

Usage-based views on second language acquisition and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR): their potential relevance for the NLP field

NLP4CALL workshop
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Stockholm

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1

CEFR levels

2

Basic Language Cognition (BLC)

3

Zipf's law

CEFR

C2

C1

B2

B1

40
Scales
(Ch. 4)

A1

C2

C1

B2

B1

A2

A1

13
Scales
(Ch. 5)

Activities

Competences

C2

C2

C1

C1

B2

B2

Activities

Competences

B1 = **Threshold Level**

a “common core” (Van Ek, 1976)

A2

A2

A1

A1

“**Practical considerations** overrode the theoretical misgivings as to the validity of the concept of ‘level’. We had used the term ‘**level**’ **despite deep misgivings about the concept.** We could see no reason to break the process of language learning into a series of steps. (...)

State education systems were organised into primary, lower secondary and upper secondary, further and higher educational sectors, and their interfaces called for assessments of proficiency that would provide objectives for one sector and starting points for the next.” (Trim, 2012, p. 28)

C2

C2

Higher levels
of education/
profession

(Hulstijn, 2011)

C1

C1

B2

B2

Activities

B1 = Threshold Level

Competences

a “common core” (Van Ek, 1976)

A2

A2

A1

A1

1

CEFR levels

2

Basic Language Cognition (BLC)

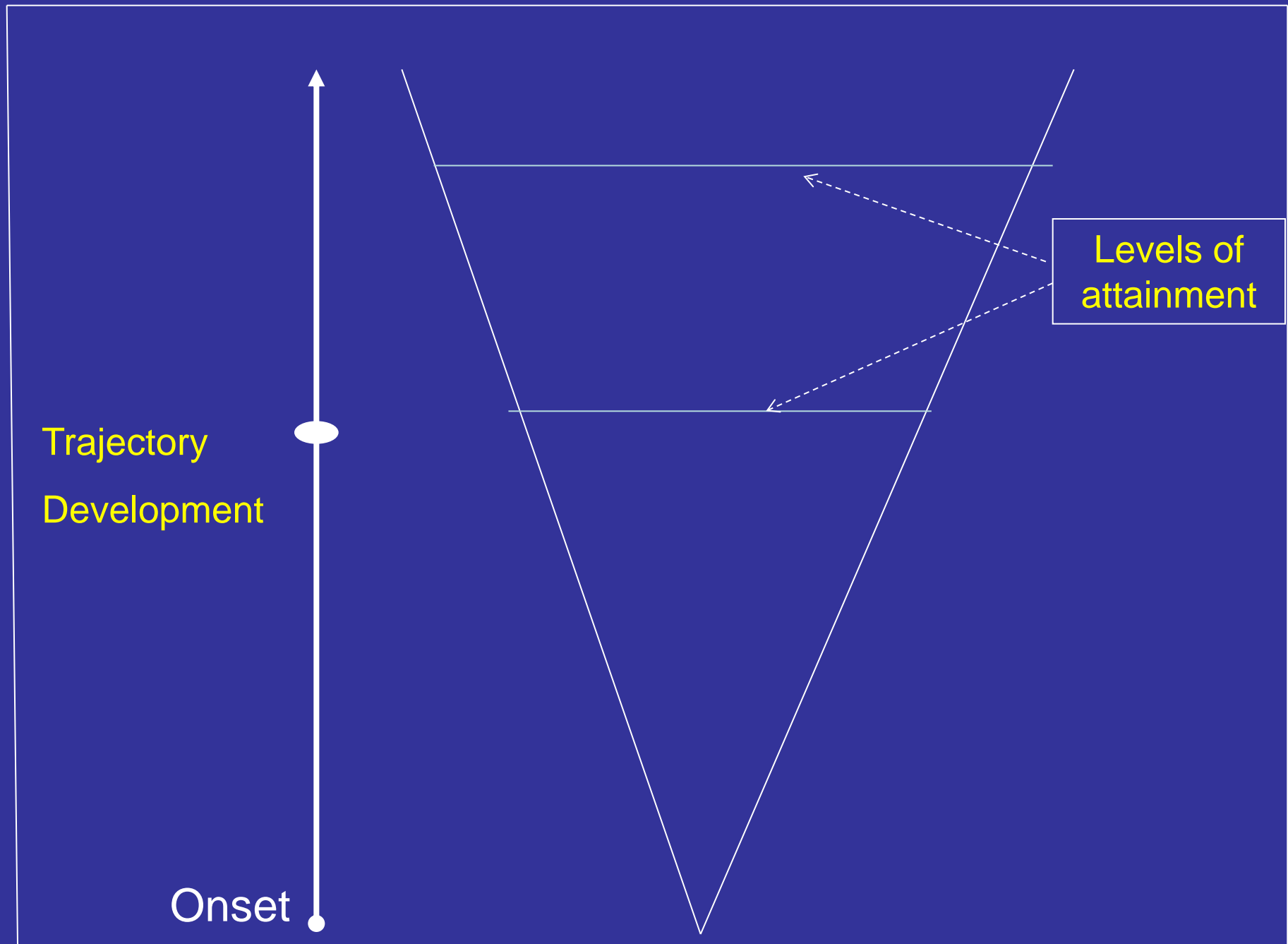
3

Zipf's law

Trajectory
Development

Onset

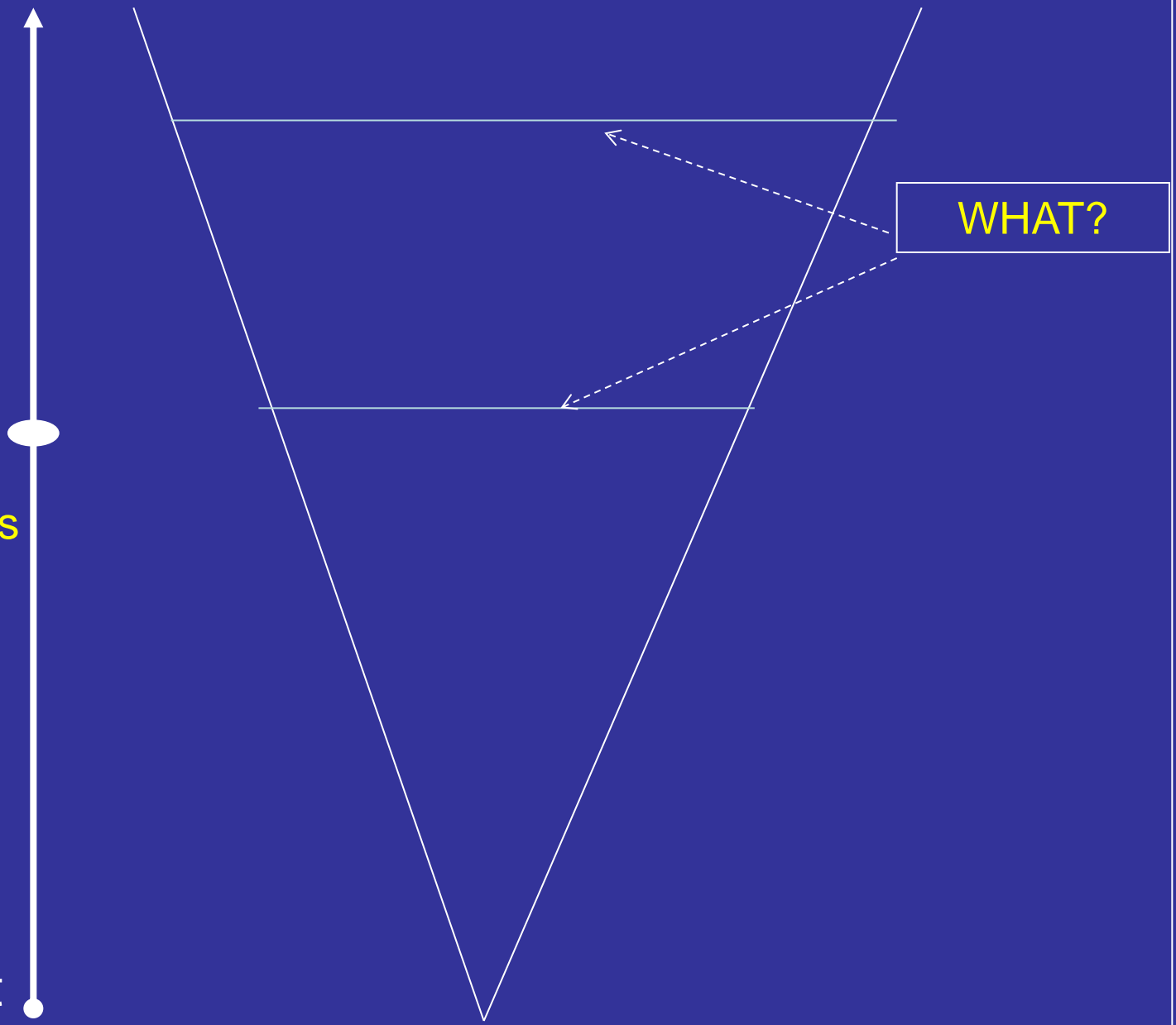
Levels of
attainment



HOW?

- Mechanisms
- Stages

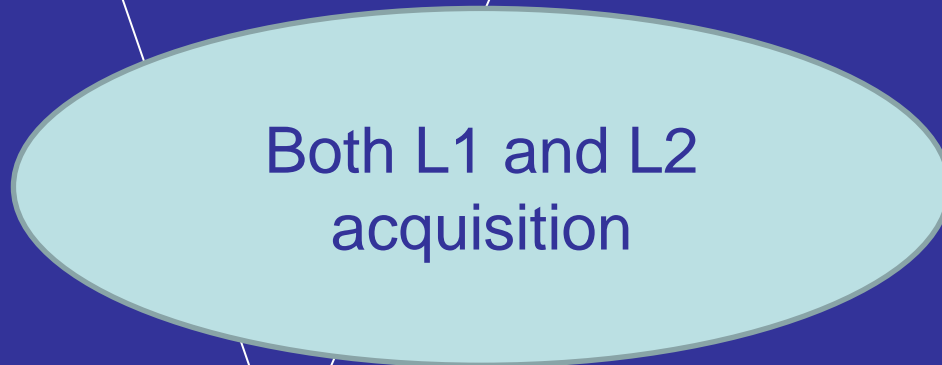
Onset



HOW?

- Mechanisms
- Stages

Onset



WHAT?

Both L1 and L2
acquisition

Individual differences

Biology

- DNA
- Fingerprint
- Environment
- Etc.

Language

- Input
- (L1 - in L2 acquisition)



The study of L1 and L2 acquisition

to account for

- commonalities, “shared cognition”



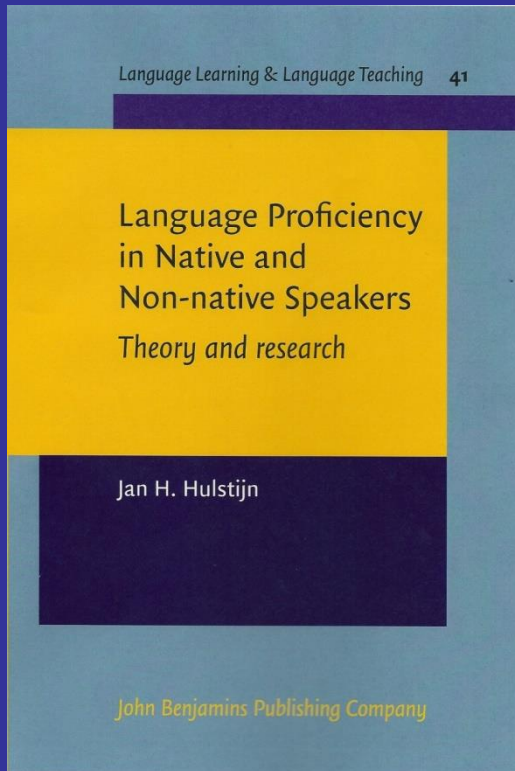
- individual differences



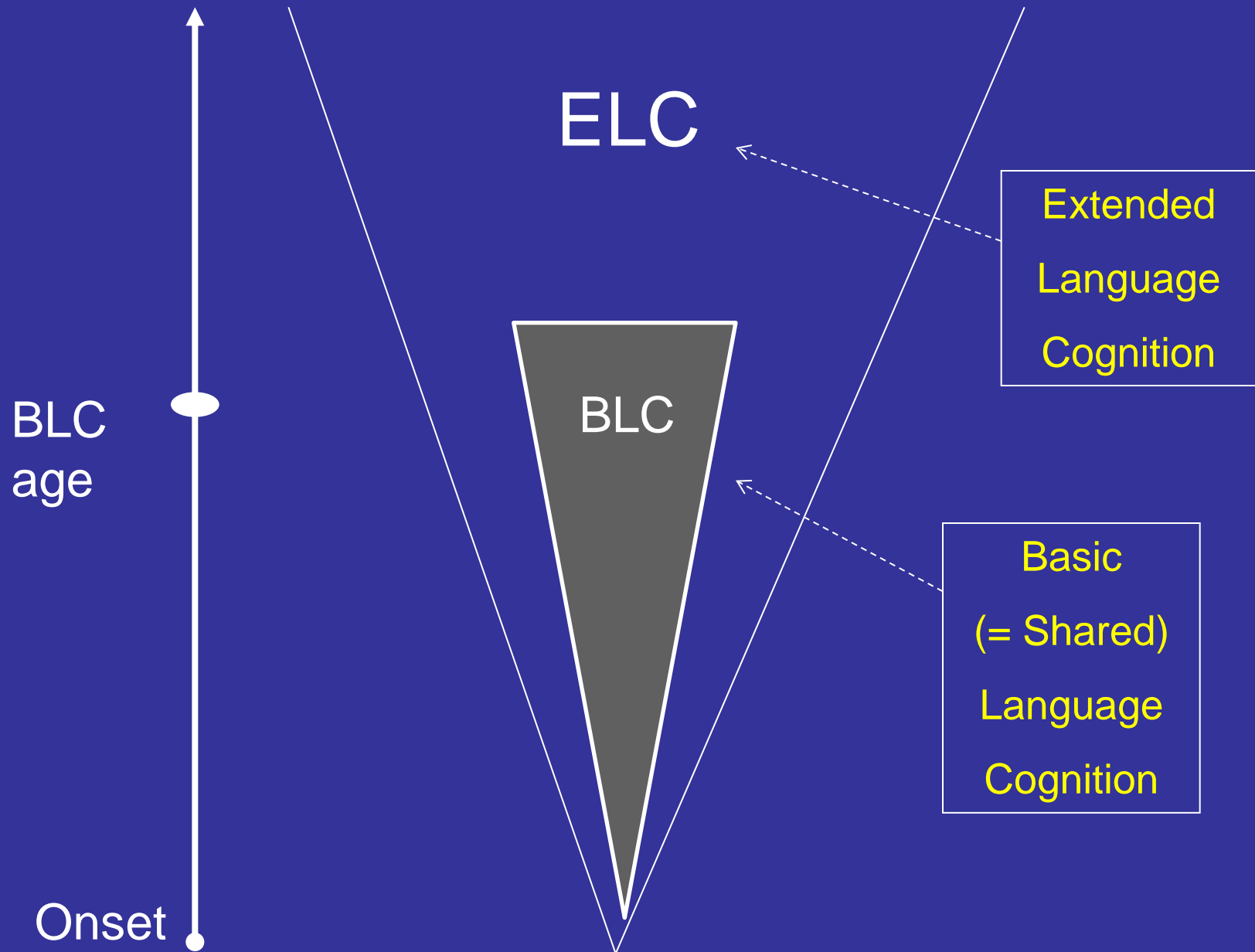
in both the **WHAT** and the **HOW**

BLC Theory

BLC = Basic Language Cognition, shared by all adult native speakers



Hulstijn, J.H. (2018, early view). An individual-differences framework for comparing non-native with native speakers: Perspectives from BLC Theory. *Language Learning*. DOI: 10.1111/lang.12317. **Free access.**



ELC

Extended
Language
Cognition

BLC

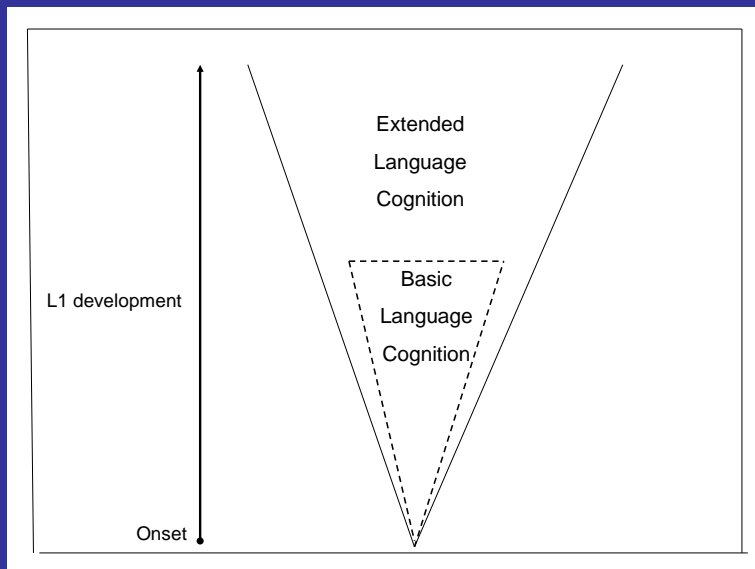
BLC
age

Basic
(= Shared)
Language
Cognition

Onset

Basic (shared) Language Cognition (BLC)

1. Oral language use (comprehension and production of speech).
2. Common words and structures.



Language Cognition

1. The largely implicit, unconscious knowledge in the domains of phonetics, prosody, phonology, morphology and syntax,
2. the largely explicit, conscious knowledge in the lexical domain (form-meaning mappings), *in combination with*
3. the automaticity (fluency) with which these types of knowledge can be processed.

Basic Language Cognition (BLC)

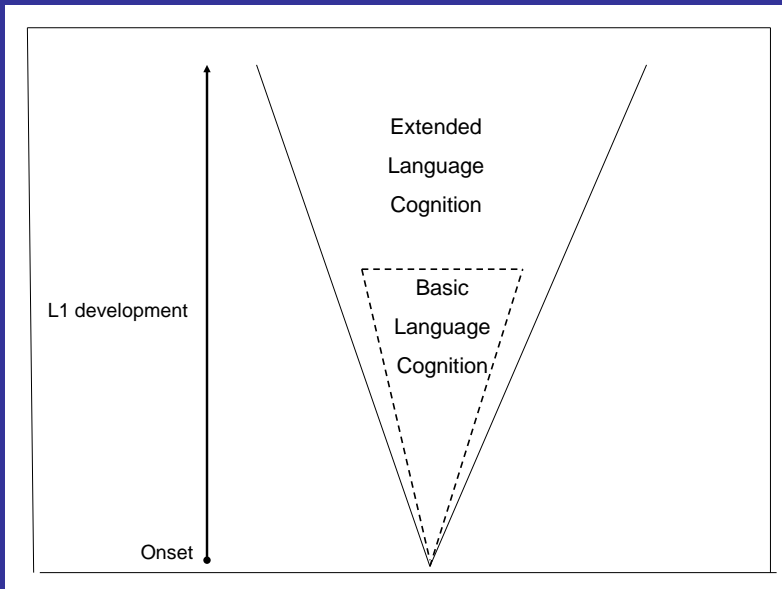
1. The largely implicit, unconscious knowledge in the domains of phonetics, prosody, phonology, morphology and syntax,
2. the largely explicit, conscious knowledge in the lexical domain (form-meaning mappings), *in combination with*
3. the automaticity (fluency) with which these types of knowledge can be processed.

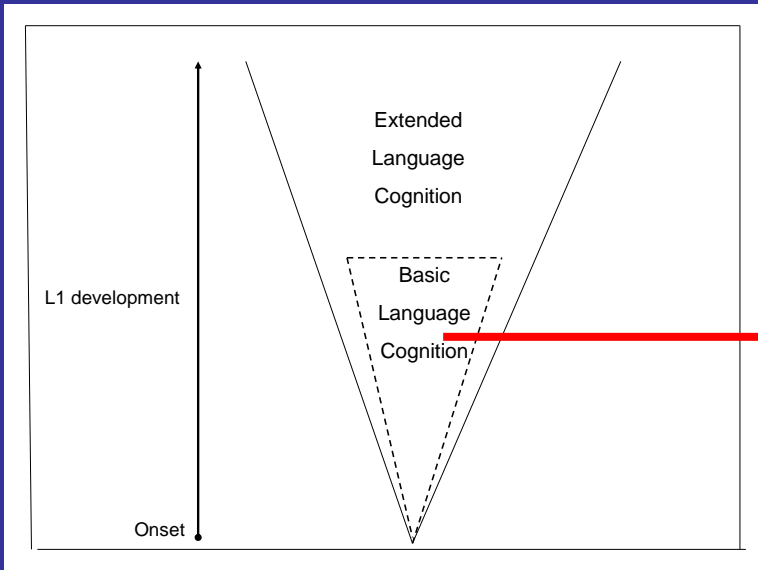
High-frequency words and structures that may occur in any communicative situation, common to all adult NSs, regardless of age, literacy or educational level.

Extended Language Cognition (ELC)

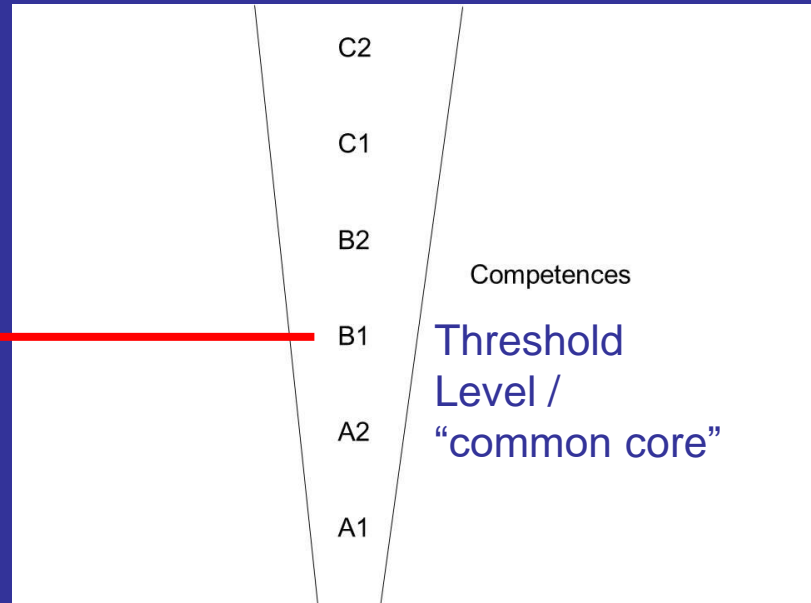
(previously called “higher language cognition”)

1. Common and uncommon words and structures.
2. Oral and written language use.





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1

CEFR levels

2

Basic Language Cognition (BLC)

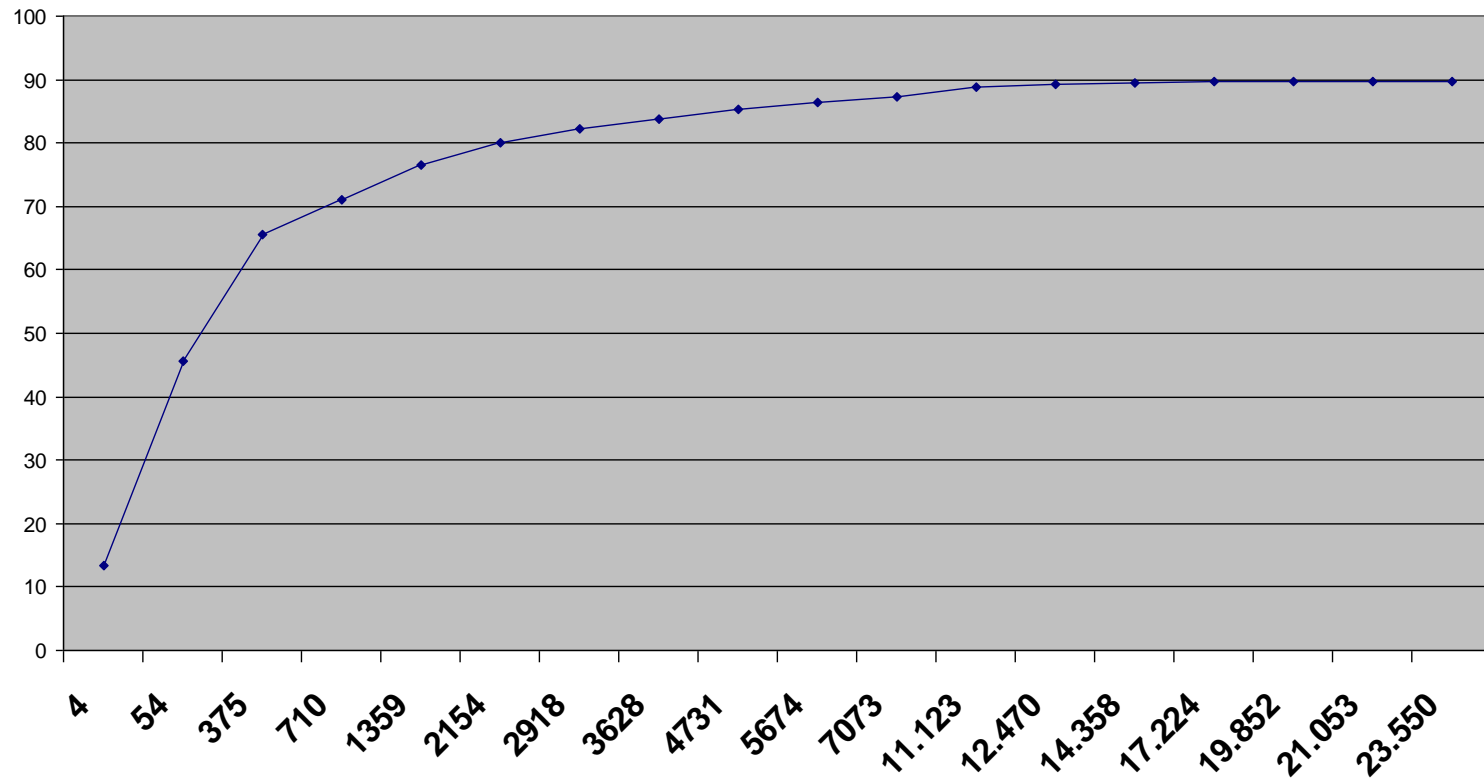
3

Zipf's law

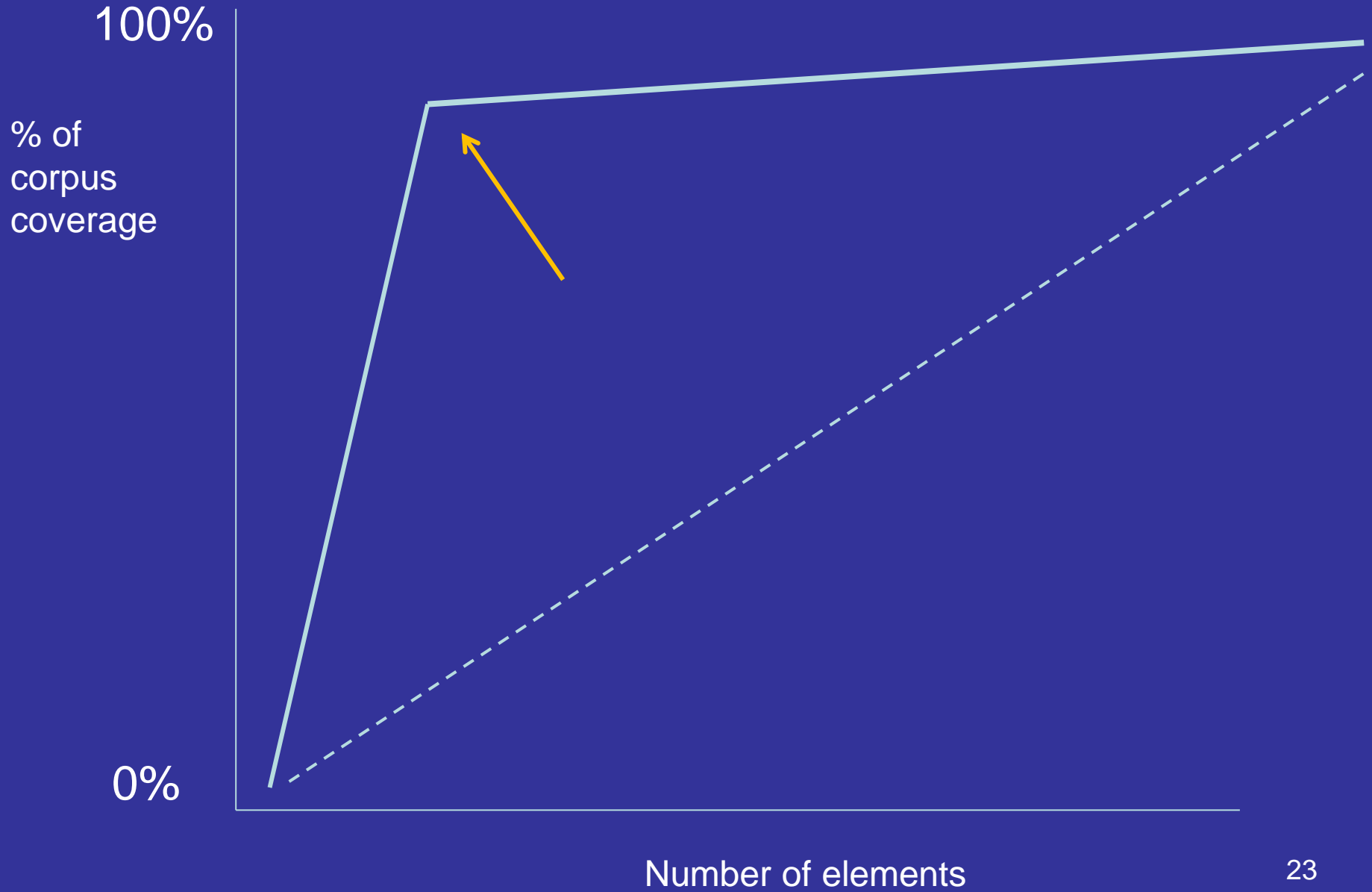
Zipf's law

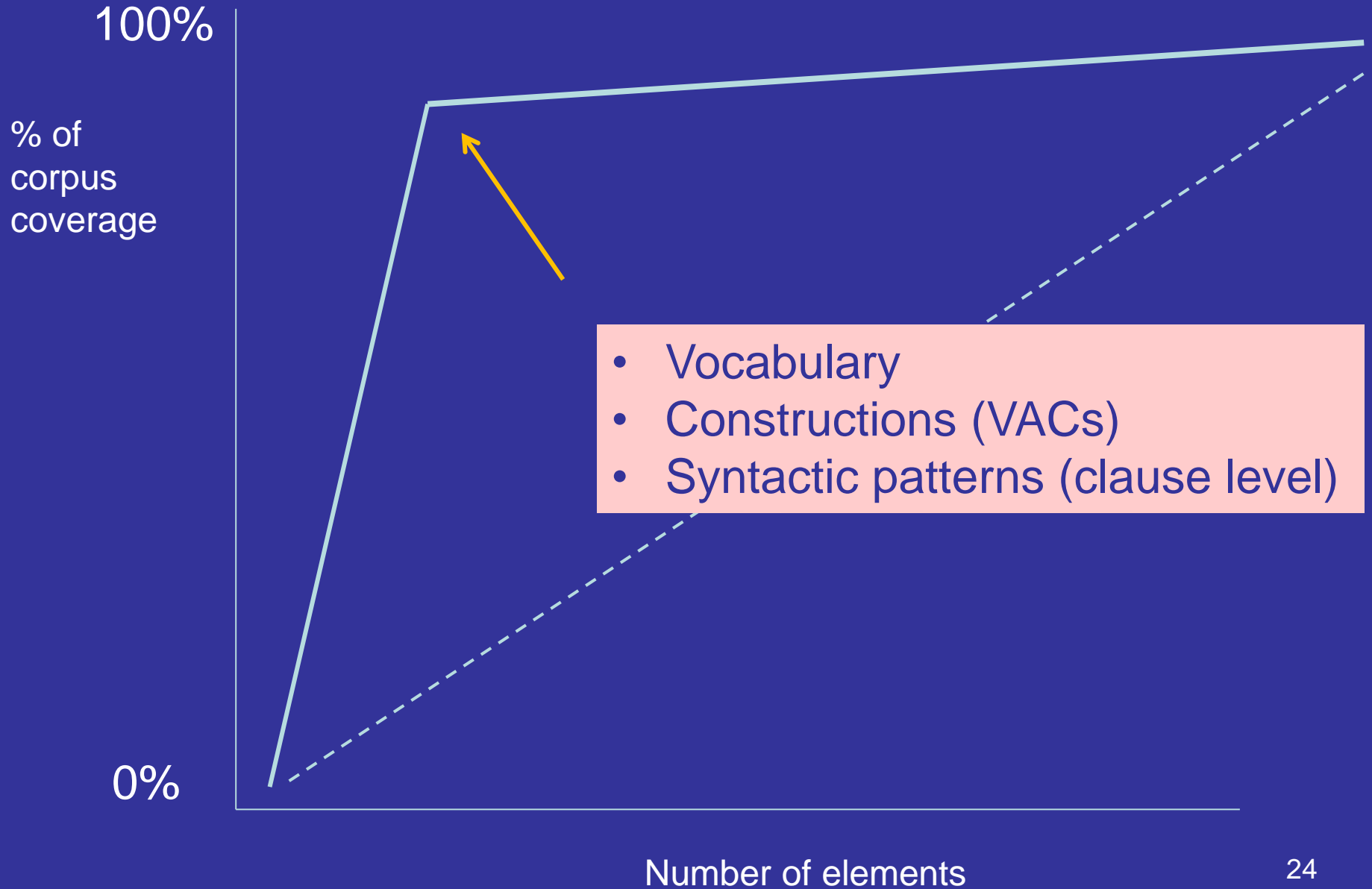
Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996

Coverage in %

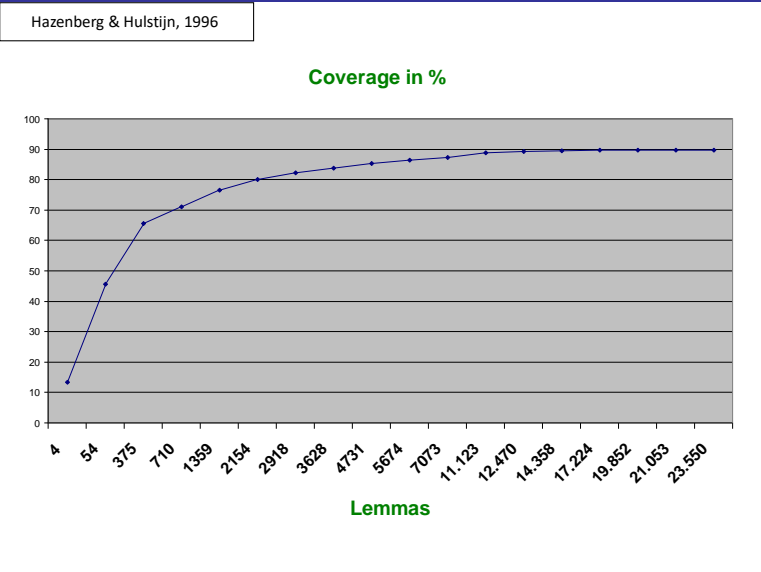
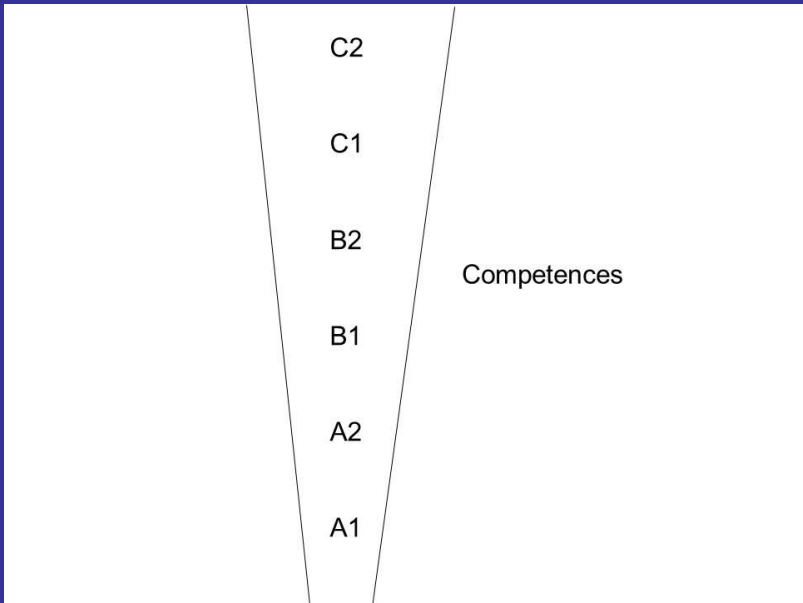
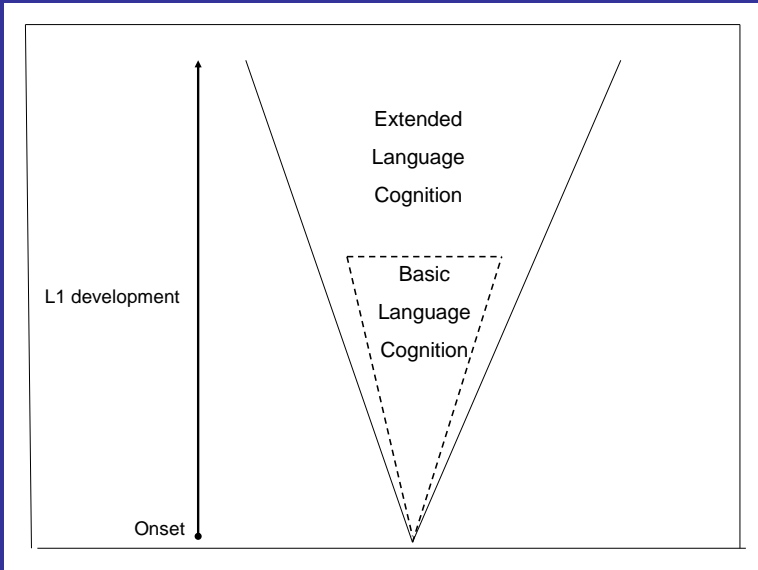


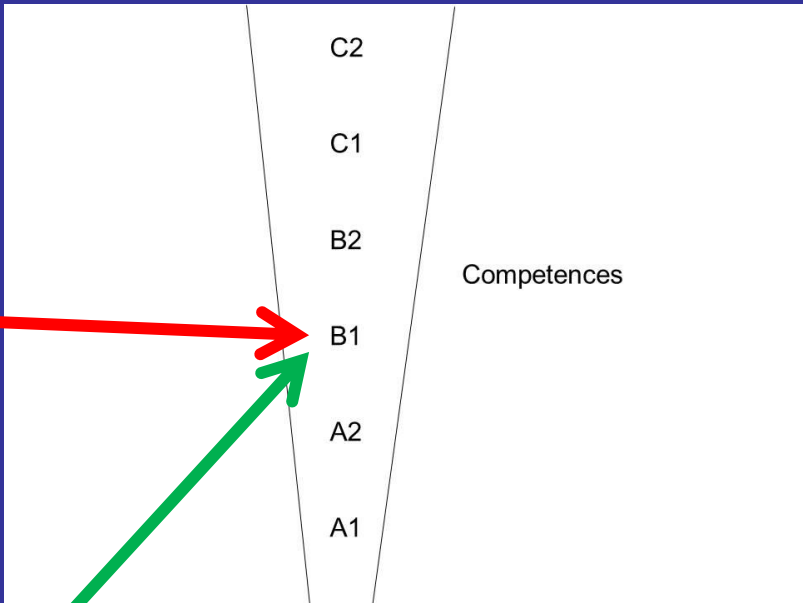
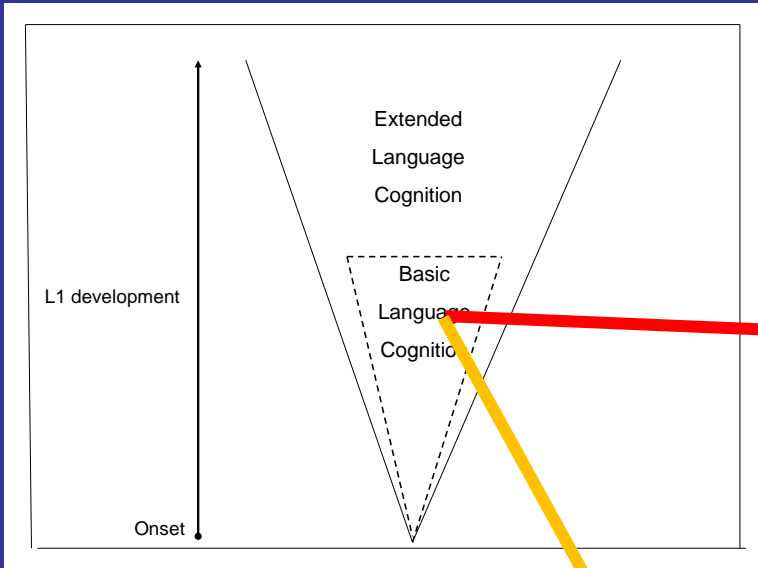
Lemmas



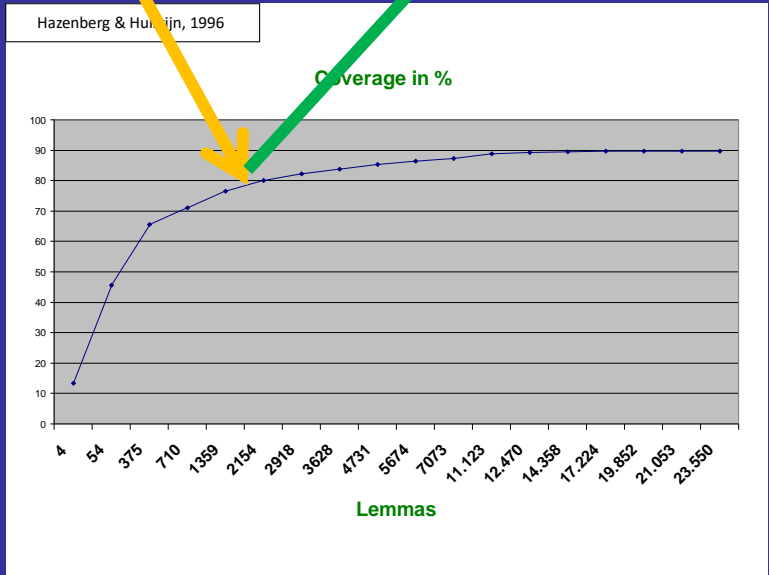


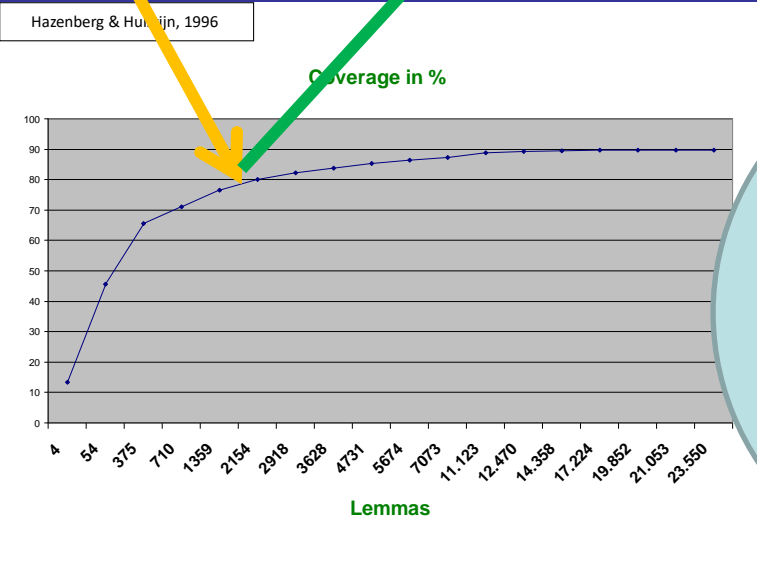
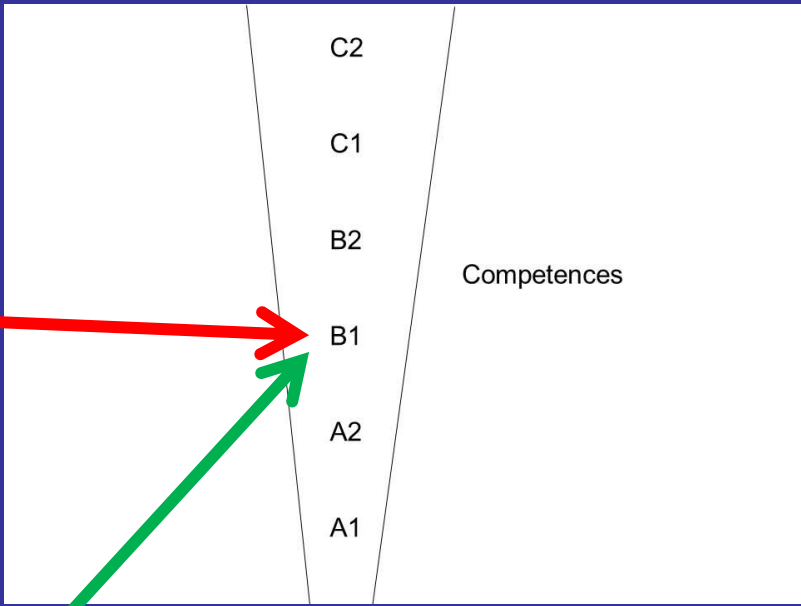
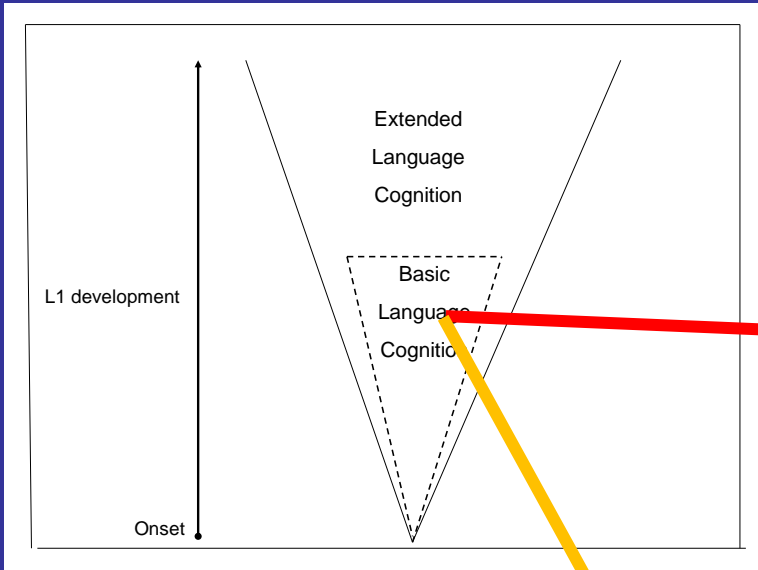
- No separation of lexis and grammar
- Where possible, Construction Grammar approach
- Illustrate constructions with many examples and minimal grammatical jargon
- Exercises: from receptive to productive





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After the 'elbow', is genre more important than frequency?