Perspectives on the Transition to EPIC

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Opening comments

➢ The CEFR

➢ The Evaluation Report

Opening comments: The CEFR

➢ CEFR levels

➢ The Global Scale

➢ The CEFR is a framework not a methodology

➢ Estimates for how long it takes to reach CEFR levels

➢ Customizing the CEFR

➢ Use the CEFR to introduce and establish standards and accountability, monitor procedures and set timeframes for review and rethinking
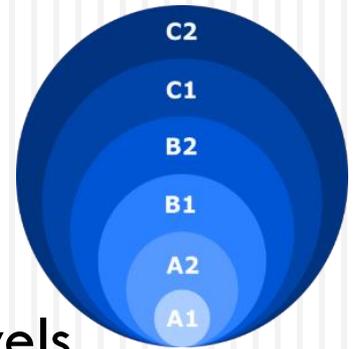
How long does it take to learn a language? Pearson, 2017.

CEFR		Hours per level		Total cumulative	
Start	Finish	Fast	Slow	Fast	Slow
<A1	A1	95	480	95	480
A1	A2	95	290	190	770
A2	B1	190	616	380	1386
B1	B2	380	1109	760	2495
B2	C1	760	1996	1520	4491

The number of guided teaching hours needed to fulfill the aims of each CEF level

A1 Approximately 90 - 100 hours

A2 Approximately 180 - 200 hours

B1 Approximately 350 - 400 hours

B2 Approximately 500 - 600 hours

C1 Approximately 700 - 800 hours

C2 Approximately 1,000 - 1,200 hours

Guided teaching hours are the hours during which the learner is in a formal learning context such as the classroom.

Source: Teacher's Guide to the Common European Framework

Pearson Longman

Opening comments: The Evaluation Report

The transition to EPIC provides an opportunity to analyze the needs and interests of the students entering higher education.

These needs are specified in the report the Committee for the Evaluation of English for Academic Purposes in Israel submitted to the Council for Higher Education in 2018.

Committee for the Evaluation of English for Academic Purposes in Israel: Evaluation Report

1. Scope

Recommendation

English teaching in HEIs will aim to achieve a high-level of competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English for Purposes of International Communication (EPIC). This will broaden the scope of EAP which at present focuses mainly on reading comprehension of academic texts.

Comments and clarifications

English is the language in which international academic and professional discourse, both spoken and written, takes place. Therefore, today's HEI graduates can only function effectively in future employment, whether in Israel or abroad, if they possess the ability to communicate in English at a high level of proficiency in a variety of situations.

These situations include:

• Listening to, understanding and responding to lectures, webinars, argumentation, explanations or other informal spoken input

• Using spoken English to interact and network with other professionals and academics from different countries in conferences or at other social or work-based events

• Reading in different genres relevant to the area of specialty, such as research articles, course materials or manuals, position papers, and shorter informal texts such as emails or postings through social media

• Writing both formal and informal texts of varied types, such as those mentioned in the previous item.

Committee for the Evaluation of English for Academic Purposes in Israel: Evaluation Report

The syllabi and teaching methods of English courses should be designed to prepare students for all the above, and more. To that end, they should prioritize expanding students' English vocabulary

(including – but not limited to – academic language), its use in context, and their written and spoken discourse skills.

Why prioritize vocabulary?

➢ How much vocabulary do you need to function in English?

➢ Estimates of lexical knowledge at entry to higher education

➢ CEFR levels and EAP placement to date

Getting a grasp of the basic grammar of a language, and learning to pronounce the sounds accurately, need not take too long. But vocabulary is the Everest of language (Crystal 2009: 6-7).

Why prioritize vocabulary?

A large vocabulary is necessary to function in English:

8,000–9,000 word families for reading,
5,000–7,000 word families for oral discourse.

Each word family has several members.

6,000 word families equals about 28,000 individual words.

This vocabulary size enables listening.

8,000 word families equals about 35,000 words.

This vocabulary size enables wide reading.

Schmitt, 2008

Why prioritize vocabulary?

The figures do not take into account the multitude of phrasal lexical items, which have been shown to be extremely widespread in language use.

Schmitt, 2008

By vocabulary we mean single words and multiword units (idioms, phrasal verbs and collocations). These are often referred to as formulaic language. It is estimated that between a third and a half of all English discourse consists of formulaic language.

Schmitt, 2017

Estimates of lexical knowledge

5 pointers 3500

4 pointers 2000

The figures refer to receptive knowledge and single words.

We don't know if learners know multi word units.

To get into Advanced 2 you need 5000

Advanced 1: 3000-4000

Basic: 2000

Pre-basic: 1&2 < 2000

Batia Laufer, Summer School 2018

CEFR levels and EAP placement

Psychometric / Amiram	Amir	EAP level	CEFR level / Source ECOSTAR	Estimate of receptive lexical knowledge /single words/Source Laufer 2018
134+	234+	Exemption		
120-133	220-233	Advanced 2	B2	5000
100-119	200-219	Advanced 1	B1	3000-4000
85-99	185-199	Basic	A2	2000
70-84	170-184	Pre-basic 2	A1	<2000
50-69	150-169	Pre-basic 1		

So how do Israeli high school graduates measure up?

At present

60% of high school graduates know much less than what they need i.e., less than 5000 word families.

35% know 2000 words or less i.e., they are at the A1 level.

Batia Laufer, Summer School 2018
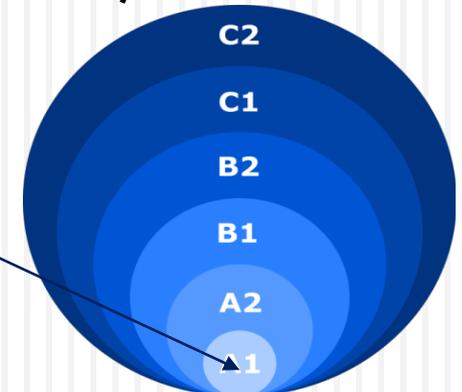
English Curriculum 2020: Goals

To raise proficiency levels:

Basic User I, A1

Basic User II, A2

Independent User I, B1

Independent User II, B2

English Curriculum 2020
Levels and goals

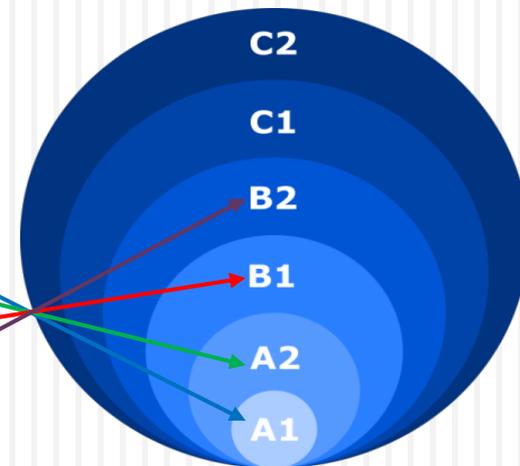**Our Goals**

CEFR levels

Basic User I, A1 – end elementary school

Basic User II, A2 – end junior high school & Bagrut 3 points

Independent User I, B1 – Bagrut 4 points

Independent User II, B2 – Bagrut 5 points

Bottom line

You need a sound linguistic basis to function in English.

All four skills rely on this language basis.

Speech and listening

- Characteristics of speech
- What makes fast speech and listening possible
- Minimizing processing to express/interpret a message

Characteristics of speech

A speaker with a normal speech rate produces some 150 words per minute…- on the average, one every 400 milliseconds.

Under time pressure the rate can easily be doubled to one every 200 milliseconds.

Levelt 1989:199, cited in Field, 2003:33

Characteristics of speech

A normal, educated adult speaker has an active vocabulary of about 30,000 words.

A speaker makes the right choice from among these, 30,000 or so alternatives not once, but in fluent speech, continuously two to five times per second – a rate that can be maintained without any clear temporal limit.

There is probably no other cognitive process shared by all normal adults whose decision rate is so high and error rate so very low.

Levelt 1989:199, cited in Field, 2003:33

What makes fast speech possible?

How is it possible to maintain such a fast speech rate?

How can we make so many correct lexical decisions, two to five times a second, when there are so many lexical options?

How can we stay focused on what we want to say if we have to make so many lexical choices?

How can we explain the low error rate?

And what about the listener?

How can a listener keep up with this speech rate?

The answer is ready-made language

Ready-made language is the key to fluency.

Chunks are ready for use at any moment and do not need re-assembling every time they are used. They are evidence of single linguistic choices.

Thus we can also partly account for the notion of 'fluency', a term frequently used to describe smooth, effortless performance in a language but one that is often only loosely defined.

O'Keeffe, McCarthy and Carter, 2007:61.

Formulaic language

Formulaic language is widespread because it carries out functions.

Formulaic language facilitates fluency. It is predictable. You don't have to string a new phrase together you can use something that is ready made. This makes processing easier also for the listener or reader as processing proceeds in chunks and not in a word by word manner.

Schmitt, 2017

Needs Only Analysis (Wray 2008)

A major strategy for learning from input is Needs Only Analysis.

The impetus is minimizing the speaker's and/or hearer's processing, to express or interpret a message.

The motivation is effective communication / the social pressure to speak like others, by adopting the multiword patterns already in use in the speech community (formulaic language).

The need to communicate effectively also takes the hearer's needs and expectations into account. This means being more formulaic.

This way a lot of meaning can be triggered with little processing and other possible meanings downgraded as candidates for interpretation.

Wray, 2008

Reading and writing

Reading as a linguistic process

Stages of reading development

Skills and strategies

Reading is a linguistic process

One characteristic of good readers is that they have automatic, accurate and rapid recognition of lexis.

We look at every letter in almost every word that we read.

Reading is a print driven process. Comprehension depends on processing specific, clear, complete information about the words on the page.

Hall and Moats, 1999:128

Stopping to figure out unknown words wreaks havoc, not only on reading speed, but also on reading comprehension.

Hall and Moats, 1999:136

Reading is a linguistic process

Reading rate may be an indicator of fluent or disfluent reading.

A slow reading rate may be symptomatic of inefficient word recognition or lack of sensitivity to the phrase – the natural unit of meaning in reading.

Rasinski, 2000

Question: Why is automatic, accurate and rapid word recognition important?

Why reading rate matters

If text is read in a laborious and inefficient manner, it will be difficult for the reader to remember what he has read and to relate the ideas expressed in the text to his or her background knowledge.

In other words, both integration of information and meaning construction will be negatively affected.

Reading in meaningful units (chunks) links decoding and comprehension.

Reading is a linguistic process

Successful reading requires readers to process the text (the surface level of reading) and comprehend the text (the deeper meaning).

Reading fluency refers to the reader's ability to develop control over surface level text processing so that he or she can focus on understanding the deeper levels of meaning embedded in the text.

Rasinski, 2004

Reading is a linguistic process

To understand reading you need a clear description of the role that vocabualry development and vocabulary instruction play in the understanding of what has been read (Report of the National Reading Panel, 2000).

Vocabulary knowledge is a good predictor of reading proficiency, if not the best (Laufer, 2013).

Reading is a linguistic process

…it has been consistently demonstrated that reading comprehension is strongly related to vocabulary knowledge, more strongly than to the other components of reading (Laufer 1997).

Laufer (1997) lists researchers who have demonstrated that "an improvement in reading comprehension can be attributed to an increase in vocabulary knowledge."

Constructing meaning

In most reading situations our purpose is to extract or construct meaning.

Texts have meaning potential and readers attempt/expect to realize that potential.

No text contains all the information necessary for comprehension.

Readers bring with them background knowledge that they use to extract/construct meaning.

Constructing meaning
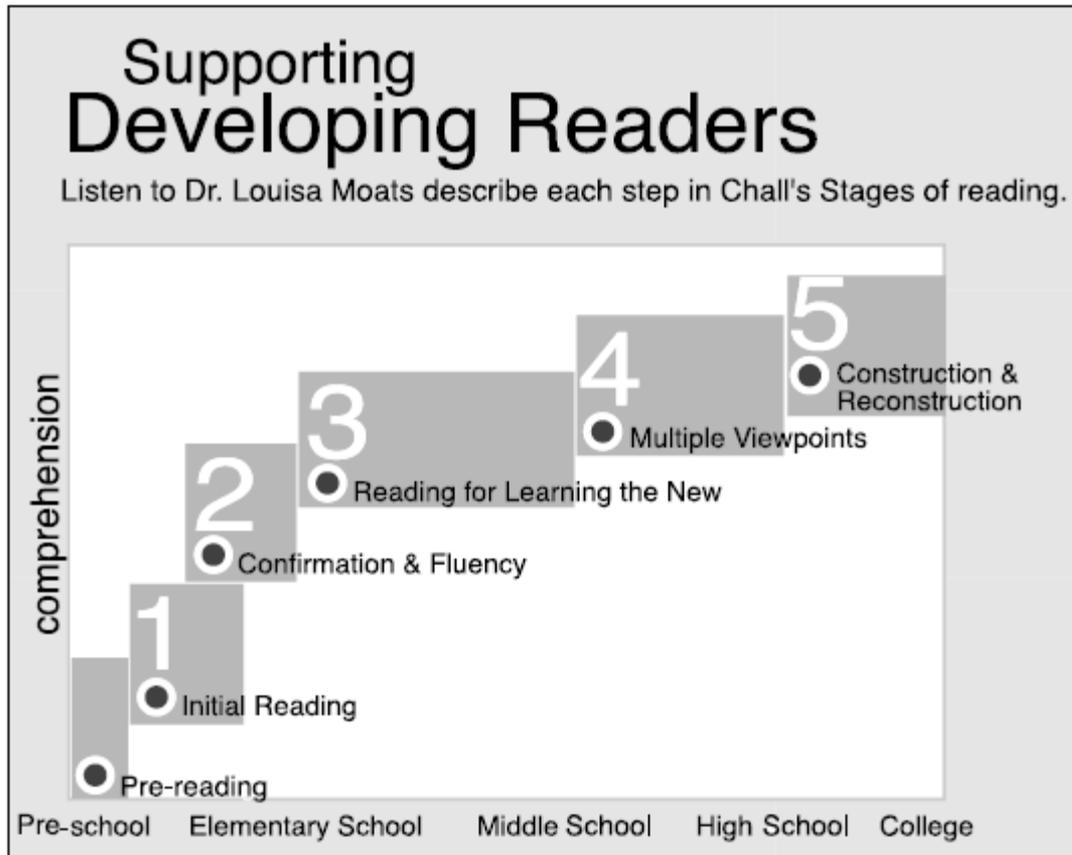
What do we mean by comprehension?

Most of the time we mean identifying or recognizing the main points of the text.

Main idea identification is a central skill in comprehending, monitoring and recalling text.

It enables the reader to organize the information presented by distinguishing main ideas from supporting details.

In higher education we expect construction and reconstruction.

Chall's Stages of Reading Development

Supporting
Developing Readers

Listen to Dr. Louisa Moats describe each step in Chall's Stages of reading.

comprehension

5 ● Construction & Reconstruction

4 ● Multiple Viewpoints

3 ● Reading for Learning the New

2 ● Confirmation & Fluency

1 ● Initial Reading

● Pre-reading

Pre-school　Elementary School　Middle School　High School　College

Stage 0 Prereading
Oral language development

Stage 1 Initial Reading
Letters represent sounds
Sound-spelling relationships

Stage 2 Confirmation and Fluency
Decoding skills
Fluency
Additional strategies

Stage 3 Reading for Learning "the New"
Expand vocabularies
Build background and world knowledge
Develop strategic habits

Stage 4 Multiple Viewpoints
Analyze texts critically
Understand multiple points of view

Stage 5 Construction and Reconstruction
Construct understanding based on analysis and synthesis

Reading in higher education
Stage 5: Construction and reconstruction

Chall's Stages of Reading Development 1983

Stage 5: Construction and reconstruction

Approximate Age – 18 + / College and beyond

At the end of this stage reading is used for one's own needs and purposes (professional and personal); reading serves to integrate ones' knowledge with that of others, to synthesize it and to create new knowledge. It is rapid and efficient.

How is this stage acquired?

Wide reading of ever more difficult materials, reading beyond one's immediate needs; writing of papers, tests, essays, and other forms that call for integration of varied knowledge and points of view.

What about teaching reading strategies?

Teaching reading strategies (predicting, guessing the meaning of words from context, skimming and scanning) is important but not before word and phrase recognition are automatic, accurate and rapid and students have the lexical coverage to understand text.

If you're skimming or scanning and don't understand the content, you'll miss out on bits of important and unimportant information.

What use is it to know where to look for information if you can't understand what the text says? Strategies without a sound linguistic foundation (98% lexical coverage) won't guarantee comprehension.

Language proficiency and operating skills and strategies

Most researchers agree that only when readers possess a critical mass of second language (L2) knowledge (lexical and grammatical) can general reading skills, such as distinguishing between main and peripheral information, between explicit and implicit material, operate most efficiently (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Carrell, 1991; Clarke, 1980; Lee & Lemonnier- Schallert, 1997).

Laufer, 2013

What about looking up words in a dictionary?

Dictionary use is time consuming and not reliable. Stopping to look up words while reading interrupts the smooth operation of processes that take place during reading.

The assumption here is that students know how to find the words they don't know.

In the case of chunks, students might not even know how to look up the item.

The bottom line is that a dictionary cannot compensate for lack of good vocabulary knowledge (Laufer 2013).

As for guessing, we'll come to that shortly.

Conclusion

We need to remember that many students enter higher education with very basic proficiency and that includes poor reading and writing skills.

Our top priority and responsibility is to teach them language (vocabulary and grammar).

At advanced levels instruction in strategies can support and aid students in how to approach texts and fulfil the purpose/s of reading. But strategies can't come instead of general comprehension which depends primarily on knowing the language.

Vocabulary revisited

The lexical plight in second language reading

Vocabulary principles

From principles to practice

Lexical targets in the English Curriculum 2020

The lexical plight in second language reading(Laufer, 1997)

Words you don't know	Words you think you know	Words you can't guess
The below-threshold syndrome	Deceptive transparency	Nonexistent contextual clues
The threshold vocabulary	Words with a deceptive morphological structure	Unusable contextual clues
	Idioms	Misleading and partial clues
	False friends	Suppressed clues
	Words with multiple meanings	
	'Synform' (similar lexical forms)	
	Deceptive transparency and reading comprehension	

Vocabualry principles (Schmitt 2008, 2017)

You need a large vocabulary to function in English. By vocabulary we mean single words and multiword units.

Enlarging students' vocabularies is a first priority.

The numerical lexical targets for speech and reading relate to high and mid frequency word families in English.

When we discuss vocabulary we make reference to size and depth.

This distinction is relevant to how much we know about vocabulary as well as the differentiation between receptive and productive vocabulary. Language users have a larger receptive vocabulary than productive vocabulary.

Vocabualry principles (Nation, 2005; Schmitt 2008, 2017)

What students need to know about words depends on the purpose of studies. For recognition the form-meaning link might suffice.

For production, students need other aspects of word knowledge (e.g., the grammar of vocabualry, collocations, constraints on use).

Word knowledge is incremental in nature. Aspects of word knowledge are learnt at different times.

The form-meaning link is usually first and should be well learnt to allow fluent listening, viewing, and reading.

We need to *push* students to make the transition from receptive knowledge to productive use.

Ratio between receptive and productive vocabulary

The ratio between receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge reported in the literature varies, largely depending on word frequency level.

At the 1,000-, 2,000- and 3,000-word frequency levels, Webb (2008) found a ratio of 88%, 73% and 65% respectively, indicating that the gap between productive and receptive knowledge increases as words become more infrequent (see also Laufer, 2005).

By way of a generalization, Milton (2009) suggests that the ratio is somewhere between 50 and 80%.

Malmstrom, Pecorari and Shaw 2017:29-30

From principles to practice (Nation, 2005, Schmitt 2008, 2017)

In the early stages (form-meaning link) decontextualized word lists can make for efficient and effective learning (explicit attention).

Contextualizing vocabulary once the form-meaning link has been established will create conditions for enhancing knowledge, learning collocations and constraints on use.

Teachers should use new vocabulary in class. This provides additional exposure and builds on the form-meaning link.

Regarding use of the L1, this is recommended for lower level students whose vocabulary isn't rich enough to follow L2 explanations. It makes for efficient and effective learning.

For higher level students, using the L2 provides opportunities for using defining vocabulary.

Testing vocabulary should reflect the level of word knowledge expected.

For checking receptive knowledge only, translation might work best.

From principles to practice (Nation, 2005, Schmitt 2008, 2017)

Assessment of productive vocabulary knowledge and/or its development should require students to produce the target vocabulary or show knowledge that reflects productive aspects of lexical items.

Recycling (expanding rehearsals) is important so as not to forget what you have learnt. Recycling also enhances vocabulary knowledge.

Massive exposure provides recycling and enhancement in rich and natural contexts.

Lexical targets in the English Curriculum 2020: Breakdown by grades/level and Bagrut points

Level	Pre-basic User Pre A1	Basic User 1 A1	Basic User II A2	Independent User I & II B1&B2	
Grades	3-6		7-9, + 10, Bagrut 3 pts	10-12, Bagrut 4&5 pts	
Receptive per level	200	1200	2000	900	1100
Productive per level	200	1000	800	500	500
Cumulative receptive	200	1400	3400	4300	5400
Cumulative productive	200	1200	2000	2500	3000

Recommendations

Focus on language instruction

Compile core lists of receptive and productive lexical targets for EPIC courses

Include lexical targets in learning outcomes

Assessment receptive and productive vocabulary

Fine tune EPIC instruction

If you want to fine tune EPIC teaching, it might be a good idea to identify which lexical items students need for receptive purposes (listening and viewing) and which you would expect them to know for productive purposes (speaking and writing).

This fine tuning would also necessitate identifying academic targets (a core list) for receptive and productive purposes. Presumably some of the targets would be general academic vocabulary and some discipline specific.

Compile core lists

Teaching all language skills including writing means that students need a larger productive vocabulary for academic/professional writing. Strategies that might compensate for deficiencies in listening and reading might not be available to second language writers.

Once you've targeted productive items, it's important to consider tasks that will help students make the transition from receptive knowledge to productive use. These will require more effort.

Consult the PAVL

Taking the academic needs of students into account, it might be advisable to look at the list of productive academic vocabulary (PAVL) (591 words) that Malmstrom, Pecorari and Shaw 2017 developed. This could form the basis of a list you curate for EPIC purposes.

Naturally at the lower EPIC levels it might be advisable to target Band 3 in the English Curriculum 2020.

Compiling a core list should maximize the mileage students gain from EPIC courses.

This will justify the time and effort required for high proficiency levels and make for a more effective and efficient EPIC program.
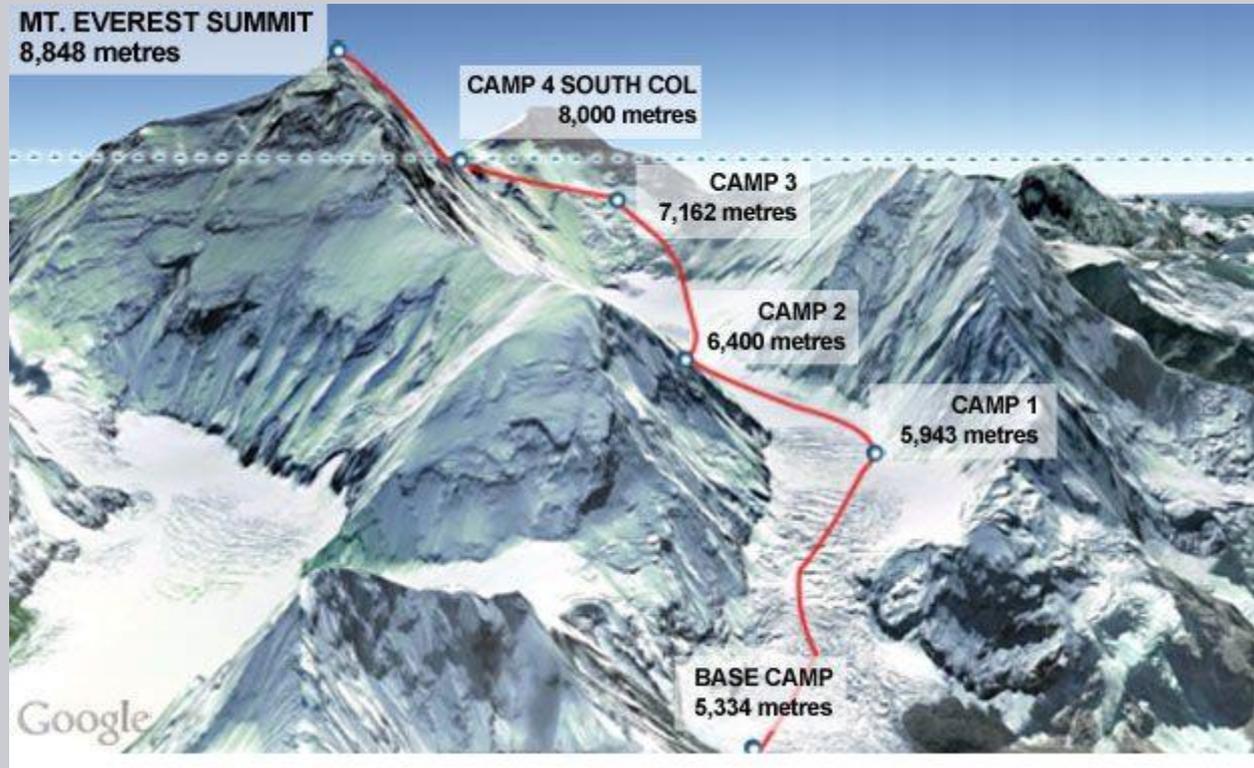
Mount Everest

We are the Sherpas!

Let's guide our students up the Everest of language.