B2 and the Maturity Factor

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CEFR levels and YLs (primary school) some examples of how these are perceived

- **School curricula**
  British Council *Survey of primary English language teaching* (Rixon, 2013)
  21 of 64 countries/regions surveyed have CEFR-related objectives:
  A1: 8, A2: 12, B1: 1, B2: 0.

  Finland – native-level Finnish 6th grade: B1.1 (productive) B1.2 (receptive)

- **ELPs** - Norwegian (*Språkperm 6-12*), UK (*Cilt Junior*): up to B1

- **Tests**: Cambridge - *Young Learners*: A2 (*Preliminary for schools*: B1)

**Highest generally perceived level for primary school: B1**
Is B2 out of the reach of children?

• Cognitive and social development

• L1 development: lexis, syntax, discourse

• L2 - Communicative language ability and domain of use

• B2 descriptors

• A closer look at L1 and L2 production
### Cognitive and social development

| Younger children 5-8/9 | - Limited short-term memory and attention span  
|                        | - Concepts not organized into more adult categories  
|                        | - Learning through concrete experience/personal knowledge  
|                        | - Beginning to form friendships, still very adult-dependent. |
| Older children 8/9-12/13 | - Speed of recalling and processing information increasing rapidly  
|                           | - Organising concepts into categories, cope with more abstract ideas.  
|                           | - Solving simple logical problems, carry out more complex tasks  
|                           | - Appreciating ‘wholeness’ in tasks with coherent parts  
|                           | - Dependent on friends and peer groups  
|                           | - Learning to cooperate and collaborate |
| Teenagers up to 17 | Forming the gist of large amounts of information, sort essential ideas from non-essentials  
|                      | Understanding of cause and effect, more complete notion of time  
|                      | Abstract problems can be tackled using logic  
|                      | World knowledge limited. Peers influential. Strong need to identify  
|                      | Appreciating others’ perspectives; seeing several sides of complex issue. |

**Sources:** Cameron (2001), McKay (2005), Nippold (2006), Pinter (2011), Morgan (2013)  
Hasselgreen and Caudwell (forthcoming)
# L1 Lexical development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young children (5-8/9)</th>
<th>Older children (8/9-12/13)</th>
<th>Teenagers (13-17)</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-3000 wds/year</td>
<td>abstract nouns</td>
<td>figurative meanings</td>
<td>derivational morphology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrasentential growth</strong> (C-, T-units)</td>
<td><strong>Conjunctions</strong></td>
<td><strong>but, before</strong></td>
<td><strong>even though, so that</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctions</td>
<td><strong>Adv.conjuncts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Provided that</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>and, then</em></td>
<td><strong>Also, So</strong></td>
<td><strong>Furthermore</strong></td>
<td><strong>Conversely</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intersentential growth</strong></td>
<td></td>
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## L1 Discourse development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>5-8/9</th>
<th>8/9-12/13</th>
<th>13-17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conversation</strong> basic</td>
<td>Less repetitive</td>
<td>More coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aware of others’ thoughts</td>
<td>Generally best performance with peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narrative</strong> basic</td>
<td>Recall feelings and desires</td>
<td>Complete episodes and elaborate detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argument and negotiation</strong> to solve conflict, some other awareness</td>
<td>Persuasion and negotiation well organised, <strong>counter arguments</strong>, others’ perspectives, advantages/disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
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## Implications for L2 CLA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Micro-linguistic</th>
<th>Older children (8/9-12/13)</th>
<th>Teenagers up to 17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexis: abstracts and derived forms conceptually emerging</td>
<td>Syntax: less complex, limited range of conjunctions and adv conjuncts</td>
<td>Lexis: Abstract concepts, derived forms and figurative meanings developing rapidly. Syntax: complex, range conjunctions, adv conjuncts incr. rapidly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual</td>
<td>Cohesion in texts and lengths of C- and T-units limited, e.g. by limitation in linking words. Limited range of genres/discourse types</td>
<td>Longer, more complex and coherent texts. Appreciate wholeness in texts and get gist. Linking words include markers such as ’smallwords’ in speaking Wider range of genres/discourse types</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-linguistic</td>
<td>Awareness of others gradually emerging.</td>
<td>Awareness of others, including outside own sphere, strong sense of identity</td>
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## L2 Domain

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Older children (8/9-12/13)</th>
<th>Teenagers up to 17</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ‘familiar’ is limited Everyday life, interests, experience Gradually more abstract and relevant /familiar societal issues and expressive topics. World knowledge very limited</td>
<td>The ‘familiar’ is expanding Complex, ‘distant’ and controversial issues World knowledge still limited. The world of young people most relevant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genre/discourse participants</td>
<td>Typically Informal, familiar participants. Conversation, problem solving, personal communication, Straightforward narrative, description, explanation</td>
<td>Expanding range, includes more formal, unfamiliar participants. Argumentative, persuasion, discussion, negotiation.</td>
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B 1 and B2 – global scale

Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.

Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. (Council of Europe, 2001: 24)

Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics

Can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (Council of Europe, 2001: 24)
B 1 and B2 - general linguistic ability

Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events (lower B1).

Has a sufficient range of language to describe unpredictable situations, explain the main points in an idea or problem with reasonable precision and express thoughts on abstract or cultural topics such as music and films (upper B1). (Council of Europe, 2001: 110).

Can express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so. (Council of Europe, 2001: 110)
B1 and B2 - sociolinguistic appropriateness

Can perform and respond to a wide range of language functions, using their most common exponents in a neutral register. Is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately. Is aware of, and looks out for signs of, the most significant differences between the customs, usages, attitudes, values and beliefs prevalent in the community concerned and those of his or her own.

(Council of Europe, 2001: 122).

Can express him or herself confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned (upper B2). Can express him or herself appropriately in situations and avoid crass errors of formulation.

(Council of Europe, 2001: 122)
B1 and B2 - Discourse competences

Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can reasonably fluently relate a straightforward narrative or description as a linear sequence of points. Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points. (Council of Europe, 2001: 125).

Can use a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas. Can develop a clear description or narrative, expanding and supporting his/her main points with relevant supporting detail and examples. (Council of Europe, 2001: 125-26)
Average range of conjunctions compared in L2 written texts of 7th and 10th graders.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>7th grade (12/13 years)</th>
<th>10th grade 815/16 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to A2</td>
<td>3.3 (max 8)</td>
<td>4.3 (max 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over A2, up to B1</td>
<td>5.1 (max 9)</td>
<td>6.9 (max 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over B1, up to C1</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.9. (max 18)</td>
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7th grade: same pool of conjunctions used by virtually all pupils – *and, but, so, because, that, for, when, if*.

10th grade: more variety demonstrated. Over B1 considerable variety.

From Hasselgreen and Moe, 2006
Conclusion

Level B2 on the CEFR is normally beyond the reach of pre-adolescent children owing to interdependent factors of:

– Social and cognitive maturity, also manifested in L1 development;

– The domain in which children normally use/learn their L2.
But the questions remain ...

• How far up the CEFR scale can children go?

• Is B1 sufficient to describe the performance of a (near) native speaker child?
11-year old native speaker narrative

One day when I came home from school I found the door wide open. I went inside and found my mum and dad on the floor, I checked if they were breathing they were. I found a gas bomb besides them it must of put them to sleep. I saw the window smashed and glass on the floor, I heard a crash upstairs so I went to see what it was. I ran upstairs I looked out of a window and saw a robber on an eagal flying away with a sack. The next morning I told my mum and dad but they said “Nonsense!” so I went to school, I told my friends and they said they saw it too. At break time we heard a sheak like an eagal, it was an eagal with a funny man on the back. “It’s him!” we shouted. In the lesson we saw a bird like shadow on the wall, we turned round and it was gone.

On Sataday me and my friend met up to solve this mystery. We got some meat and the eagal came. “Hear, birdy birdy birdy”, we called and then the eagal came and landed on the floor so I threw the meat. The burgular fell off and we caught him. But then he threw a gas bomb and we dozed off into a sleep. When I woke up I found it was all a dream.
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References


Cameron, L. (Council of Europe, 2001) Teaching languages to young learners. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


WEBSITES

Cambridge English tests for young learners:
https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/exams/younglearnersandforschools

CILT portfolio:

Finnish basic school curriculum:

New Jersey Curriculum project 2012:

Språkperm Norway:
http://www.fremmedspraksenteret.no/nor/fremmedspraksenteret/larings---ressurser/den-europeiske-sprakpermern

Swedish national curriculum, English 4-6 grade:
http://www.skolverket.se/laroplaner-amen-och-kurser/grundskoleutbildning/grundskola/engelska