Completing the *English Vocabulary Profile*: insights from the C levels

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Content of this talk

- Introducing the six-level *English Vocabulary Profile*
- Functionality of the interactive resource
- Scope of the C levels
- Phrases in the *English Vocabulary Profile*
- Idioms in the *English Vocabulary Profile*
- Online availability of the resource
English Profile is…

A long-term collaborative research programme aiming to:

• understand what the CEFR actually means for English

• investigate what learner English is really like

• develop reference descriptions for each CEFR level

*English Vocabulary Profile* is one strand of this research
Corpus-informed research

English Profile projects are using electronic corpora to find out what learners CAN do. A corpus…

• provides real language data
• highlights what is frequent
• clearly shows typical patterns: structures, collocations, phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms
• captures change over time, as a corpus is constantly updated
But out of the blue, now I am a brought up person, I have all forgot.

2 Dear Kim, Your letter was a wonderful surprise coming out of the blue like that.

Think about that ... Nothing comes out of the blue!

Of course a solution should not be expected out of the blue.

I was absorbed in my thoughts when out of the blue, numerous objects started coming into my head.

One morning, completely out of the blue, her husband called and told her he was coming.

As this offer came out of the blue, I did not have any other options than to go to him.

Then everything happen out of the blue, we felt someone's hand pulling us out of the world.

Everything started while Alice was walking home when out of the blue a strange creature appeared.

We see on TV so called expert nutritionists that appear out of the blue and insist in their having found the only way.

And than he changed out of the blue.

st class football match or a thrilling book do not come out of the blue.

rd at which point all your superiors trust you and then out of the blue you make a big mistake, if you try to over come.

As a king, Benjamin never got his ideas out of the blue and put them into action.

We can't invent our future out of the blue!

Dear Mary, Your letter was surprised, was coming out of the blue like this.

On that very day, however, Niall had told her out of the blue, after having had a drink too many in a pub: 

Suddenly, out of the blue someone was standing on the doorstep.

Until one day out of the blue, he had a brainwave.

The receptionist was not to be seen anywhere but out of the blue came a little girl dressed in a lovely white dress.

However, out of the blue, they discovered the method to turn a liquid into a solid.

But out of the blue she just did one thing: She took the framed photo.

The word "mother-tongue" does not come out of the blue!

Edward appeared next to me like out of the blue.

But then - it appeared to be out of the blue - the young girl grew more and more unhappy.

But out of the blue Mark, her son, jumped from the bush and he looked.

He tried to sleep together in same room and same bed but out of the blue we heard the creature's voice and suddenly the street.

Completely out of the blue, I noticed one more light in the street.

Last year I got a letter, out of the blue, from an aunt I hardly knew.

Dear Paul, Your letter came to me out of the blue.

In case I have received something out of the blue.

Right out of the blue.

Kim, I was extremely happy when I received your letter out of the blue.

It was a bolt out of the blue.

Dear Kim, Your letter was a wonderful surprise coming out of the blue like that.

Then, out of the blue, a good looking young man caught the new comer.
Cambridge Learner Corpus

- Joint development by CUP and Cambridge ESOL
- Over 45 million words
- Over 200,000 exam scripts
- Grows each year by 2-3 million words
- All CEFR levels
- 130 first languages
- 203 countries
- Over 20 million words coded for errors
Sources used for A1-B2 levels

- Cambridge Learner Corpus
- Spoken and written native speaker corpora
- Cambridge ESOL Vocabulary Lists (KET & PET)
- Breakthrough, Waystage, Threshold & Vantage syllabi
- Cambridge Readers wordlists
- Wordlists in current coursebooks & vocabulary books
- Hindmarsh English Lexicon
Compiling methods

• Assign levels: first A1, A2, B1, B2, now C1 and C2
• Not just by word but at sense level (= each meaning)
• Using data from Cambridge University Press dictionaries
• Taking account of native speaker corpus frequency
• Finding out what learners at each level CAN do
• Reflecting current classroom practice and materials
• British English and American English versions
Vocabulary coverage at A1-B2

Percentage of word types in EVP (CEFR A1-B2 levels)

- A1: 71.04% Other Words, 20.95% AWL Words, 0.51% K2 Words (1,001-2,000), 7.50% K1 Words (1-1,000)
- A2: 24.66% Other Words, 19.75% AWL Words, 2.55% K2 Words (1,001-2,000), 19.75% K1 Words (1-1,000)
- B1: 43.65% Other Words, 25.39% AWL Words, 7.91% K2 Words (1,001-2,000), 23.05% K1 Words (1-1,000)
- B2: 35.14% Other Words, 24.87% AWL Words, 16.52% K2 Words (1,001-2,000), 23.47% K1 Words (1-1,000)
2010-2011 Validation process

The A1-B2 data has been validated by:

• researchers in Cambridge, Nottingham, Miami and Tokyo
• students tested on phrasal verbs in Tokyo, Bilbao and Brno
• CUP authors, editors and lexicographers
• Cambridge ESOL item writers and test developers
• teachers around the world, via Word of the Week feedback

Amendments and additions have been made as a result.
Choose level:
- A1
- A1-A2
- A1-B1
- A1-B2
- A1-C1
- A1-C2

Browse A-Z
OR
Enter a word or phrase

Word family:
Nouns: day, midday
Adjectives: daily
Adverbs: daily

NOUN
24 HOURS
A1 [C] a period of 24 hours

Dictionary examples:
Functionality of the resource

- Fast and powerful
- No space constraints - phrases are duplicated
- Can be updated to reflect change
- Useful tool for materials development
- Searchable in many different ways
Core results:

- know verb HAVE INFORMATION [A1]
- know verb ASK FOR INFORMATION [A1]
- know verb BE ABLE [A2]
- know verb BE CERTAIN [A2]
- let sb know [A2]
- you know [B1]
- know verb BE FAMILIAR WITH [B1]
- know verb UNDERSTAND A SUBJECT [B1]
- get to know sb/sth [B1]
- I know [B1]
- as you know [B1]
- as far as I know [B2]
- know better (than to do sth) [B2]
- I know [B2]
- you never know [B2]
- before you know it [C1]
- know sth inside out [C1]
- know what you are talking about [C1]
- know verb GUESS CORRECTLY [C1]
- know best [C2]
- know of sth/sb [B2]
Functionality of the resource

Advanced search criteria include:

- words, phrases, phrasal verbs, idioms
- grammar and usage
- prefix and suffix
- part of speech + topic
Choose level:
- A1
- A1-A2
- A1-B1
- A1-B2
- A1-C1
- A1-C2
- A2 only
- B1 only
- B2 only
- C1 only
- C2 only

Core results:
- damaged adjective B1
- dark adjective NOT PALE A1
- dated adjective C2
- decent adjective SATISFACTORY B2
- decorative adjective B2
- deep adjective TOP TO BOTTOM A2
- deep adjective COLOUR B1
- deep adjective SOUND B2
- defective adjective C2
- delicate adjective SOFT B2
- delicate adjective EASY TO DAMAGE B2
- delicate adjective ATTRACTIVE C2
- delicious adjective B1
- delightful adjective B2
- dense adjective B2
- desperate adjective SERIOUS C2
- different adjective NOT SAME A1
- different adjective SEPARATE B1
- dirty adjective A2
- disastrous adjective C1
- disgusting adjective B1
-
knowledge

Word family:
Nouns: knowledge
Verbs: know
Adjectives: knowledgeable, known, unknown
Adverbs: knowingly

NOUN

UNDERSTANDING
B1 [U or no plural] information and understanding that you have in your mind

Dictionary examples:
Her knowledge of English grammar is very extensive.
He has a limited knowledge of French.
The details of the scandal are now common knowledge.
Scope of the C levels

- Additional senses of words already in A1-B2
- New words supported by corpus evidence
- Extension of many word families
- Lots of additional phrases and phrasal verbs
- Frequent idioms, where there is evidence
Extra sources for C levels

- IELTS data in Cambridge Learner Corpus
- Academic English native speaker corpora
- Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000)
- Academic Formulas List (Ellis & Simpson-Vlach, 2010)
- Phrasal expressions analysis (Martínez, 2010)
The Academic Word List

*(Italicised form is the most common)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>available</th>
<th>evident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>availability</td>
<td>evidenced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unavailable</td>
<td>evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic Formulas List

the degree to which
in more detail
to determine whether
is determined by
to do so
Phrases - Martínez research

Ron Martínez, University of Nottingham, took the A1-B2 pilot version and identified ‘missing’ or ‘embedded’ frequent phrases, using the British National Corpus

• Some new phrase entries created for A1-B2 levels
• Remaining phrases included at C1 and C2 levels
Phrases added to EVP

Missing phrase:

*and all that*  989 per 100m in BNC

primarily a spoken phrase, but has some Cambridge Learner Corpus evidence - included at B1
and all that

**B1** used for saying that other similar things are included or that the whole of a situation is considered.

Dictionary examples:

*He told us about his school and all that.*

*We decided to stay in bed, with it being a holiday and all that.*

*Learner example:*

*I really enjoy shopping for clothes, but not only for clothes, also for things like earrings and all that!*  

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**in all**

**B2** used to show the total amount of something.

Dictionary example:

*Some of the children came, so there were 15 of us in all.*

*Learner example:*

*Secondly, even though most people like[d] [the] group RADIANT, they [only] played for 35 minutes in*

---

**all of a sudden**

**B2** suddenly and unexpectedly.

Dictionary example:

*All of a sudden, he came bursting in through the door.*
Phrases added to EVP

Embedded phrase: *a number of*

was within AMOUNT sense of *number* (B1), with these dictionary examples:

*The number of people killed in road accidents fell last month.*

*There were a number of soldiers present at the rally.*

Now included as a separate phrase at B2.
AMOUNT

B1 [C or U] an amount

Dictionary examples:

The number of people killed in road accidents fell last month.
A small number of children are educated at home.
A large number of people were contacted.

Learner example:
We are a well-mixed class with equal numbers of boys and girls, all about 20 years old.

a number of sth

B2 several

Dictionary examples:

There were a number of journalists present at the public meeting.
We’ve had quite a number of complaints about the programme.

Learner example:
There are a number of errors in your article.
Phrases at the C levels

Inclusion based on frequency and learner evidence

• Many academic formulas and discourse markers

  C1: needless to say, in the event of, in short

  C2: along the lines of, in all likelihood
Phrases at the C levels

- Strong collocations
  
  C1: high time       C2: cast doubt/ suspicion on

- Meaning extension and figurative use
  
  C1: the foot of sth, set foot in/on       C2: at heart

- Idiomatic use
  
  C1: go hand in hand       C2: lose heart
Idioms in the English Vocabulary Profile

• Mainly a feature of the C levels
• Additional category search for A1-C2 version
• Inclusion dictated by NS frequency and CLC
• Not included: *raining cats and dogs*
• Included: *behind closed doors*
Search results for A1-C2 (2 matches)

Core results:
- **door** noun A1
- **behind closed doors** C2
Search results for A1-C2 (21 matches)

Core results:
- in the dark
- call it a day
- make sb's day
- go/run deep
- out of your depth
- leave someone to their own devices
- behind closed doors
- down under
- down and out
- go downhill
- down the drain
- beyond your wildest dreams
- not/never in your wildest dreams
- a drop in the ocean
- be down in the dumps
- do the job
- make a bad/good, etc. job of sth
- the jury is (still) out
- keep your eyes open (for sb/sth)
Availability of EVP online

- Preview version of A1-C2 levels (letters DJK)
- Downloadable booklet explaining the whole programme
- Word of the Week - 90 entries archived with a new word appearing each week
- A1-B2 levels available free on the EP website
- A1-C2 levels expected Spring 2012