Illustrative descriptors (CEFR, Chapter 3.4)

YUKIO TONO

What is an "illustrative descriptor"?

A1 - READING

I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.

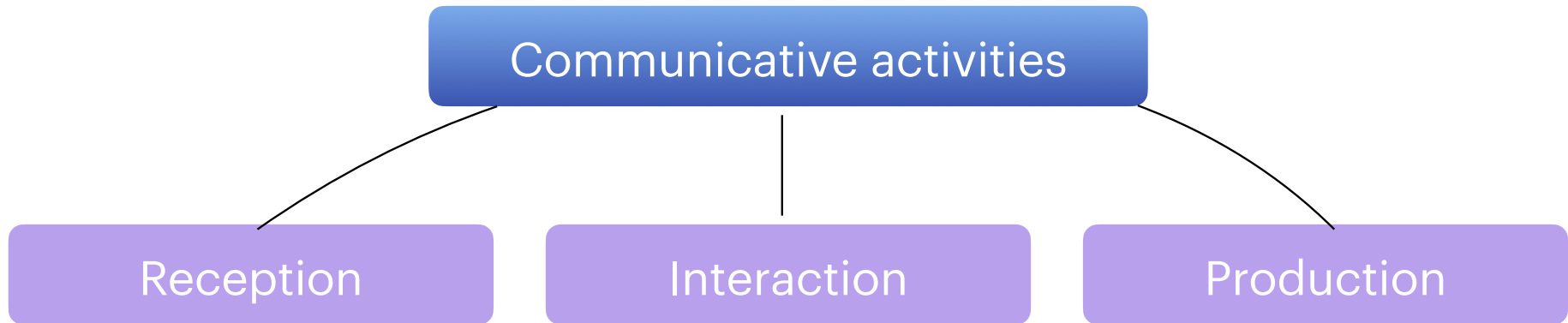'Can do' descriptors = what learners can do with language at the given level
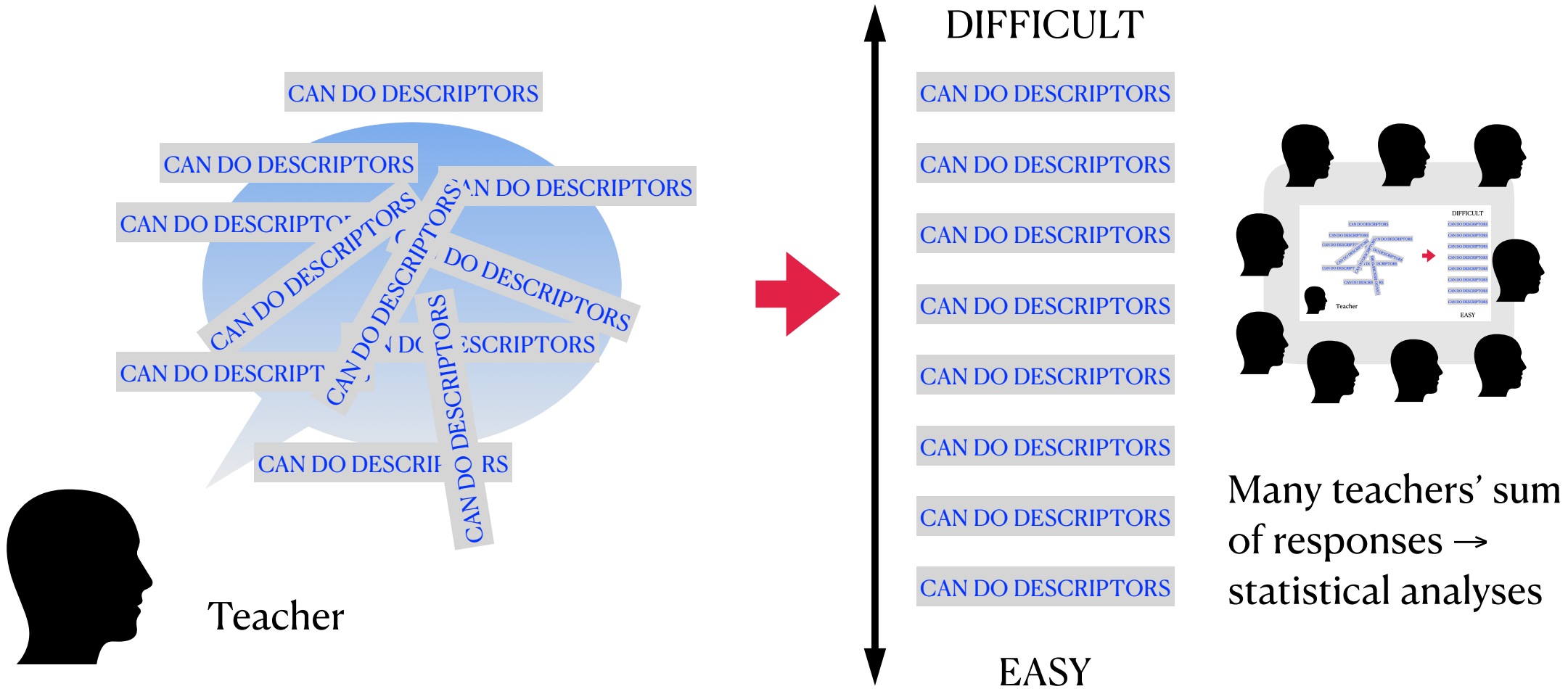
Communicative activities

Reception

Interaction

Production

How to scale descriptors

Types of Descriptors

All the details will be presented in Chapters 4 & 5

Communicative activities	Communication strategies	Text-types	Communicative language competences
Reception	Planning Execution Evaluation & Repair	Note-taking Processing text	Linguistic competences
Production	Planning Compensating Monitoring and repair		Sociolinguistic competences
Interaction	Taking the floor (Turntaking) Co-operating Asking for clarification		Pragmatic competences
Mediation	Planning Execution Evaluation & Repair		

Flexibility in a branching approach (1)

- Below A1:
  - can make simple purchases where pointing or other gesture can support the verbal reference;
  - can ask and tell day, time of day and date;
  - can use some basic greetings;
  - can say yes, no, excuse me, please, thank you, sorry;
  - can fill in uncomplicated forms with personal details, name, address, nationality, marital status;
  - can write a short, simple postcard.
- The descriptors above concern 'real life' tasks of a tourist nature. In a school learning context, one could imagine a separate list of 'pedagogic tasks', including ludic aspects of language – especially in primary schools.

Flexibility in a branching approach (2)

- Secondly, the Swiss empirical results suggest a scale of 9 more or less equally sized, coherent levels as shown in Figure 2. This scale has steps between A2 (Waystage) and B1 (Threshold), between B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage), and between B2 (Vantage) and C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency). The possible existence of such narrower levels may be of interest in learning contexts, but can still be related to the broader levels conventional in examining contexts.
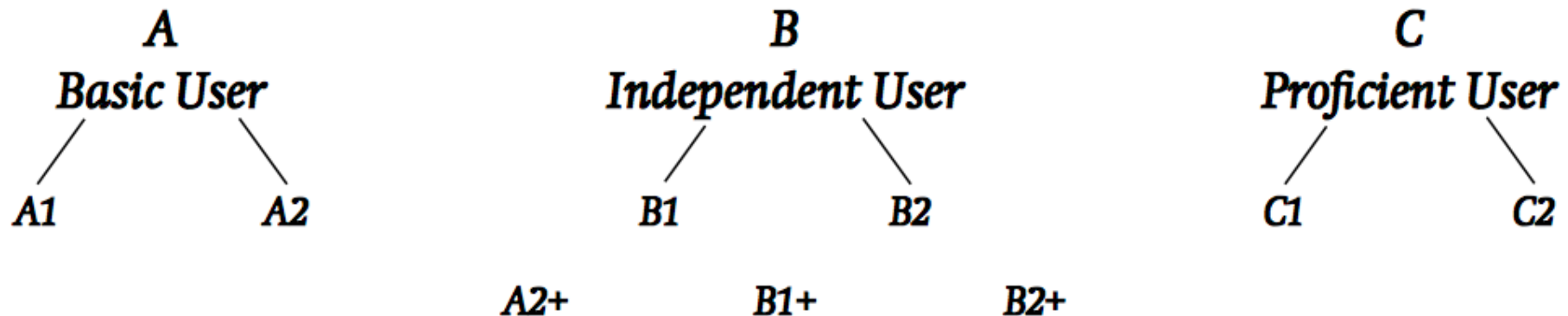
Flexibility in a branching approach (3)

Example 1:
A primary to lower secondary school system, for example, or system for adult evening classes in which the provision of visible progress at low levels is felt necessary, could develop the *Basic User* stem to produce a set of perhaps six milestones with finer differentiation at **A2** (*Waystage*) where large numbers of learners would be found.

```
            A                                    B
        Basic User                        Independent User
         /      \                              /
       A1        A2                           B1
      / \       /  \                          6
   A1.1 A1.2  A2.1  A2.2
    1    2    / \    5
          A2.1.1 A2.1.2
            3      4
```
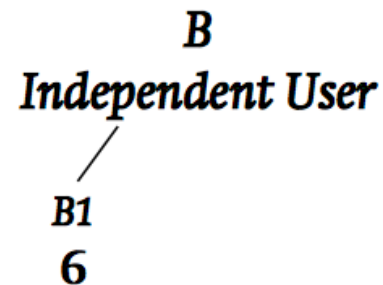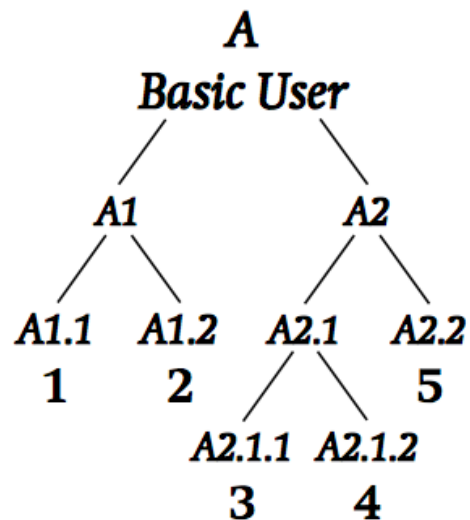
Flexibility in a branching approach (4)

Example 2:
In an environment for learning the language in the area where it is spoken one might tend to develop the *Independence* branch, adding a further layer of delicacy by subdividing the levels in the middle of the scale:

```
         A                        B                           C
     Basic User            Independent User             Proficient User
     /       \             /            \               /            \
   A1        A2          B1             B2             C1            C2
           /    \       /   \          /   \          /  \
        A2.1  A2.2    B1.1  B1.2     B2.1  B2.2     C1.1  C1.2         10
   1
          2     3       4     5       6     7        8     9
```
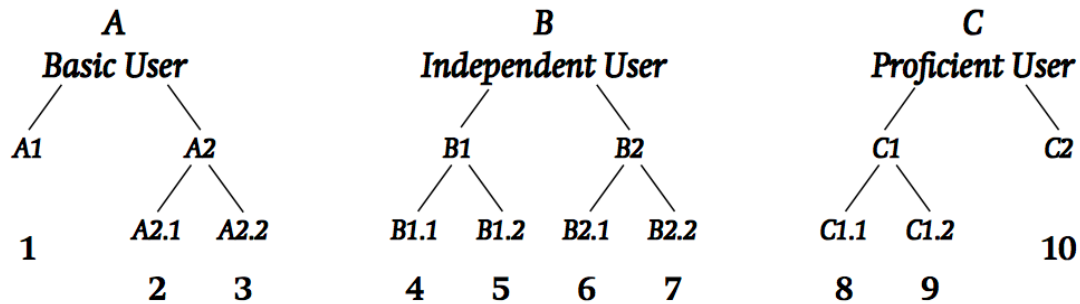
Example 3:
Frameworks for encouraging higher level language skills for professional needs would probably develop the *Proficient User* branch:

```
          B                           C
   Independent User            Proficient User
   /            \               /            \
  B1             B2            C1            C2
                                           /    \
   1             2             3         C2.1   C2.2

                                          4      5
```