Marita Härmälä, Finnish Education Evaluation Centre

Eli Moe, University of Bergen

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AWARENESS IN SUBJECT CLASSES

7th CEFR SIG Meeting,
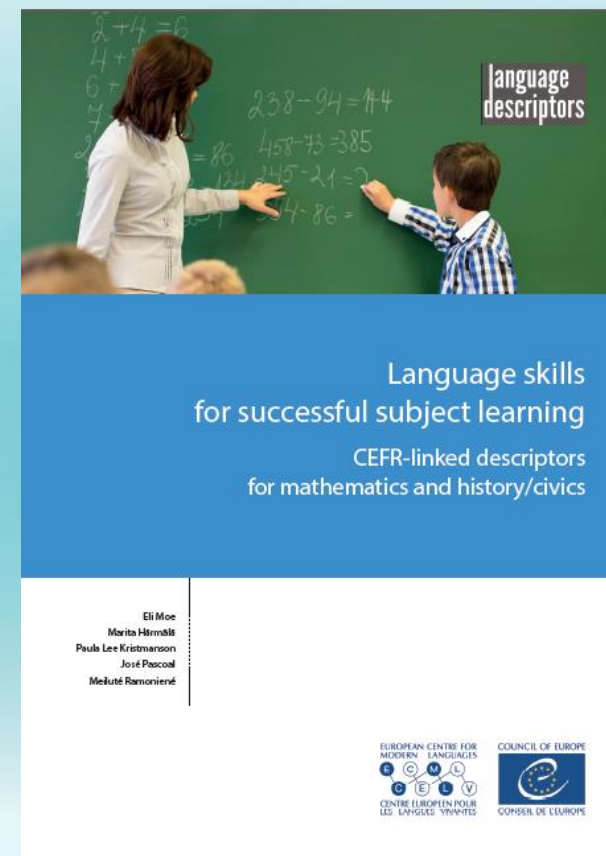May 2018, University of Bochum

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Language skills for successful subject learning: CEFR-linked descriptors for mathematics and history (2012-2015)

- **For raising awareness of the language-related aspects and the importance of language in constructing knowledge in non-language subjects**

- **For setting language objectives in lessons**

- **For use as assessment criteria (formative and summative)**

- **For gauging the language level used by teachers in subject classes and adapting it accordingly**

Language skills
for successful subject learning

CEFR-linked descriptors
for mathematics and history/civics

Eli Moe
Marita Härmälä
Paula Lee Kristmanson
José Pascoal
Meilutė Ramonienė

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Developing language awareness in subject classes 2016-2019

- Team:
    - Marita Härmälä (Finland); Artashes Barkhanajyan (Armenia), Jérôme Béliard (France), Eli Moe (Norway), Susan Ballinger (Canada)

- Aim:
    1) tools for recognising students' language needs in different school subjects
    2) examples of language supportive teaching materials

- Data gathering:
    - Questionnaire (https://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2016-2019/languageinsubjects)
    - Workshop in Graz November 2017
    - Network meeting October 2018
    - National seminars, workshops, school visits

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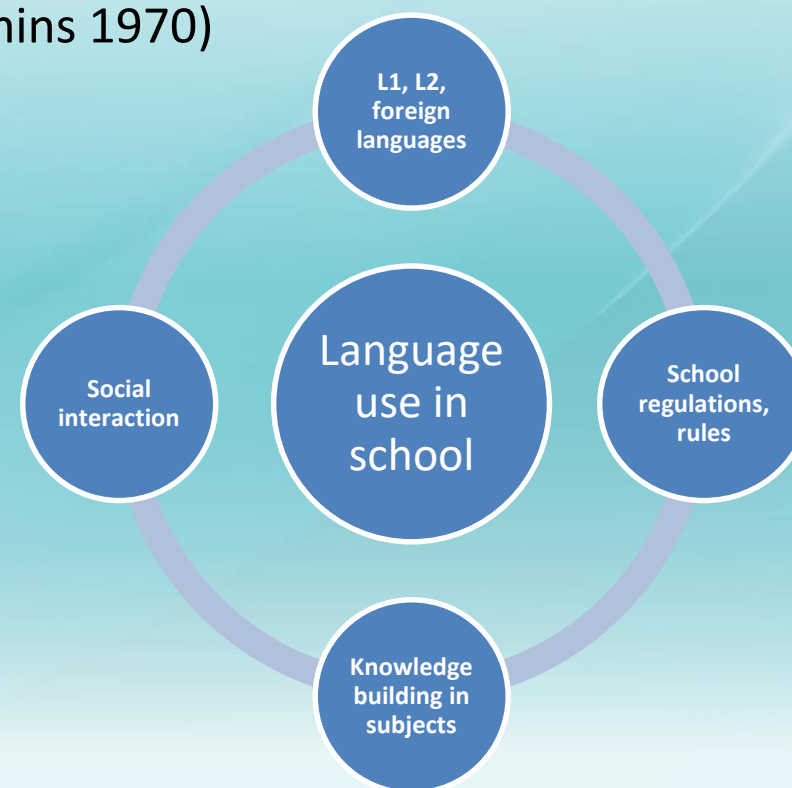
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Languages at school

- Everyday language vs. academic language (Cummins 1970)
- Language of schooling (Schleppegrell)
- CLIL
- Subject specific language:

      genres, text types

      ways of thinking, talking, writing

      grammatical structures, concepts

      language functions

      etc.

L1, L2, foreign languages

Social interaction

Language use in school

School regulations, rules

Knowledge building in subjects

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Example: math and history

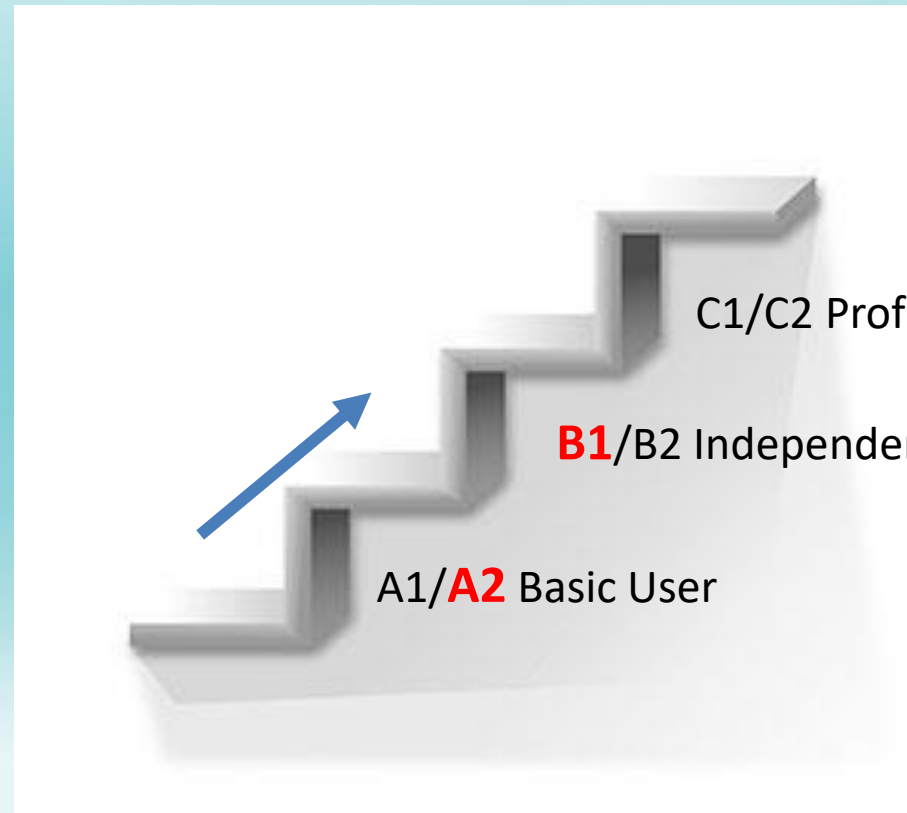|	History	Math
Language	- Chronological order - Change: causes and consequences - Facts, interpretations	- Not connected to time - No emotional content - Exactitude (e.g. definitions)
Challenges	- Historical empathy: to step into other people's shoes (Rantala 2015)	- Worded problems: challenging both languagewise and mathematically (Barbu & Beal 2010) - Implicit logical relationships (Schleppegrell 2007)

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Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2003)

C1/C2 Proficient User

B1/B2 Independent User

A1/**A2** Basic User

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Situations where L2 speakers have language-related difficulties
(Härmälä, Moe, Béliard, Barkhanajyan 2017)

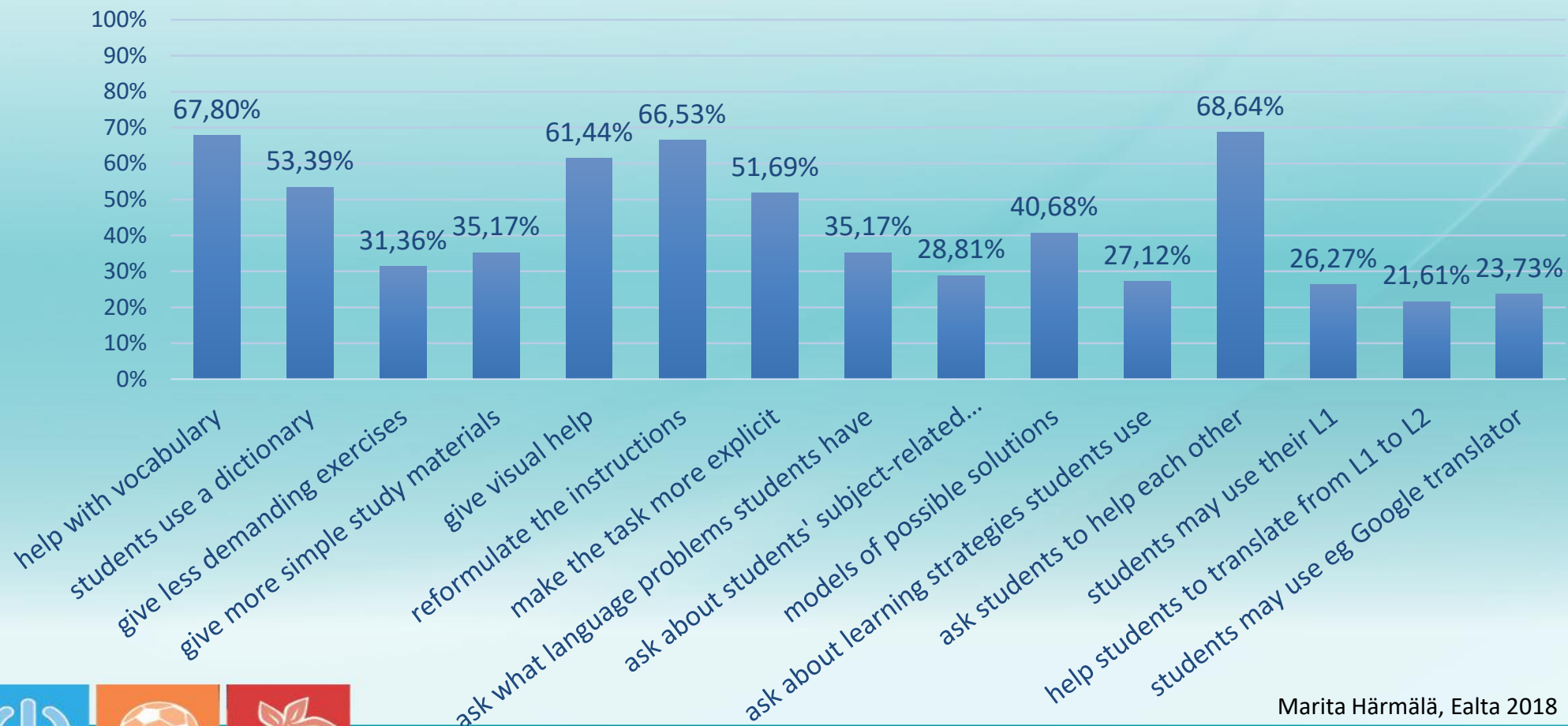| Situation	%
During whole-class discussions	67,8 %
During group work activities	44,9 %
During pair work activities	28,4 %
On written assignments	**84,8 %**
During social interactions (at break time, etc.)	26,7 %
During oral presentations	65,3 %
My L2 students do not face language-related difficulties	4,7 %
Other	12,3 %

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Scaffolding techniques that respondents use
(Härmälä, Moe, Béliard, Barkhanajyan 2017)

67,80%
53,39%
31,36%
35,17%
61,44%
66,53%
51,69%
35,17%
28,81%
40,68%
27,12%
68,64%
26,27%
21,61%
23,73%

help with vocabulary
students use a dictionary
give less demanding exercises
give more simple study materials
give visual help
reformulate the instructions
make the task more explicit
ask what language problems students have
ask about students' subject-related…
models of possible solutions
ask about learning strategies students use
ask students to help each other
students may use their L1
help students to translate from L1 to L2
students may use eg Google translator

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Finnish National Core Curriculum (2014): good skills at the end of 6ᵗʰ grade

History: The student is able to

- **describe** changes and **tell** why change is not always the same as progress
- broadly **describe** causal relationships for some historical phenomena
- **explain** with some examples why the same phenomenon or event may be interpreted in different ways
- **present a story** by **explaining** the event or phenomenon from the point of view of different actors

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What is 'to describe' on different proficiency levels and in different subjects?

A2:   Can describe events and activities **in a simple list of points.**

B1:   Can pass on information and **briefly describe events, observations and processes.** Can **describe how s/he is thinking** when solving a task in a straightforward way. Can **briefly describe a visual representation** (a graph, a figure, a table, a drawing etc.) **pointing out** important features.

Mathematics, history, science, music, physical education?

Defining language goals

Functions
- Can describe causal relationships of a class society
- Can ask questions
- Can answer questions

Structures
- Cases in Finnish
- Wh-questions
- Past tense
- Conjunctions

Vocabulaire
- In 17th century, at the beginning of, gradually, all the time
- what, why, when?
- To become something (translat.)
- because, even though…

-> The student is able **to describe factors connected to the origins and consequences of a class society** by using different temporal constructions and conjunctions such as in 17th century, gradually; because, even though

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Challenges / Next steps :

Challenges:

- to get more subject teachers involved
- to illustrate how to define the language goals for different proficiency levels

Next steps:

- develop tools and teaching materials to help subject teachers to get started (Platform)
- to continue promoting cooperation between teachers and other persons involved

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THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

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