CEFLING
Linguistic Basis of the Common European Framework for L2 English and L2 Finnish
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Aims of CEFLING
The CEFLING project addresses fundamental questions in how second language proficiency develops from one level to the next. These proficiency levels, or scales, are a central component of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The results of the study will provide a new theoretical model for connecting the CEFR “can do” type proficiency level descriptions with linguistic characteristics of actual language data.

What are the CEFR levels about?
The CEFR scale describes what language learners can do in a foreign language at different levels ranging from beginning to advanced learners. The CEFR is currently being adopted throughout Europe as the international yardstick for curricula, examinations, materials and courses. Finland has pioneered in using the CEFR: it has been adapted for the new National Core Curricula for schools and for the National Certificates language examination.

Pulling together language testing and second language acquisition expertise
Describing language learners and their abilities – as is done in the CEFR – requires theoretical and practical knowledge of both language acquisition and language assessment. Rarely, however, do these two well established but independent areas of study communicate, and therefore it is uncertain to what extent the CEFR, or other scales, reflect actual language learning. This project, which is a part of a wide European network of researchers, brings second/foreign language acquisition and language testing experts together to investigate common concerns about the CEFR.

Research questions
The study addresses the following questions of both theoretical and practical importance:

• What combinations of linguistic features characterise learners’ performance at the proficiency levels defined in the Common Framework and its Finnish adaptations?
• To what extent do adult and young learners who engage in the same communicative tasks, at a given level, perform in the same way linguistically? To what extent are the adult-oriented CEFR levels and their Finnish adaptations for young learners equivalent?
• To what extent are the pedagogical tasks found in the teaching materials in the Finnish comprehensive school comparable with the tasks defined in the CEFR and the new curriculum?
• What are the linguistic and communicative features that teachers (or National Certificates raters) pay attention to when assessing learners with the help of the Finnish adaptations of the CEFR scales? How do these features relate to the linguistic and communicative analysis of the same performances?
Assumptions about language and learning
The underlying principle of the project is a usage-based view of language learning, which combines some cognitive views of the Processability Theory with a more detailed structural analysis of the developmental stages based on Conceptual Semantics and Construction Grammar.

The theories on measurement and communicative competence underlying the CEFR itself also form part of the conceptual background of this study.

Project data
The project will study both learners of English and Finnish and will focus on their performance in writing tasks. The data for adults comes from the National Certificates test performance corpus and the data for children will be collected during the project.

This study focuses only on writing skills but the approach can be modified for the study of other skills (speaking, listening, reading).

Application of findings
The results have strong possibilities for practical applications within curriculum development, teacher training, diagnostic and other language skill assessment and teaching material production.

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