasts and exercises, for one language, such as [Randall's](#) web-site (English)
  - a YouTube channel such as [Anglo-Link](#) (English), [sweetandtastyTV](#) (Korean)
  - ...
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