Validity: Linguaskill General

Information on test validity

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Linguaskill is a modular online multi-level test of English language proficiency that reports results on an internationally recognised reference framework called the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Linguaskill has two variants: Linguaskill General and Linguaskill Business. Linguaskill General can be used for admissions, progress measurement, or as an exit test for higher education institutions and pathway programs. It can also be used for recruitment for roles in a non-business-specific environment where the employee needs strong English skills to perform their role but will not need specialist business terminology. The test is designed to have a positive influence on language teaching and learning. The following key features of Linguaskill provide a sound foundation for the test results to be used in the contexts mentioned above:

- Rigorous test content review performed by language testing professionals ensures high-quality test questions which assess critical language knowledge and skills of stakeholders' interest.

- Approximately 4,000 participants of a trial study on Linguaskill reported that the test assesses language knowledge and skills that are essential for real-world communication.

- The Reading and Listening modules, which are computer-adaptive, yield highly reliable test scores, with reliability estimates of 0.94 for Reading and 0.93 for Listening. Regular checks are done to maintain this high level of test reliability.

- The Writing component of Linguaskill is marked by an auto-marker developed based on machine learning technology with the Institute of Automated Language Teaching and Assessment (ALTA) at the University of Cambridge, where we work with researchers from the Department of Engineering, Computer Laboratory and the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics to create the next generation of AI-empowered assessment and learning tools for English language learners. Research has indicated that the automated scores are highly correlated with those awarded by certified human assessors, which are considered the gold standard. This suggests that the auto-marker has achieved the marking accuracy of a highly trained Cambridge English examiner.

- The Speaking component of Linguaskill adopts a hybrid approach to marking in which candidates' oral responses are marked by either an auto-marker or human assessors. When the automarker indicates low confidence in marking, the test response is flagged up and escalated to human examiners. Our research has found that hybrid marking resulted in a good agreement with exclusive human marking in terms of 95.6% exact agreement and 100% adjacent agreement on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

- During test construction, the Reading and Listening questions are carefully designed based on CEFR descriptors for the two skills. Recent internal studies using a standard-setting technique confirmed the proper alignment between Reading and Listening scores and the CEFR framework as intended. The Writing and Speaking scores have also been reviewed by panels of experts for establishing alignment. The positive findings from these studies empower Linguaskill score users to interpret the results and make informed decisions based on CEFR.

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Cambridge Assessment English
The Triangle Building
Shaftesbury Road
Cambridge
CB2 8EA
United Kingdom

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