The paper by Hanh Nguyen (Hawai'i Pacific University) and Gabriele Kasper (University of Hawai'i at Manoa) reported on a longitudinal analysis of pharmacy interns during their work in consultations with patients when dispensing medications ('Changing competence-in-interaction: Evidence from a pharmacy intern in patient consultations'). Their findings show the contextualization of the use of a particular lexical item changes over time to using language practices that are less complex but, it turns out, more appropriate, for the particular task at hand. The authors show how interactional competence develops in this intern's more effective recipient design work.

The respondent, Leo van Lier (Monterrey Institute of International Studies), suggested that researchers attempting to find evidence of language learning focusing on the learners' orientation to contextualized language use should look at how learners construct their own linguistic environments. He noted that CA can show indicators of institutional discourse and to describe development, he found the focus on diversification of interactional practices useful. However, he argued that for indications of learning, CA needs help from exogenous theory.

The research presented in the panel shows that micro-analyses of actions done through language can address both processes of learning and outcomes toward which those processes may lead. These papers show new ways of describing the objects of language learning (actions and action sequences) and promote a view of learning that is both local and potentially traceable with a focus on particular kinds of action sequences over time.

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The English Profile Programme: Background, current issues and future prospects

Introduction: The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the English Profile Programme (EPP)

The EPP is a collaborative programme of interdisciplinary research, whose goal is to provide a set of Reference Level Descriptions (RLDs) for English for all six levels of the CEFR (Council of Europe 2001; Little 2006), from A1 to C2.

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The CEFR describes communicative functions at the six proficiency levels but is not language-specific. This means that, although 'learner competences' are discussed in chapter 5 of the document (Council of Europe 2001), how the functions are realised in any particular language remains beyond the scope of the CEFR. Further development needs to be done by users of the Framework to produce language-specific descriptors and their linguistic exponents. To facilitate such research, the Council of Europe has set out guidelines for developing RLDs for national and regional languages. The aim is to 'transpose the Framework descriptors that characterise the competences of users/learners' at a given level in terms of 'linguistic material specific to each language' and which are considered necessary for the implementation of those competences (Council of Europe 2005: 4).

In developing an RLD for a specific language, the relevant distinctions between the CEFR levels can be systematically derived and more precise descriptors produced. The EPP is a serious attempt to do this for English (see www.englishprofile.org).

The English Profile Programme: from 2005 to the present

The EPP was set up in 2005, supported by six partners working in related fields: University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, Cambridge University Press, the University of Cambridge Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics (RCEAL), the University of Bedfordshire Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), the British Council, and English UK. From its outset, the EPP was based on interdisciplinary collaboration within an inclusive research agenda, also reflected in the formation of an English Profile Network comprising an international base of academics, government advisors and educationalists with an interest in English and the CEFR. This considerable breadth is reflected in the variety of themes in publications resulting from EPP work during the initial three years (2005–2008; see a special issue of *Research Notes* – Cambridge ESOL 2008).

A key tool for the research being carried out is the Cambridge Learner Corpus (CLC), a unique electronic collection of learner writing from A1 to C2 levels, which currently (December 2009) comprises 35 million words and is growing at a rate of around 3 million words a year.[1] The CLC consists of scripts from Cambridge ESOL exams taken all over the world. It is cross-linguistic in nature, which allows researchers to compare different pairs of source and target languages. In total, 130 source languages are represented, over 20 of which by large enough samples to be used for quantitative analysis. Professor Ted Briscoe (University of Cambridge, Computer Laboratory) adapted the parser to work with the learner data in the CLC and was responsible for ensuring that the corpus was suitably tagged and parsed. In this report three interrelated research strands are outlined, each of which is concerned with 'criterial features' of the CEFR levels, i.e. features that help distinguish one level from the others. In each case significant progress has been made in 2008–2009. The three strands are:

(i) specifying wordlists for the CEFR levels;
(ii) defining level-based criterial features of English grammar, morpho-syntax and usage;
(iii) describing features of functional criteriality at CEFR C1 and C2 levels.

[1] See the Cambridge Learner Corpus webpages: www.cambridge.org/elt/corpus/learner_corpus.htm.

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The initial outputs will appear in 2010, in a book or web-published form (the English Profile website already includes a searchable preview version of the Wordlists for the letters D, J and K).

Current status of three EPP research strands

Wordlists

The Wordlists strand (Capel 2009) focuses on graded vocabulary development for learners. The current lists of entries for British English and American English cover A1–B2-level words and phrases, providing definitions, native speaker examples, frequent collocates, and learner examples from the CLC. In the Wordlists, the levels A1–B2 have been assigned at SENSE level, since it is evident from the CLC that different senses are acquired at vastly different levels of proficiency (indicating that WORDS may also be criterial for CEFR proficiency levels).

The methodology employed in the creation of the Wordlists includes the use of data from Cambridge University Press dictionaries (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* and *Cambridge Learner's Dictionary*), taking account of frequency in large international corpora of English and also considering current classroom materials. The sources used to decide on a level include:

- Cambridge Learner Corpus
- Spoken and written native speaker corpora
- Cambridge ESOL Vocabulary Lists (KET & PET)
- *Breakthrough* (Trim n.d.), *Waystage* (van Ek & Trim 1990b), *Threshold* (van Ek 1975a, b; van Ek & Trim 1990a) and *Vantage* (van Ek & Trim 2001)
- Cambridge Readers wordlists
- Wordlists in English language teaching coursebooks and vocabulary skills books
- *Cambridge English Lexicon* (Hindmarsh 1980)

This research has already provided a number of interesting insights. For example, it has shown that the most frequent senses are not always the first taught. Furthermore, evidence from the CLC sometimes indicates EARLIER production than is represented in some existing vocabulary lists. Strong first language (L1) influences are detected, especially at A1/A2 levels. The acquisition of affixes is shown not to be straightforward, and L1 frequency seems to be a useful guide here. In addition, common phrases and collocations appear to merit separate treatment.

Criterial features of English grammar, morpho-syntax and usage

This strand is being directed by Professor John Hawkins at RCEAL. It focuses on sets of lexical, semantic and morpho-syntactic features that appear to distinguish the CEFR levels of English and is already providing useful data on the transfer effects of different L1s (Hawkins & Buttery 2008).

Four types of CRITERIAL FEATURES have been identified (Hawkins & Buttery 2009): (i) positive grammatical properties (i.e. correct properties of English) that are acquired

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at a certain second language (L2) level and generally persist at higher levels, (ii) negative grammatical properties, (iii) positive usage distribution, and (iv) negative usage distribution.

For instance, a property which is acquired at B2 may differentiate B2, C1 and C2 from A1, A2 and B1, and will be criterial for the former set of levels. Such a property is, for example, a new verb co-occurrence (Williams 2007), appearing at B1: NP–V–NP–NP (e.g. *She asked him his name*), which will be criterial for all the levels from B1 upwards. With regard to the usage distribution, the positive will match native speaker uses and the negative will not. For example, the relative distribution of subject relatives (*the professor who wrote the book*) to object relatives (*the book that the professor wrote*) approximates that of L1 English speakers' usage at C2 but not at lower levels and hence this distribution is criterial for C2 level. A negative usage distribution has been detected in the lexical frequency skewing for common verbs of English (e.g. *know*, *see*, *think*) whereby they are overrepresented in the learner corpora compared to the native speaker usage and the frequency skewing in the learner usage declines with increasing proficiency.

The initial hypotheses and search for criterial features were based on the *Threshold* series (T-series) by van Ek & Trim (1975a, b, 1990a, b, 2001). A preliminary corpus study has indicated tendencies to confirm or challenge what occurs at each level as defined in the T-series. Initial results reveal several features for which the T-series adequately predicts the level of occurrence. For example, the use of reflexive emphatic pronouns appears to distinguish A2 from B1, as does the indefinite article *a/an* for frequency (e.g. *once a day*) as well as structures such as V + *-ing* (e.g. *walking stick*) and V + *-ed/-en* (e.g. *broken promises*). Some other features apparently differ from the predicted level assigned in the T-series. For example, complementising verb and complementising adjective structures do not appear at the same time but rather at B1 and B2 respectively. It may be that the complementising Verb + Vinf (e.g. *forget/remember to lock the door*) is acquired earlier than complementising Adj + Vinf (e.g. *likely/expected to arrive*) because the latter kind of modification is rarer across the L1s or less frequent in L2. Other factors may have a role to play, namely the specifics of the task.

This strand also comprises a search for SEMANTIC FEATURES that characterise learners' progress in the strategies used to convey meaning in L2. For example, a sub-corpus was created by Filipović (2009) based on 20 verbs that have the potential to collocate actively and to be used in numerous syntactic environments whereby meanings of different quality (e.g. from physical to figurative) and complexity are conveyed as the direct result of a learner's progress (e.g. *catch*, *drag*, *fall*, *hit*, *stagger*, *stand*, *throw*). Verbs with different frequencies were chosen to check how quickly different meanings can be mastered once the item enters the system and what kind of meanings are learned first. For example, *stagger* enters relatively late (at C2 level) but it is immediately used in both physical and figurative meanings (e.g. *staggering from the heavy blow*).

A number of general observations can be made at this stage about the development of MEANING-CONVEYING STRATEGIES in learners across the levels. The A levels are characterised by the prevailing of the physical sense of verbs almost exclusively, apart from few meaning shifts such as *catch transport* or *fall in love*. The B levels exhibit figurative and more complex, yet extremely transparent, meaning, e.g. *a bright light hit my face* or *catch every little detail*. At the C levels, more complex and creative semantic modifications begin to appear as well as fully figurative and metaphorical uses that successfully mimic L1 language habits (e.g. *throw yourself into learning English*, *take it as a friendly and useful suggestion*).

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Further and statistically precise analysis based on larger samples will establish the exact ratios and relationships of these semantic features, as well as determine how decisively criterial they are for the respective levels at which they seem to be fully acquired (see also Hendriks 2008; Hendriks & Saville 2009).

Functional progression at C1 and C2

This strand is being led by the University of Bedfordshire Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA). An early phase of research linked definitions of the language function construct with the role of language functions and their linguistic realisations in language models, in frameworks of language proficiency levels and in language teaching and testing syllabuses and materials. A review of the historical background to language functions and related concepts was conducted (Hawkey 2007) and a report was produced entitled *Functional progression at the C level of the CEFR* (Green 2007; Hawkey & Green 2008). This also built on the work of van Ek & Trim (op. cit.) and described developments of enhanced functional descriptors for English at the C levels of the CEFR. The study extracted claims about the functions addressed at the C levels using data from CEFR lists of function words and meta-documents such as test specifications, proficiency scales, teaching syllabuses and curricula, proficiency frameworks, coursebook outlines and materials in current use around the world. In a second phase of research, these claims were tested against the perceptions of teachers, the content of teaching and testing materials, and against learner data in the CLC (Green 2009). Initial analysis suggests that sets of communicative functions such as ARGUING, CRITICISING AND EVALUATING; EDITING, REFINING AND STRUCTURING; DEFINING, DEFENDING AND JUSTIFYING; ABSTRACTING, INTERPRETING AND INTEGRATING are salient at the C levels, together with increasing sensitivity to the relationship between choices of linguistic form and contexts for use. However, the T-Level categories of IMPARTING AND SEEKING INFORMATION, EXPRESSING AND FINDING OUT ATTITUDES, SOCIALIZING, DECIDING ON AND MANAGING THE COURSE OF ACTION, ASSURING AND REPAIRING COMMUNICATION and STRUCTURING DISCOURSE may also be capable of encompassing the range of functions identified at the C level in the materials analysed by the researchers. This categorisation does not, in itself, appear to discriminate clearly the heuristic, imaginative and pragmatic opportunities (Bachman & Palmer 1996) that the C level seems to open up for learners.

These studies suggest that additional categories of function may be required or that a DIFFERENT approach to presenting them should be found in order to capture progression at the C levels.

Future prospects

The immediate future of the EPP will involve extending the current analyses to broader samples from the CLC and collecting further written data from learners of English worldwide. Another major challenge already being tackled is how to include spoken language in the analysis (McCarthy & Saville 2009), as well as other data that will make it possible to foster

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a close relationship between the EPP research and its outcome with teachers and learners of English in different contexts worldwide (Alexopoulou 2008).

The EPP remains on course in the development of its research STRANDS: through 'Corpus and computational linguistics' to investigate the language which learners actually produce at each level; through a focus on 'Curricula and materials', with particular attention to the higher levels (B2–C2) and in terms of 'Assessment', focusing on how language skills develop, both in terms of learner knowledge and how learners are able to use the language. Other areas being addressed also include pedagogy and teacher education.

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