

# Language descriptors for migrant and minority students' success in compulsory education

ECML-project 2012 – 2013

<http://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2012-2015/LanguageDescriptors/tabid/1800/Default.aspx>

[https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Schoollang\\_EN.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Schoollang_EN.asp)



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# Project group

## Five project members

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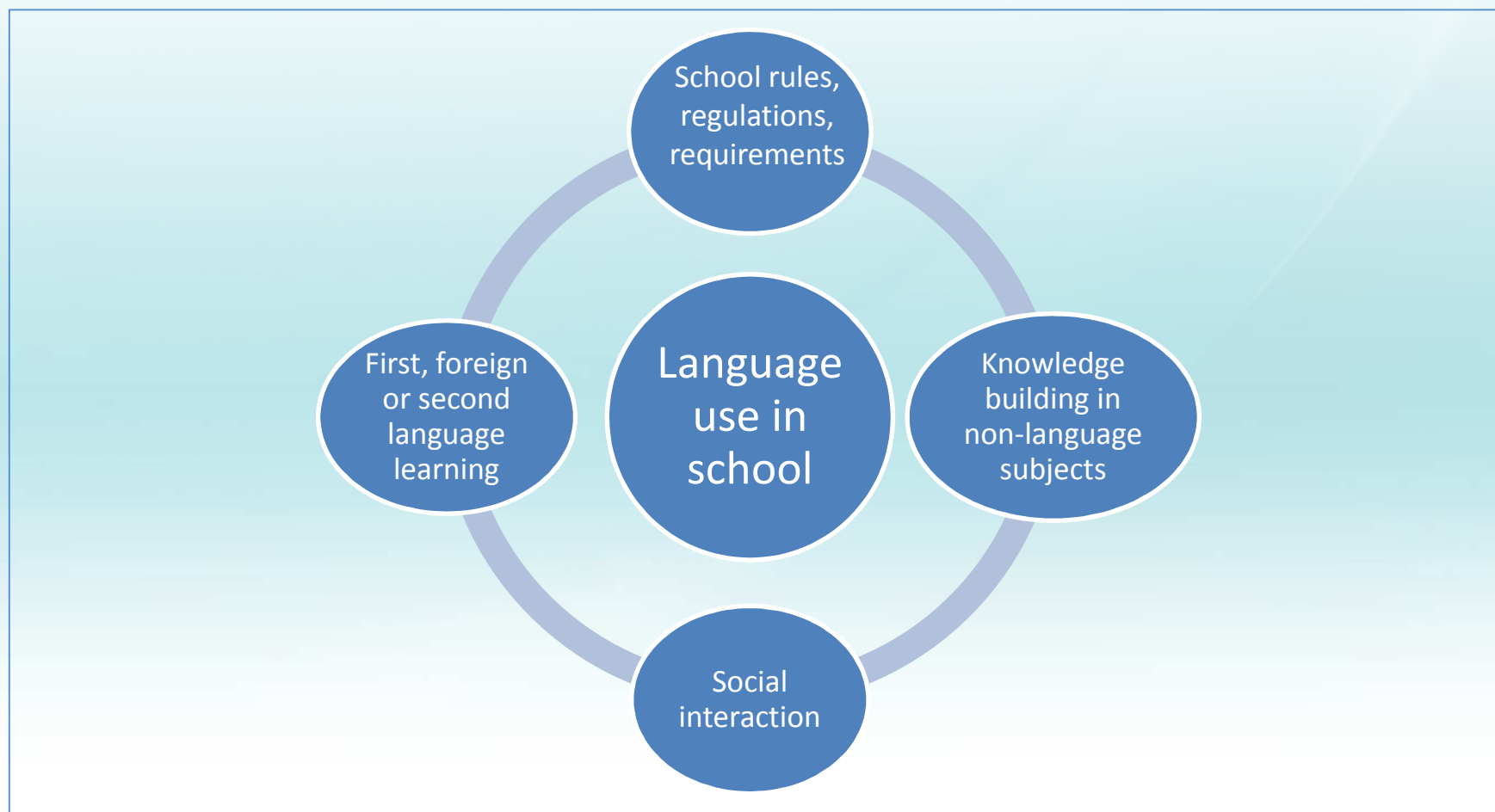


# Overview of presentation

- Aim of the project
- Background - Language of schooling
  - What had been done earlier?
  - What was new in our study?
- Process of developing language descriptors
- Project output
- How could the language descriptors be used?



# Language situations in school



# Research on the language of schooling

- Cummins (1979, 1980, 1981) – BICS and CALP
- Mary Schleppegrell (2001, 2006, 2011 and more) characterised the language of schooling
- Beacco (2010), Vollmer (2010), Pieper (2011), Linneweber-Lammerskitten (2012) – identified important discourse functions 15 – 16 year old students needed to cope with in history, science, literature and mathematics
- And others



# Basic skills and curriculum goals

- In many countries basic skills are integrated in curriculum goals for all subjects





# Norway: history/social sc. example

- **Curriculum goal 7<sup>th</sup> grade:** *Read* texts about people living under different conditions, and **discuss** why they think, act and see events differently
- **Curriculum goal 10<sup>th</sup> grade:** Use statistical sources (*read and analyse/interpret graphically represented info*) to calculate and **describe** trends and variations in social science discussions and **evaluate** whether the statistics give reliable information



# What was new in our study

- The *Language descriptors study* linked language requirements in subjects to CEFR levels





## Aim

- to link levels of language proficiency to subject language – i.e. to indicate which CEFR levels young migrant or minority learners (at the ages of 12/13 and 15/16) needed to have in the language of schooling in order to do well in mathematics and history/civics, i.e. minimum standards
- to raise an awareness of the challenges young language learners met when learning subject matter contents by means of a language, which was not their first language



# Project focus

What level of language proficiency do migrant/minority pupils need in order to do well in compulsory schooling?

Subjects: History/civics (social science) and mathematics

Age groups: 12/13 and 15/16 year old pupils



# Language descriptors

- for listening, reading, speaking and writing
- <http://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2012-2015/LanguageDescriptors/tabid/1800/Default.aspx>



# Example: Understand instructions and tasks in teaching materials

C1	Can understand in detail lengthy, complex instructions in an area of specialty
B2	Can understand lengthy, complex instructions/ tasks in teaching materials, also when it involves several steps
B1	Can understand clearly written straightforward instructions/tasks in teaching materials
A2	Can understand simple routine instructions/tasks in teaching materials



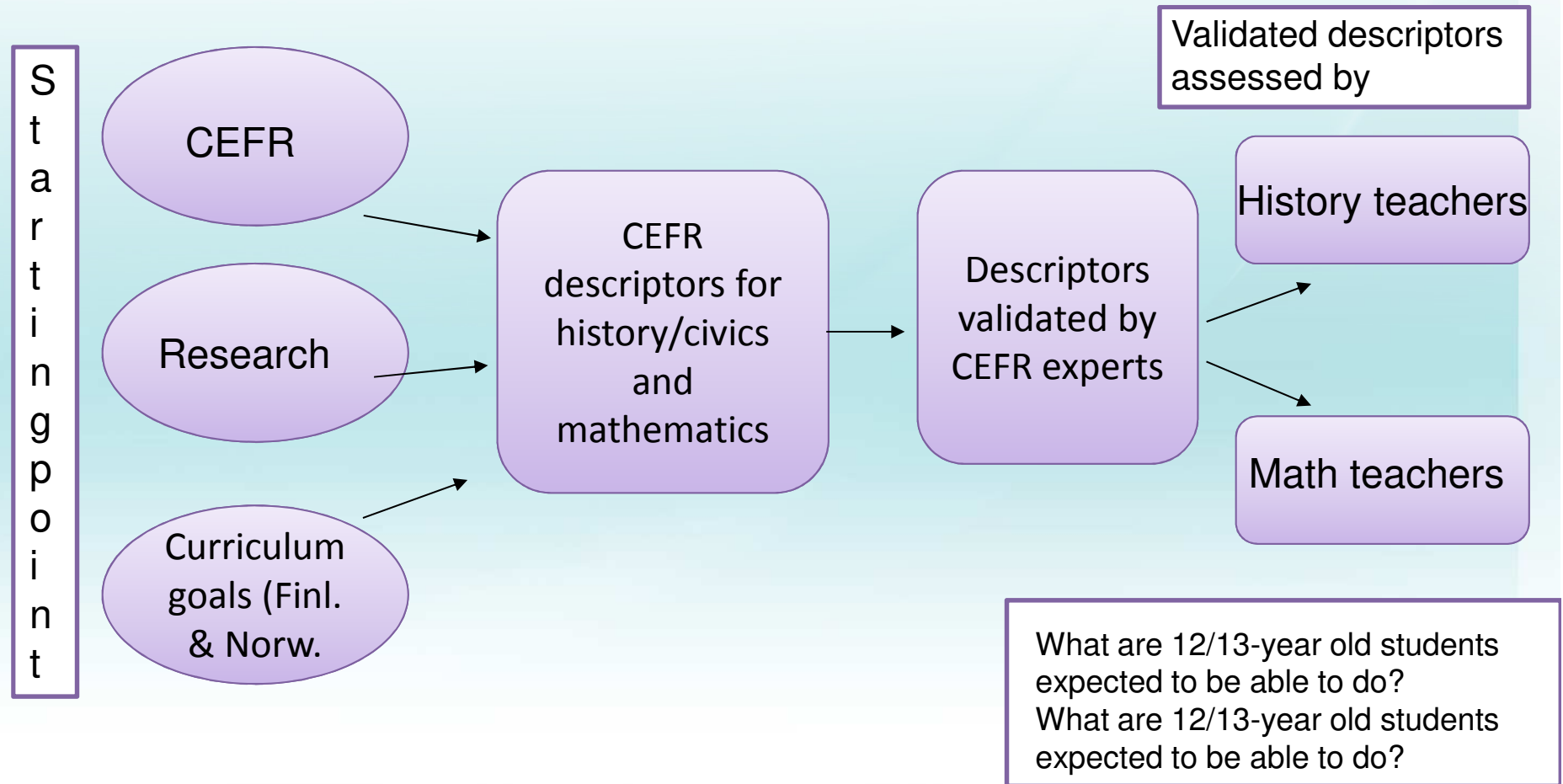
## Example: Interact in teamwork

B2	Can contribute to a project work by reporting and explaining detailed information on topics that he/she finds interesting.
B2	Can help organise the work, give feedback to team members and suggest how to proceed the work.
B1	Can help to solve practical problems that arise, e.g. while working on a project, explain her/his opinion and ask for classmates' views.
A2	Can ask and answer simple questions on subject topics that s/he knows well.





## Process of developing descriptors





## Overall findings

	History/civics	Mathematics
12/13 year old students	B1	B1
15/16 year old students	B2 (or «approaching B2»- for some functions)	B2 (or «approaching B2»- for some functions)



# In which way could the descr. useful?

- Encourage stakeholders to reflect upon necessary language skills (awareness raising)
- Encourage teachers to be concrete on and prepare students for what kind of language they have to cope with (receptive and productive skills) i.e.
  - assist students in developing their reading and listening strategies
  - assist students in developing their speaking and writing skills, i.e. how to express comparison / arguments etc when speaking and writing



## How could the descriptors be used?

By teachers

- to raise awareness of the language-related aspects of various school subjects
- to determine language objectives for lessons
- to use as formative assessment criteria
- to use as self-assessment criteria for students



# How could the descriptors be used?

By researchers/ teacher trainers / teachers – a starting point for

- developing descriptors for other subjects and age groups
- developing teaching materials
- awareness raising of the language-related aspects of various school subjects
- reflecting on and developing language objectives for lessons
- reflecting on and developing assessment criteria
- developing more detailed descriptors tailored to their specific subject/topic



## How could the descriptors be used?

By students

- to set learning goals
- to reflect upon own learning
- to reflect upon how language supports subject learning
- as self-assessment criteria



# What is the next step?

- to move from a general approach to what goes on in subject classrooms
- to look into what language challenges students come across in different subjects
- to look into what teaching material could be useful







## Developing language awareness in subject classes

ECML PROJECT 2016-2019

language  
in subjects

# Thank you for listening!



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