Cambridge English
Transforming Language Education

English Opens Doors: Chile

Client: Ministry of Education
Country: Chile

Cambridge English Language Assessment worked closely with the Chilean Ministry of Education to gather and diagnostically analyse data on language learning levels that helped validate and refine its English Opens Doors programme.

In 2003, as part of its strategy for improving quality and equity in its education system, the Chilean Ministry of Education launched a national English project, 'English Opens Doors'.

One of the project's aims was for all state school students to reach a level equivalent to *Cambridge English: Key* (Level A2) by the end of primary school and a level equivalent to *Cambridge English: Preliminary* (Level B1) by the end of high school.

Evaluating the existing English competence of school students was an important first step in this strategy, and we were chosen to design a diagnostic test to establish students' listening and reading comprehension.

The diagnostic test we designed was developed from our own bank of materials, which had already been extensively internationally trialled and validated.

The diagnostic test consisted of two parts which tested Reading and Listening and was calibrated to the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

A sample of 12,000 students, representing 8th grade (13–14 year olds) and 12th grade (17–18 year olds) school students took the test in 2004. A similar profile of students was tested again in 2008 to determine what progress had been made.

Analysis of the results indicated a clear progression of English language proficiency in the intervening four years. The Chilean Ministry of Education was provided with empirical evidence indicating that the interventions implemented as part of their English Opens Doors strategy were successful.

Data gathered through the test, the questionnaires and the accompanying student tracking forms also allowed comparison of results from different types of schools, according to how they are financed and administered.

This analysis enabled the Ministry to further refine and reshape its English Opens Doors strategy.

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