

Cambridge English

Transforming Language Education

Analysing English Skills in Basque Schools

Client: Basque Institute of Evaluation and Research in Education

Country: Basque Country, Spain

Cambridge English Language Assessment is delivering a three- year project to determine current levels of English in the Basque school system, with results used to set final target levels for primary and secondary school students.

The Cambridge team is working closely with the Basque Institute of Evaluation and Research in Education (ISEI-IVEI), which also commissioned the study. ISEI-IVEI, which has close links with the Basque Ministry of Education, is responsible for evaluating the non-university educational system, promoting educational research in the non-university sector, and providing a documentation and resource service related to education.



Since 2004, ISEI-IVEI has been analysing English skills – primarily at primary level – in both state-funded and private schools where teaching is mainly delivered in Basque and Spanish. In 2011, a trilingual programme was launched with the aim of improving students’ Basque, Spanish and English skills with a target of 20% tuition in each of the three languages.

After the launch of the programme, Cambridge English Language Assessment was commissioned to design, produce and implement English language benchmarking tests for primary and secondary-level students. Primary students were tested on reading and listening skills, with testing extended to writing skills, and speaking (for a smaller sample) at secondary level. The benchmarking tasks all reflected authentic English usage, were drawn from the Cambridge item banking system, and were fully calibrated to align with the Common European Framework of Reference.

Implementation of the benchmarking project is scheduled over three years. In 2011, more than 1,000 primary students and 500 secondary students were

assessed; a similarly representative sample was tested again in 2012 and 2013.

The ultimate objective is to use the test results to set final achievement levels for students leaving primary and secondary education, targets which can then be applied across the entire country.

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