

THE ALTE CAN DO PROJECT

English version

**Articles and Can Do
statements produced by the
members of ALTE
1992-2002**



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Part 1

THE ALTE FRAMEWORK AND THE 'CAN DO' PROJECT

(This appears as Appendix D to Council of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment*)

The ALTE Framework

The ALTE 'Can Do' statements constitute a central part of a long-term research programme set by ALTE, the aim of which is to establish a framework of 'key levels' of language performance, within which exams can be objectively described.

Much work has already been done to place the exam systems of ALTE members within this framework, based on an analysis of exam content and task types, and candidate profiles. A comprehensive introduction to these exam systems is available in the *ALTE Handbook of European Language Examinations and Examination Systems*.

The ALTE 'Can Dos' are user-orientated scales

The aim of the 'Can Do' project is to develop and validate a set of performance-related scales, describing what learners can actually do in the foreign language.

In terms of Alderson's (1991) distinction between **constructor**, **assessor** and **user** orientated scales, the ALTE 'Can Do' statements in their original conception are user-orientated. They assist communication between stakeholders in the testing process, and in particular the interpretation of test results by non-specialists. As such they provide:

- a) a useful tool for those involved in teaching and testing language students. They can be used as a checklist of what language users can do and thus define the stage they are at;
- b) a basis for developing diagnostic test tasks, activity-based curricula and teaching materials;
- c) a means of carrying out an activity-based linguistic audit, of use to people concerned with language training and recruitment in companies;
- d) a means of comparing the objectives of courses and materials in different languages but existing in the same context.

They will be of use to people in training and personnel management, as they provide easily understandable descriptions of performance, which can be used in specifying requirements to language trainers, formulating job descriptions, specifying language requirements for new posts.

The ALTE 'Can Do' statements are multilingual

An important aspect of the 'Can Do' statements is that they are multilingual, having been translated so far into twelve of the languages represented in ALTE. These languages are: Catalan, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish. As language-neutral descriptions of levels of language proficiency they constitute a frame of reference to which different language exams at different levels can potentially be related. They offer the chance to demonstrate equivalences between the examination systems of ALTE members, in meaningful terms relating to the real-world language skills likely to be available to people achieving a pass in these exams.

Organisation of the 'Can Do' statements

The 'Can Do' scales consist currently of about 400 statements, organised into three general areas: *Social and Tourist*, *Work*, and *Study*. These are the three main areas of interest of most language learners. Each includes a number of more particular areas, e.g. the Social and Tourist area has sections on Shopping, *Eating out*, *Accommodation*, etc. Each of these includes up to three scales, for the skills of Listening/*Speaking*, *Reading* and *Writing*. *Listening/Speaking* combines the scales relating to interaction.

Each scale includes statements covering a range of levels. Some scales cover only a part of the proficiency range, as there are many situations in which only basic proficiency is required to achieve successful communication.

The development process

The original development process went through these stages:

- a) describing users of ALTE language tests through questionnaires, reports from schools, etc.;
- b) using this information to specify range of candidate needs and identify major concerns;
- c) using test specifications and internationally recognised levels such as Waystage and Threshold to draw up initial statements;
- d) moderating statements and assessing their relevance to test takers;
- e) trialling statements with teachers and students with a view to evaluating relevance and transparency;
- f) correcting, revising and simplifying the language of the statements in the light of the above.

Empirical validation of the ALTE 'Can Do' statements

The scales as developed above have been subjected to an extended process of empirical validation. The validation process is aimed at transforming the 'Can Do' statements from an essentially subjective set of level descriptions into a calibrated measuring instrument. This is a long-term, ongoing process, which will continue as more data become available across the range of languages represented by ALTE.

So far data collection has been based chiefly on self-report, the 'Can Do' scales being presented to respondents as a set of linked questionnaires. Nearly ten thousand respondents have completed questionnaires. For many of these respondents, additional data are available in the form of language exam results. This is believed to be by far the biggest collection of data ever undertaken to validate a descriptive language proficiency scale.

Empirical work has started by looking at the internal coherence of the 'Can Do' scales themselves, the aims being:

1. To check the function of individual statements within each 'Can Do' scale;
2. To equate the different 'Can Do' scales, i.e. to establish the relative difficulty of the scales;
3. To investigate the neutrality of the 'Can Do' scales with respect to language.

Questionnaires have been administered in the subjects' own first language, except at very advanced levels, and mainly in European countries. Respondents have been matched to appropriate questionnaires – the Work scales given to people using a foreign language professionally, the Study scales to respondents engaged in a course of study through the

medium of a foreign language, or preparing to do so. The Social and Tourist scales are given to other respondents, while selected scales from this area have also been included in the Work and Study questionnaires as an 'anchor'.

Anchor items are used in data collection for a Rasch analysis in order to link different tests or questionnaires together. As explained in Appendix A, a Rasch analysis creates one single measurement framework by using a matrix data collection design, or a series of overlapping test forms linked together by items which are common to adjacent forms, which are called anchor items. Such systematic use of anchor statements is necessary in order to enable the relative difficulty of the areas of use, and particular scales, to be established. The use of Social and Tourist scales as an anchor was based on the assumption that these areas call upon a common core of language proficiency and can be expected to provide the best point of reference for equating the Work and Study scales.

Textual revision

One outcome of the first phase has been a textual revision of the 'Can Do' scales. In particular, statements with negative orientation have been removed, as they proved problematic from a statistical point of view, and did not seem wholly appropriate to descriptions of levels of attainment. Here are two examples of the kind of changes made:

1. Negative statements were rephrased positively, preserving original meaning:
 - Was: *CANNOT answer more than simple, predictable questions.*
 - Changed to: *CAN answer simple, predictable questions.*

2. Statements used as negative qualifications to a lower level statement were changed to positive statements intended to describe a higher level:
 - Was: *CANNOT describe non-visible symptoms such as different kinds of pain, for example 'dull', 'stabbing', 'throbbing' etc.*
 - Changed to: *CAN describe non-visible symptoms such as different kinds of pain, for example 'dull', 'stabbing', 'throbbing' etc.*

Relating the 'Can Do' statements to ALTE examinations

Following the initial calibration of the 'Can Do' statements, and the textual revision described above, attention has turned to establishing the link between the 'Can Do' scales and other indicators of language level. In particular we have started looking at performance in ALTE examinations, and at the relation between the 'Can Do' scales and the Council of Europe Framework levels.

Beginning in December 1998, data were collected to link 'Can Do' self-ratings to grades achieved in UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate) EFL exams at different levels. A very clear relationship was found, making it possible to begin to describe the meaning of an exam grade in terms of typical profiles of 'Can Do' ability.

However, when 'Can Do' ratings are based on self-report, and come from a wide range of countries and respondent groups, we find some variability in respondents' overall perception of their own abilities. That is, people tend to understand 'can do' somewhat differently, for reasons which may relate in part to factors such as age or cultural background. For some groups of respondents this weakens the correlation with their exam grades. Analytical approaches have been chosen to establish as clearly as possible the relationship between 'Can Do' self-ratings and criterion levels of proficiency as measured by exam grades. Further

research based on 'Can Do' ratings by experienced raters will probably be necessary to fully characterise the relationship between exam grades and typical 'Can Do' profiles of ability.

A conceptual problem to be addressed in this context concerns the notion of mastery – that is, what exactly do we mean by 'can do'? A definition is required in terms of *how likely* we expect it to be that a person at a certain level can succeed at certain tasks. Should it be certain that the person will always succeed perfectly on the task? This would be too stringent a requirement. On the other hand, a 50 per cent chance of succeeding would be too low to count as mastery.

The figure of 80 per cent has been chosen, as an 80 per cent score is frequently used in domain- or criterion-referenced testing as an indication of mastery in a given domain. Thus, candidates achieving an ordinary pass in an ALTE exam at a given level should have an 80 per cent chance of succeeding on tasks identified as describing that level. Data so far collected on Cambridge exam candidates indicate that this figure accords well with their average probability of endorsing 'Can Do' statements at the relevant level. This relationship has been found to be fairly constant across exam levels.

By defining 'can do' explicitly in this way we have a basis for interpreting particular ALTE levels in terms of 'Can Do' skills.

While the relation to exam performance has so far been based on Cambridge exams, data linking 'Can Do' statements to performance in other ALTE examinations will continue to be collected, allowing us to verify that these different examination systems relate in essentially the same way to the ALTE 5-level Framework.

Anchoring to the Council of Europe Framework

In 1999 responses were collected in which anchors were provided by statements taken from the 1996 Council of Europe Framework document. Anchors included:

1. the descriptors in the self-assessment grid of major categories of language use by level (Table 7);
2. 16 descriptors relating to communicative aspects of Fluency, from illustrative scales.

Table 7 was chosen because in practice it is achieving wide use as a summary description of levels. ALTE's ability to collect response data in a large number of languages and countries provided an opportunity to contribute to the validation of the scales in Table 7.

The 'Fluency' statements had been recommended because they had been found to have the most stable difficulty estimates when measured in different contexts in the Swiss project (North 1996/2000). It was expected that they should thus enable a good equating of the ALTE Can-do statements to the Council of Europe Framework. The estimated difficulties of the 'Fluency' statements were found to agree very closely with those given (North 1996/2000), showing a correlation of $r = 0.97$. This constitutes an excellent anchor between the 'Can Do' statements and the scales used to illustrate the Council of Europe Framework.

However, using Rasch analysis to equate sets of statements (scales) to each other is not straightforward. Data never fit the model exactly: there are issues of *dimensionality*, *discrimination* and *differential item function* (systematic variation of interpretation by different groups), which must be identified and dealt with so as to allow the truest possible relation of the scales to emerge.

Dimensionality relates to the fact that the skills of Listening/Speaking, Reading and Writing, though highly correlated, are still distinct: analyses in which they are separated produce more coherent, discriminating distinctions of level.

Variable discrimination is evident when we compare Table 7 and the 'Can Do' statements. Table 7 is found to produce a longer scale (to distinguish finer levels) than the 'Can Do'

statements. It seems likely that the reason for this is that Table 7 represents the end product of an extended process of selection, analysis and refinement. The result of this process is that each level description is a composite of carefully selected typical elements, making it easier for respondents at a given level to recognise the level which best describes them. This produces a more coherent pattern of responses, which in turn produces a longer scale. This is in contrast to the present form of the 'Can Dos', which are still short, atomic, statements which have not yet been grouped into such rounded, holistic descriptions of levels.

Group effects (differential item function) are evident in the fact that certain respondent groups (i.e. respondents to the Social and Tourist, Work or Study forms of the questionnaire) are found to discriminate levels considerably more finely on certain of the scales used as anchors, for reasons which have been difficult to identify.

None of these effects are unexpected when using a Rasch modelling approach to scale equating. They indicate that a systematic, qualitative review of the texts of the individual statements themselves remains a necessary and important stage in arriving at a 'final' equating of the scales.

Levels of proficiency in the ALTE Framework

At the time of writing the ALTE Framework is a five-level system. The validation described above confirms that these correspond broadly to levels A2 to C2 of the CE Framework. Work on defining a further initial level (Breakthrough) is in progress, and the 'Can Do' project is contributing to the characterisation of this level. Thus the relation of the two Frameworks can be seen as follows:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Council of Europe Levels | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | C1 | C2 |
| ALTE Levels | ALTE Breakthrough Level | ALTE Level 1 | ALTE Level 2 | ALTE Level 3 | ALTE Level 4 | ALTE Level 5 |

The salient features of each ALTE level are as follows:

ALTE Level 5 (Good User): the capacity to deal with material which is academic or cognitively demanding, and to use language to good effect, at a level of performance which may in certain respects be more advanced than that of an average native speaker.

Example: CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.

ALTE Level 4 (Competent User): an ability to communicate with the emphasis on how well it is done, in terms of appropriacy, sensitivity and the capacity to deal with unfamiliar topics.

Example: CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold on to his/her turn to speak

ALTE Level 3 (Independent User): the capacity to achieve most goals and express oneself on a range of topics.

Example: CAN show visitors round and give a detailed description of a place.

ALTE Level 2 (Threshold User): an ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non-routine information.

Example: CAN ask to open an account at a bank, provided that the procedure is straightforward.

ALTE Level 1 (Waystage User): an ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and begin to express oneself in familiar contexts.

Example: CAN take part in a routine conversation on simple predictable topics.

ALTE Breakthrough Level: a basic ability to communicate and exchange information in a simple way.

Example: CAN ask simple questions about a menu and understand simple answers.

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Neil Jones, Marianne Hirtzel, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, March 2000

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ALTE Skill Level Summaries

| ALTE Level | Listening/Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| ALTE Level 5 | CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions. | CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts. | CAN write letters on any subject and full notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy. |
| ALTE Level 4 | CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work or keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions. | CAN read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, to read the media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence. | CAN prepare/draft professional correspondence, take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows an ability to communicate. |
| ALTE Level 3 | CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic or keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics. | CAN scan texts for relevant information, and understand detailed instructions or advice. | CAN make notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests. |
| ALTE Level 2 | CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements. | CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area. | CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters. |
| ALTE Level 1 | CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context. | CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters. | CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information. |
| ALTE Break-through Level | CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic. | CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information. | CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places. |

ALTE Social & Tourist statements summary

| ALTE Level | Listening/Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| ALTE Level 5 | CAN talk about complex or sensitive issues without awkwardness. | CAN (when looking for accommodation) understand a tenancy agreement in detail, for example technical details and the main legal implications. | CAN write letters on any subject with good expression and accuracy. |
| ALTE Level 4 | CAN keep up conversations of a casual nature for an extended period of time and discuss abstract/cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression. | CAN understand complex opinions/arguments as expressed in serious newspapers. | CAN write letters on most subjects. Such difficulties as the reader may experience are likely to be at the level of vocabulary. |
| ALTE Level 3 | CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, such as personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news. | CAN understand detailed information, for example a wide range of culinary terms on a restaurant menu, and terms and abbreviations in accommodation advertisements. | CAN write to a hotel to ask about the availability of services, for example facilities for the disabled or the provision of a special diet. |
| ALTE Level 2 | CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way and pick up nuances of meaning/opinion. | CAN understand factual articles in newspapers, routine letters from hotels and letters expressing personal opinions. | CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience and express opinions in predictable language. |
| ALTE Level 1 | CAN express likes and dislikes in familiar contexts using simple language such as 'I (don't) like....'. | CAN understand straightforward information, for example labels on food, standard menus, road signs and messages on automatic cash machines. | Can complete most forms related to personal information. |
| ALTE Break-through Level | CAN ask simple questions of a factual nature and understand answers expressed in simple language. | CAN understand simple notices and information, for example in airports, on store guides and on menus. CAN understand simple instructions on medicines and simple directions to places. | CAN leave a very simple message for a host family or write short simple 'thank you' notes. |

ALTE SOCIAL and TOURIST statements
Overview of concerns and activities covered

| CONCERN | ACTIVITY | ENVIRONMENT | LANGUAGE SKILL REQUIRED |
|---------------------|---|--|--|
| Day-to-Day Survival | 1. Shopping 2. Eating out 3. Hotel-type accommodation 4. Renting temporary accommodation (flat, room, house) 5. Settling into accommodation 6. Using financial and postal services | Self-service shops Counter service shops Market place Restaurants Self-service (fast food) Hotels, B & B, etc. Agency, private landlord Host families Banks, bureaux de change, post offices | Listening/Speaking Reading Listening/Speaking Reading Listening/Speaking Reading, Writing (form filling) Listening/Speaking Reading, Writing (form filling) Listening/Speaking Reading, Writing (letters) Listening/Speaking Reading, Writing |
| Health | Getting/staying well | Chemist's Doctor's Hospital Dentist's | Listening/Speaking Reading |
| Travel | Arriving in a country Touring Getting/giving directions Hiring | Airport/port Railway/bus station Street, garage, etc. Travel agency Rental firms (car, boat, etc.) | Listening/Speaking Reading, Writing (form filling) |
| Emergencies | Dealing with emergency situations (accident, illness, crime, car breakdown, etc.) | Public places Private places, e.g. hotel room Hospital Police station | Listening/Speaking Reading |
| Sightseeing | Getting information Going on tours Showing people around | Tourist office Travel agency Tourist sights (monuments, etc.) Towns/cities Schools/colleges/universities | Listening/Speaking Reading |
| Socialising | Casual meeting/getting on | Discos, parties, schools, hotels, | Listening/Speaking |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| | with people Entertaining | campsites, restaurants, etc. Home, away from home | |
| The Media/Cultural events | Watching TV, films, plays, etc. Listening to the radio Reading newspapers / magazines | Home, car, cinema, theatre, ' <i>Son et Lumière</i> ', etc. | Listening/Reading |
| Personal contacts (at a distance) | Writing letters, postcards, etc. | Home, away from home | Listening/Speaking (telephone) Reading, Writing |

ALTE Work statements summary

| ALTE Level | Listening/Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| ALTE Level 5 | CAN advise on/handle complex delicate or contentious issues, such as legal or financial matters, to the extent that he/she has the necessary specialist knowledge. | CAN understand reports and articles likely to be encountered during his/her work, including complex ideas expressed in complex language. | CAN make full and accurate notes and continue to participate in a meeting or seminar. |
| ALTE Level 4 | CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work and argue for or against a case. | CAN understand correspondence expressed in non-standard language. | CAN handle a wide range of routine and non-routine situations in which professional services are requested from colleagues or external contacts. |
| ALTE Level 3 | CAN take and pass on most messages that are likely to require attention during a normal working day. | CAN understand most correspondence, reports and factual product literature he/she is likely to come across. | CAN deal with all routine requests for goods or services. |
| ALTE Level 2 | CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters. | CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters and theoretical articles within own work area. | CAN make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable. |
| ALTE Level 1 | CAN state simple requirements within own job area, such as 'I want to order 25 of...' | CAN understand most short reports or manuals of a predictable nature within his/her own area of expertise, provided enough time is given. | CAN write a short, comprehensible note of request to a colleague or a known contact in another company. |
| ALTE Break-through Level | CAN take and pass on simple messages of a routine kind, such as 'Friday meeting 10 a.m.' | CAN understand short reports or product descriptions on familiar matters, if these are expressed in simple language and the contents are predictable. | CAN write a simple routine request to a colleague, such as 'Can I have 20X please?' |

ALTE WORK statements

Overview of concerns and activities covered

| CONCERN | ACTIVITY | ENVIRONMENT | LANGUAGE SKILL REQUIRED |
|---|---|--|--|
| Work-related services | 1. Requesting work-related services | Workplace (office, factory, etc.). | Listening/Speaking Writing |
| | 2. Providing work-related services | Workplace (office, factory, etc.). customer's home | Listening/Speaking Writing |
| Meetings and seminars | Participating in meetings and seminars | Workplace (office, factory, etc.), conference centre | Listening/Speaking Writing (notes) |
| Formal presentations and demonstrations | Following and giving a presentation or demonstration | Conference centre, exhibition centre, factory, laboratory, etc. | Listening/Speaking Writing (notes) |
| Correspondence | Understanding and writing faxes, letters, memos, e-mail, etc. | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) | Reading Writing Reading |
| Reports | Understanding and writing reports (of substantial length and formality) | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) | Reading Writing |
| Publicly available information | Getting relevant information (from e.g. product literature, professional/trade journals, advertisements, web sites, etc.) | Workplace (office, factory, etc.), home | Reading |
| Instructions and guidelines | Understanding notices (e.g. safety. Understanding and writing instructions (in, for example, installation, operation and maintenance manuals) | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) | Reading Writing |
| Telephone | Making outgoing calls Receiving incoming calls (inc. taking messages/writing notes) | Office, home, hotel room, etc. | Listening / Speaking / Writing (notes) |

ALTE Study statements summary

| ALTE Level | Listening/Speaking | Reading | Writing |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|
| ALTE Level 5 | CAN understand jokes, colloquial asides and cultural allusions. | CAN access all sources of information quickly and reliably. | CAN make accurate and complete notes during the course of a lecture, seminar or tutorial. |
| ALTE Level 4 | CAN follow abstract argumentation, for example the balancing of alternatives and the drawing of a conclusion. | CAN read quickly enough to cope with the demands of an academic course. | CAN write an essay which shows ability to communicate, giving few difficulties for the reader. |
| ALTE Level 3 | CAN give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, and answer predictable or factual questions. | CAN scan texts for relevant information and grasp main point of text. | CAN make simple notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes. |
| ALTE Level 2 | CAN understand instructions on classes and assignments given by a teacher or lecturer. | CAN understand basic instructions and messages, for example computer library catalogues, with some help. | CAN write down some information at a lecture, if this is more or less dictated. |
| ALTE Level 1 | CAN express simple opinions using expressions such as 'I don't agree'. | CAN understand the general meaning of a simplified text book or article, reading very slowly. | CAN write a very short simple narrative or description, such as 'My last holiday'. |
| ALTE Break-through Level | CAN understand basic instructions on class times, dates and room numbers, and on assignments to be carried out. | CAN read basic notices and instructions. | CAN copy times, dates and places from notices on classroom board or notice board. |

ALTE STUDY statements

Overview of concerns and activities

| CONCERN | ACTIVITY | ENVIRONMENT | LANGUAGE SKILL REQUIRED |
|---|--|---|--|
| Lectures, talks, presentations and demonstrations | 1. Following a lecture, talk, presentation or demonstration 2. Giving a lecture talk, presentation or demonstration | Lecture hall, classroom, laboratory, etc. | Listening/Speaking Writing (notes) |
| Seminars and tutorials | Participating in seminars and tutorials | Classroom, study | Listening/Speaking Writing (notes) |
| Textbooks, articles, etc. | Gathering information | Study, library, etc. | Reading Writing (notes) |
| Essays | Writing essays | Study, library, examination room, etc. | Writing |
| Accounts | Writing up accounts (e.g. of an experiment) | Study, laboratory | Writing |
| Reference skills | Accessing information (e.g. from a computer base, library, dictionary, etc.) | Library, resource centre, etc. | Reading Writing (notes) |
| Management of Study | Making arrangements, e.g. with college staff on deadlines for work to be handed in | Lecture hall, classroom study, etc. | Listening/Speaking Reading Writing |

Part 2

Relating the ALTE Framework to the Common European Framework of Reference

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1. Introduction

1.1 The ALTE Framework and the Council of Europe Framework

ALTE – The Association of Language Testers in Europe – is an association of providers of European foreign language examinations. Registered in 1992 as a European Economic Interest Group (EEIG), it provides a context for transnational collaboration between some of the major international providers in the field of language testing.

From the outset, one of ALTE's main aims has been to establish common levels of proficiency in order to promote the transnational recognition of certification in Europe. Work done in the furtherance of this aim is referred to as the ALTE Framework Project.

Through the Framework Project ALTE members have classified their examinations within a common system of levels. (An up-to-date list of exams can be found on the ALTE website: www.alte.org.) Beginning with general language proficiency exams, the Framework is being extended to cover exams for specific purposes, such as business. The Framework is currently a five-level system, but work is proceeding to define a lower level (Breakthrough in Council of Europe terms).

Members' exams have been classified within the Framework through an extended process of comparison, content and task analysis, including reference to external specifications such as the Council of Europe Waystage and Threshold levels (*Milanovic 1993, Milanovic and Saville 1995, Milanovic et al. 1997*). In the new area of computer-based testing a group of ALTE members are collaborating on projects which have already produced tests in several languages that report results in ALTE levels. From this work a statistically derived measurement scale is thus being developed to complement the existing analytical definition of the Framework.

The Framework aids interpretation. Relating examinations to a single common framework makes it easier to explain to end users of exam certificates, such as employers, exactly how to interpret that certificate. This makes qualifications more usable and thus increases people's potential mobility.

The ALTE 'Can Do' Project, which is introduced in greater detail below, is an important part of the work on the Framework. The 'Can Do' statements provide a comprehensive description of what language users can typically do with the language at different levels, in the various language skills and in a range of contexts (Social and Tourist, Work, Study). The 'Can Do' Project has a dual purpose: to help end users to understand the meaning of exam certificates at particular levels, and to contribute to the development of the Framework itself by providing a cross-language frame of reference.

The ALTE Framework and the Council of Europe Framework have much in common, and there are obvious benefits in relating them to each other in as simple and transparent a way as possible. This paper presents an account of work that has been done to relate the ALTE and the Council of Europe Frameworks to each other, which involves the alignment of three scales:

1. The ALTE 'Can Do scale', that is, a language proficiency scale defined through descriptions of typical abilities at each ALTE level;

2. The ALTE exam scale, that is, a language proficiency scale defined by performance in exams at each ALTE level. Relating the 'Can Do' and exam scales allows us to say: 'If you pass an ALTE exam at Level 3 you will typically be able to do x, y and z.'
3. The Council of Europe Framework.

Frameworks by their nature aim to summarise and simplify, identifying those features which are common to all language users and all situations of use, in order to provide a point of reference for particular users and particular situations of use. There is a balance to be sought here: a framework which is too high-level, abstract or general will be difficult to relate to any real-world situations, and will thus tend to be interpreted differently by anybody who seeks to make use of it. On the other hand, a framework which is too low-level, concrete and particular will run the risk of simply not corresponding to any real-world situation, because of the many ways in which these may vary.

Thus the approach taken in this paper, of taking a heterogeneous range of data and attempting to construct a single interpretative framework for it by fitting it to a particular statistical model, can be expected to throw some light on the limits of generalisability in building a descriptive framework for language proficiency.

1.2 The 'Can Do' project

The 'Can Do' Project is a long-term ALTE development which has received European Union Lingua funding for several stages since its inception in 1992.

The aim of the 'Can Do' Project is to develop and validate a set of performance-related scales, describing what learners can actually do in the foreign language. In terms of Alderson's (1991) distinction between constructor, assessor and user-oriented scales, the ALTE 'Can Do' statements in their original conception are user-oriented.

The 'Can Do' statements are multilingual, having been translated so far into thirteen of the languages represented in ALTE. These languages are: Catalan, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish. They constitute a frame of reference to which different language exams at different levels can potentially be related. They offer the chance to demonstrate equivalences between the exam systems of ALTE members, in meaningful terms relating to the real-world language skills of people achieving a pass in these exams.

1.2.1 Structure of the 'Can Do' statements

The 'Can Do' scales consist currently of about 400 statements, organised into three general areas: *Social and Tourist*, *Work*, and *Study*. These were judged to be the three main areas of interest for most language learners. Each includes a number of more particular areas, e.g. the Social and Tourist area has sections on *Shopping*, *Eating out*, *Accommodation*, etc. Each of these includes up to three scales, for the skills of *Listening/Speaking*, *Reading* and *Writing*.

Each such scale includes statements covering a range of levels. Some scales cover only a part of the proficiency range, as of course there are many situations of use which require only basic proficiency to be dealt with successfully.

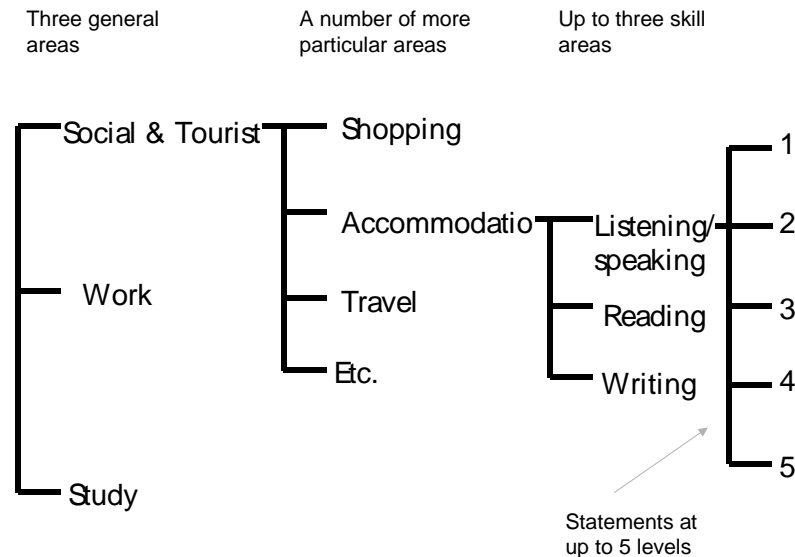


Figure 1: Structure of the ‘Can Do’ statements

The Social and Tourist area in particular draws on the Threshold level (1990). Table 1 gives an example of a ‘Can Do’ scale from the Work area.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Area: | Work |
| Activity | Requesting work-related services |
| Environment | Workplace (Office, factory etc) |
| Language skill | Listening/Speaking |
| 1 | CAN state simple requirements within own job area, for example ‘I want to order 25 of ...’. |
| 2 | CAN ask questions of a fact-finding nature, for example establishing what is wrong with a machine, and understand simple replies. |
| 3 | CAN put her/his point across persuasively when talking, for example about a familiar product. |
| 4 | CAN give detailed information and state detailed requirements within familiar area of work. |
| 5 | CAN argue his/her case effectively, justifying, if necessary, a need for service and specifying needs precisely. |

Table 1: Selected statements at Levels 1 – 5 from an example ‘Can Do’ scale

1.2.2 Development of the ‘Can Do’ statements

The original development process went through a number of stages (Milanovic and Saville 1995). Studies of ALTE users led to the specification of a range of candidate needs and major concerns. Draft statements were then trialled with teachers and students to evaluate relevance and transparency, and moderated in an iterative process.

The scales as developed above have then been empirically validated, in order to transform the 'Can Do' statements into a calibrated measuring instrument.

It is worth stressing that this is a major, long-term research undertaking. The construction and validation of such a large multilingual set of task descriptors requires a great deal of work, firstly of a qualitative nature, at the writing and translating stage. Empirical validation then requires the collection of a large amount of data. The aim is, after all, to construct a detailed, language-neutral description of functional levels of proficiency, which should apply equally well to the learning and use of foreign languages in all European countries, irrespective of which language the statements are expressed in, and which target language they are used to describe. This implies a two-dimensional matrix of first language by target language, with data available for each of the cells in the matrix. Evidently, some cells will be easier to fill than others, and it is not practical to collect equal amounts of data for each language; however, it is necessary to collect as wide a range of language data as possible. The project will also incorporate a growing number of languages, as new members and associate members translate and make use of the 'Can Do' statements.

A subsequent stage is to link the language exams of each ALTE member to the scale described by the 'Can Do' statements. Again, this process is expected to take a number of years, depending on the resources available to each ALTE member and the size, in terms of candidature, of their exams.

The 'Can Do' Project is believed to be the largest project of its type ever attempted, and the most ambitious in scope.

1.2.3 Data collection using questionnaires

So far, data collection has been based chiefly on self-report, the 'Can Do' scales being presented to respondents as a set of linked questionnaires. Nearly ten thousand respondents have completed questionnaires. For many of these respondents, additional data are available in the form of language exam results.

The decision to use questionnaires to collect data on the 'Can Do' statements had several important consequences. Firstly, the text of the 'Can Do' statements had to be organised appropriately. This meant deconstructing the original paragraph-length level descriptions into a larger number of shorter statements, of generally no more than one sentence. Then different forms of response were trialled. The form finally chosen elicited a Yes/No response to each statement, using the instruction:

Put ONE cross next to each statement. Tick YES if the statement describes your level, or if you can do BETTER than this. Tick NO if you CAN'T do what is described because it is TOO DIFFICULT for you.

In other words, respondents were asked to respond negatively to those statements which described a task beyond their capacity, and respond positively to everything else.

By choosing a Yes/No form of response, we placed the onus squarely on the respondents to decide whether or not they could do the task in question. We might have used a scalar form of response, allowing respondents to express degrees of confidence in their ability to do something, but we were not convinced that this would provide more information, or indeed solve the problem of deciding what 'can do' actually means.

In the end the meaning of 'can do' is something we will need to define explicitly, in terms of the probability of someone having a certain proficiency level being able to succeed on certain tasks. This topic is discussed in Part 2.3.2 below.

The use of self-report has implications for the relative difficulty of the 'Can Do' statements that make up the description of a level. This reflects entirely the perception of the respondents themselves – how they view their ability to manage in different situations. This goes, for example, for the relative difficulty of the language skills – speaking, reading, writing – or the relative difficulty of operating in a professional or a social setting.

The description of a level which emerges from combining all the statements that fall within that level will reflect this perception. If respondents find reading relatively easy, for example, it may be that the highest level description contains very few statements describing reading. The descriptions of proficiency which result from this approach must thus be seen as normative and descriptive of the typical pattern of abilities of a particular group of respondents. They are not intended to be absolute, prescriptive statements of what a level 'should' mean in terms of some set of criteria developed elsewhere. This has advantages if one considers how the ALTE Framework is intended to be used. A common use is to describe proficiency globally. An employer will advertise a post requiring, say, ALTE Level 3, because he expects that a person at that level will typically have the range of skills he needs. In designing general-purpose language proficiency exams, too, it makes sense to target typical profiles of ability – that is, ensure that the papers testing different language skills are experienced as being at a similar level of difficulty by the 'typical' candidate.

1.2.4 Comparison of ALTE 'Can Do' and Council of Europe statements

It is possible to attempt empirically to link the ALTE and Common European Frameworks, because the Common European Framework is itself originally based on empirical work (North 1996/2000, North and Schneider 1998, Council of Europe 1996).

The analysis reported here includes data from versions of questionnaires which contained statements taken from the Council of Europe Framework document (Council of Europe 1996). Statements were taken from:

- The self-assessment grid prepared for the European Language Portfolio, identified as 'Table 7' in Council of Europe 1996, 133;
- 16 statements from scales relating to spoken interaction ("Fluency"), identified as "excellent items" in North 1996/2000, 405-9.

'Table 7' consists of five scales for Listening, Reading, Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production and Writing. It was chosen because of its wide use in the context of the European Language Portfolio. The 'Fluency' statements had

been found to have stable difficulty estimates when measured in different contexts in the Swiss project. It was expected that they would provide a good link between the ALTE 'Can Do' statements and the Council of Europe Framework.

These Common European Framework statements represent the end product of an extended process of development, with each level description being a composite of carefully selected typical elements. Here is an example statement from 'Table 7':

I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works. (Writing, Level C2)

Here is an example 'Fluency' statement:

I can express myself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. (Fluency & Flexibility, Level C1)

As noted above, the 'Can Do' statements in their present form are relatively short, atomic statements. This is an important difference, which can be expected to complicate comparison.

2. Method and findings

2.1 Validation of the 'Can Do' statements

2.1.1 Structure of the response data

Questionnaires have generally been administered in the subjects' own first language, and so far mainly in European countries. Respondents have as far as possible been matched to appropriate questionnaires – the Work scales given to people using a foreign language professionally, the Study scales to respondents engaged in a course of study through the medium of a foreign language, or preparing to do so. The Social and Tourist scales are given to other respondents, while selected scales from this area have also been included in the Work and Study questionnaires as an anchor.

The use of anchor statements is necessary to enable the relative difficulty of the areas of use, and particular scales, to be established (for more on this see 0 below). The use of Social and Tourist scales as an anchor was based on the assumption that these areas call upon a common core of language proficiency and can be expected to provide a valid point of reference for equating the Work and Study scales. In the later data collection discussed in this paper the role of the anchor was taken over by statements from the Council of Europe illustrative scales.

The basic analysis approach is thus to bring all the data together into a single dataset, irrespective of the language in which the questionnaire was completed, and the target language which the respondent was describing. Analysis finds the line of best fit through all the responses, so that the difficulty of any statement reflects an averaging across all L1 and L2s in the

data. Having found this, then analysis of fit can be used to identify those statements that show differential item function – i.e. that particular groups respond to in a significantly different way.

2.1.2 Initial validation

Empirical work looked initially at the internal consistency of the 'Can Do' scales themselves, the aims being to verify how individual statements function within each 'Can Do' scale, to equate the different 'Can Do' scales to each other, i.e. establish the relative difficulty of the scales, and to investigate the neutrality of the 'Can Do' scales with respect to language. Main findings of this part of the work are summarized below.

The difficulty of individual statements was found to agree quite well with the original assignment to levels ($r = .78$). Where statements moved in difficulty this could often be explained by certain features of the statement. Features which generally made statements more difficult included the use of very specific exemplification, reference to a situation involving stress or heightened responsibility, and reference to a difficult channel of communication (e.g. the telephone). Features which generally made statements easier included generality or brevity.

Statements with explicit negative qualification ('CANNOT do ...') were found to perform badly, in that higher-level respondents reacted in the opposite way to that intended. The CANNOT qualification describes a lower level of proficiency – that is, an easier task – but higher-level respondents were reluctant to endorse such statements, with the result that they were found to be relatively more difficult than intended for these respondents. This was not unexpected, and reflected a problem specifically with using negatively oriented statements in a self-report questionnaire format.

Effects connected with first or target language, or other group effects, have been investigated as far as the present range of data permits. It appears that a number of statements vary in difficulty according to the respondent's first language (or the language of the questionnaire). Some of these effects have been linked to problems of translation, but others are less readily explained.

There also appear to be significant differences between certain target language groups, where learners of certain target languages may be relatively more or less confident of their communicative as opposed to receptive skills.

Work in this area will continue as more data become available.

An outcome of the first phase was a textual revision of the 'Can Do' statements, removing, in particular, statements with negative orientation, and adding new statements where a need was identified.

2.2 Relating the 'Can Do' statements to the Common European Framework

In 1999 responses were collected in which the original anchor statements taken from the Social and Tourist area were replaced by statements taken from the Council of Europe Framework document (1996 edition). Two sets of anchor items were used:

1. the grid of major categories of language use by level identified as 'Table 7';
2. 16 statements from scales relating to spoken interaction ('Fluency').

2.2.1 The anchor design

The anchor design is shown in Figure 2. For an explanation of anchoring see Part 5.4.

The diagonal sets of boxes in Figure 2 are the seven 'Can Do' questionnaire forms. They appear twice, once for the June and once for the December data collection. In June they each contained anchor statements taken from 'Table 7'; in December these were replaced by the Common European Framework 'Fluency' statements.

In both June and December, some of the respondents were also candidates for Cambridge English as a Foreign Language exams, and their exam grades could thus be compared with their responses.

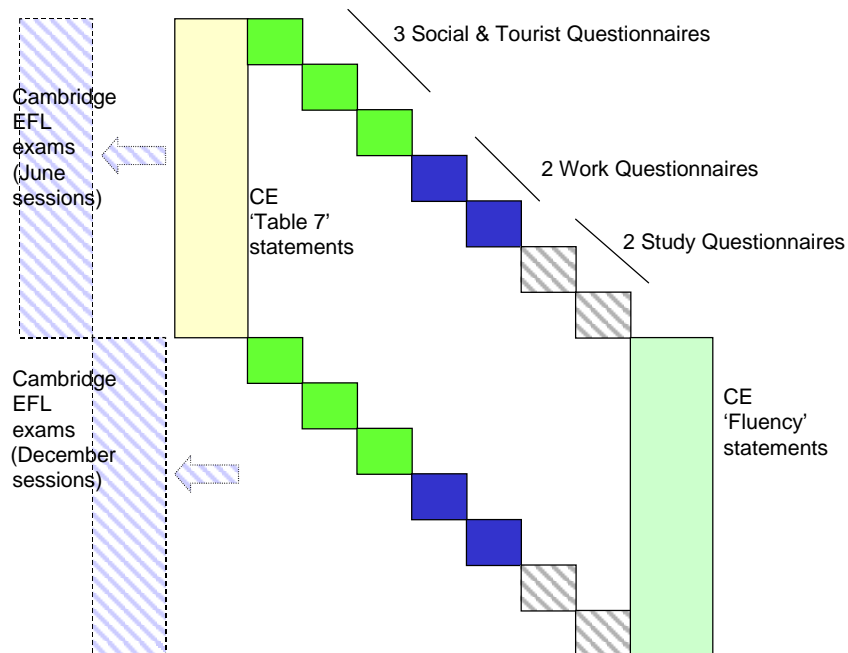


Figure 2: Anchor design for linking 'Can Do' questionnaires, Common European Framework statements and English as a Foreign Language exams

Figure 2 shows that the links in the data run vertically and horizontally. Thus the 'Can Do' questionnaires are linked to each other only indirectly, by the horizontal links to the accompanying Common European Framework statements. The Common European Framework 'Table 7' and 'Fluency' statements are linked to each other indirectly, via the 'Can Do' questionnaires, which are the same in both December and June.

The anchor design illustrated here includes only a subset of the available data, as the earlier questionnaires with their Social and Tourist anchors are left out of the picture. Although all of these data are relevant to working out a final equating of the 'Can Do' scales, this paper focuses on the more recent data and the link to exam grades and Common European Framework statements.

2.2.2 Cleaning the data: removing people and items

In Rasch analysis it is usual to try and improve the coherence of the data, and consequently the definition of the measurement scale, by removing misfitting responses. From separate analyses of the Fluency, Can Do and 'Table 7' sets about 350 misfitting respondents from the total 3,000 were identified and removed.

An investigation into the reason for misfit found that the only systematic effect related to age. As Figure 3 shows, it is respondents below the age of 18 that are most likely to misfit.

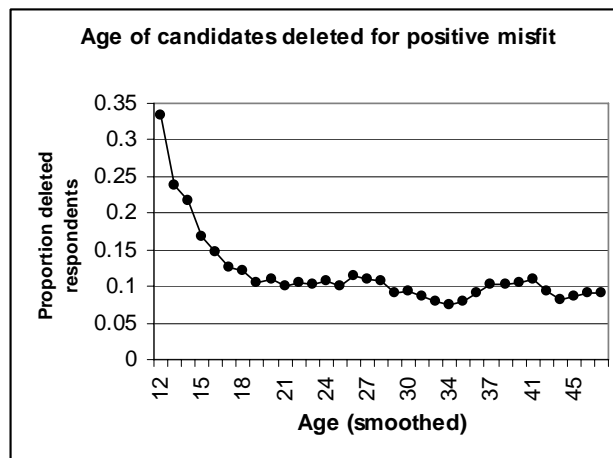


Figure 3: Age of deleted respondents (5-year moving average)

2.2.3 Linking 'Table 7' and the 'Fluency' statements

A separate analysis of the 'Fluency' statements was run to check the correlation of the difficulties found with those given by North (North 1996/2000). The correlation was high ($r = 0.97$). Difficulties were also found to be fairly stable across respondent groups. Thus these statements should constitute a good anchor between the 'Can Do' statements and the scales used to illustrate the Council of Europe Framework. One problem is that in the current analysis the highest level (C2) statements are not well distinguished from the level below (C1). This may be a general effect in these data, based on self-ratings.

An analysis of the whole data set was then run, to estimate difficulties of the 'Table 7' and 'Fluency' statements on the same scale. The difficulty estimated for the fluency statements was compared with the difficulty given by North in order to derive parameters for equating to the Common European Framework scale. The 'Table 7' statements were then plotted against the Common European Framework band cutoffs, as thus estimated, to compare the levels found with those intended.

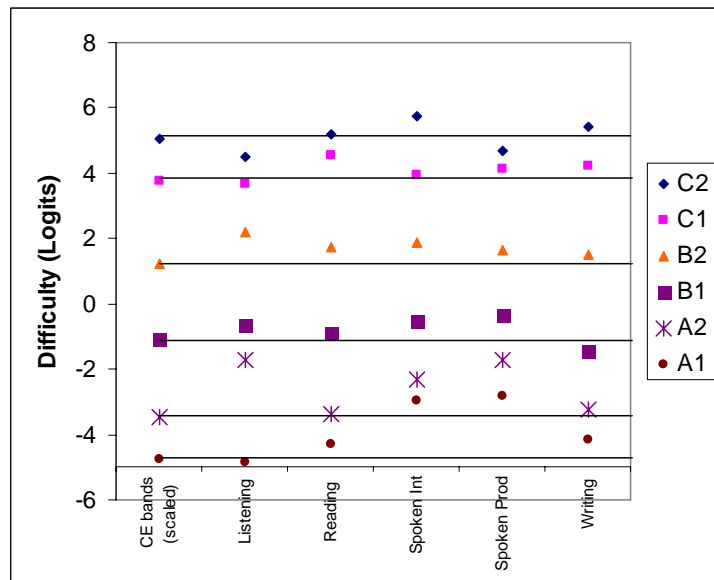


Figure 4: 'Table 7' statements equated to Common European Framework via 'Fluency' statements

Figure 4 shows the 'Table 7' statements against the Common European Framework level thresholds A1 to C2, as derived from the equating via the 'Fluency' statements. The logit values on the Y axis are shown as scaled to the metric of the present analysis.

'Table 7' contains five scales, each with one statement describing each CE level. It can be seen that there is generally very good correspondence between the intended level of these statements and that found in the analysis. Between A2 and C1, nearly all the statements fall in the intended level. At the highest level, respondents do not distinguish C2 so clearly from C1. At the lower end, two of the scales (Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production) do not have a clearly distinguished level A1.

2.2.4 Linking 'Can Do' statements to the Common European Framework scale

Having verified that the two sets of Council of Europe statements agreed quite well with each other, the difficulties estimated for the 'Can Do' statements were then used to group them by Council of Europe level. This tended to bunch them into the middle bands, indicating that the 'Can Do' statements in their present form operate on a shorter scale than the Council of Europe statements. The 'Can Do' difficulties were therefore scaled, using

the ratio of the spread of person abilities as estimated separately from 'Can Do' and Common European Framework statements. This spread out the 'Can Do' statements, approximating more closely the original assignment of 'Can Do' statements to ALTE levels. However, there remained fewer statements at the highest levels than in the original, analytical assignment of 'Can Do' statements to levels.

2.2.5 Linking the ALTE and Common European Framework levels

An assumption was made that Levels A2 and B2 (Waystage and Vantage) could be taken to correspond to ALTE Levels 1 and 3. These points were chosen because the ALTE Level 2 exams are explicitly modelled on the Council of Europe Waystage specification, and Vantage represents that rather well-understood intermediate level tested in English by the FCE exam.

The scale and the band cutoffs used in ALTE computer-adaptive testing projects were used as a working definition of the ALTE levels. The origins of this scale lie in work done over several years at Cambridge to establish the relative difficulty of UCLES EFL exams. The difficulty threshold of the passing grade on each exam (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, CPE) is taken as a provisional definition of the ALTE five-level system.

The ALTE and CE levels were equated by scaling to the two reference points (A2 = ALTE 1, B2 = ALTE 3) identified above. This allowed the relative position of the other bands to be compared, and allowed the Can Do statements to be grouped by ALTE level.

The two groupings of 'Can Do' statements (by ALTE level and by CE level) were found to be very similar.

2.3 Relating the 'Can Do' statements and Common European Framework to ALTE exams

2.3.1 Relation between exam grade and self-ratings

The data contain a link between 'Can Do' self-ratings and grades achieved in UCLES EFL exams at different levels. This analysis focused on the data collected in December 1999, which is linked to the versions of the 'Can Do' questionnaires which contained the CE 'Fluency' statements. 478 candidates completed questionnaires, almost half (213) being candidates for FCE.

Figure 5 shows the mean self-rating of candidates grouped by the exam grade which they achieved. The exams are ordered by level (KET = ALTE Level 1, CPE = ALTE Level 5). The grades shown for KET and PET are: P = Pass, and M = Pass with Merit. For the other exams the grades run from A down to C, with C being a pass.

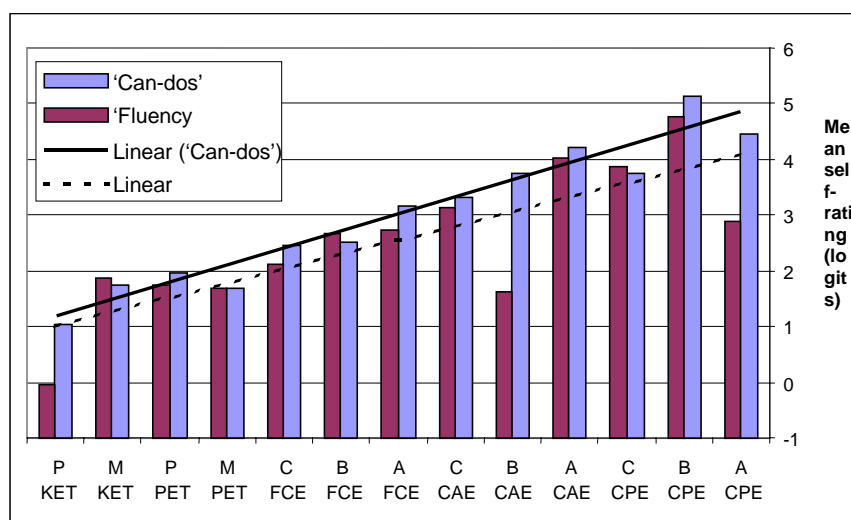


Figure 5: Mean self-ratings ('Can Do' statements, 'Fluency') by exam grade (December 1999 data)

Figure 5 shows self-ratings on the 'Can Do' statements and on the 'Fluency' statements separately estimated. A clear relationship is evident between self-rating and exam grade achieved (the odder values are due to very small numbers of candidates in particular groups).

Grouping on exam grade, a high correlation was found between mean self-ratings and exam grade achieved. Table 2 shows that the 'Can Do' ratings bear a slightly closer relation to exam grade achieved than do the 'Fluency' statements.

| | 'Cando' | 'Fluency' |
|------------|---------|-----------|
| Fluency | 0.86 | |
| exam level | 0.91 | 0.79 |

Table 2: Correlations between exam level, 'Can Do' and 'Fluency' self-ratings, grouping by exam level achieved

Summarised by exam group, the strength of the relationship between exam grade and self-rating of ability is clear. None the less, there is considerable variability in self-rating at the level of the individual respondent, and this weakens the individual correlation with exam grade. A simple prediction of one from the other is not supported by the present data.

2.3.2 Using a mastery criterion to define the meaning of 'Can Do'

The variability between self-rating and exam grade suggests that individuals understand 'can do' in different ways. To relate 'Can Do' statements to levels of proficiency it is necessary to define mastery of a level in terms of a specific probability of being able to perform particular tasks which describe that level. If self-ratings accurately reflect the true difficulty of tasks, then the probability of respondents at a given level endorsing statements which describe that level should be constant across all levels.

This idea was tested against the present data, grouping respondents by exam level (Pass grade candidates only), and grouping the 'Can Do' statements by ALTE level, as found in the equating described above.

Figure 6 shows that rather than remaining constant across levels, the probability of endorsing statements at the level of the exam drops steadily from 90% at Level 1 to less than 60% at Level 5. In this data, there is a mismatch between the notion of a criterion mastery level and the bandings of the Can Do statements.

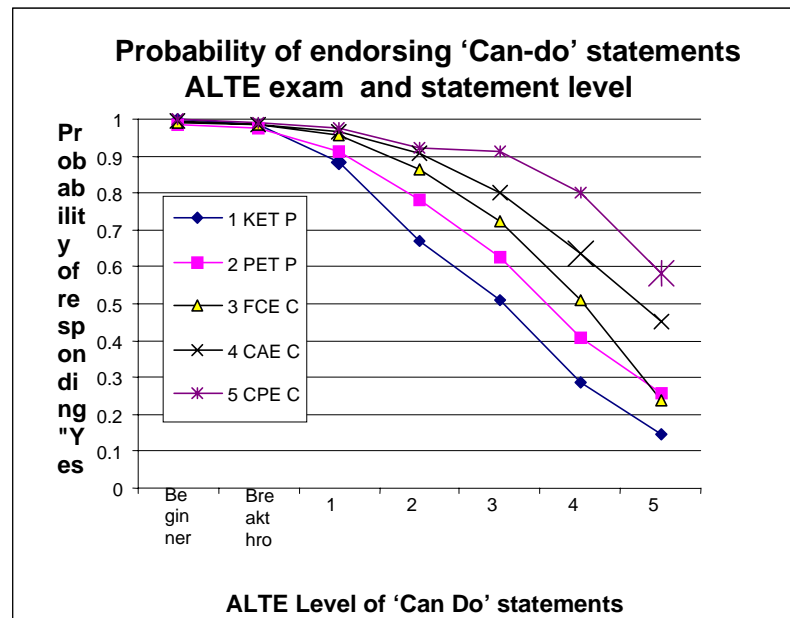


Figure 6: Probability of candidates endorsing 'Can Do' statements as assigned to ALTE levels by the equating process

3. Discussion

3.1 Effects related to respondent groups

The analysis reported here found that responses to both the ALTE and Common European Framework statements can vary across groups of respondents.

As noted above, it was found that age was a factor: the responses of young people were more likely to misfit. The 'Can Do' statements chiefly concern ability to operate in an adult world, and refer to tasks which children of school age would probably have had no experience of. Thus we can expect that their responses might be inconsistent, or differ from the pattern observed in the adult majority. We had not actually intended to elicit responses from this age group; these respondents were mostly candidates for Level 1 (KET) exams. This effect is therefore explicable, but it does indicate that a set of language proficiency level descriptors designed for adults may not be applicable without modification for use in schools. Group effects were also found when respondents were grouped by area: Social and Tourist, Work, and Study. Respondents to the Social and Tourist questionnaires tended to discriminate levels more finely than respondents to the Study questionnaires. This was true of responses to CE statements as well as ALTE Can Do statements. No demographic features of these

groups, or features related to their level or spread of language proficiency, as measured by exam grades, could be found to explain this.

As noted above, considerable variability was observed in self-ratings when compared to exam grade achieved. Some, though not a large part, of this variability appeared to be related to first language background, in that particular L1 groups tended to rate themselves relatively higher or lower. Evidence was found that respondents with a lower language proficiency level, as measured by exam grades, tend to rate themselves too generously. Candidates at higher levels, perhaps from the vantage point of a better understanding of the range of the foreign language and the difficulty of achieving perfection, seem prone to rate themselves more modestly. This would account for the pattern of responses found in 2.3.2 above and illustrated in Figure 6, where exam candidates achieving a pass at Level 1 have a 90% probability of endorsing Level 1 statements, while Level 5 candidates have a less than 60% probability of endorsing Level 5 statements.

3.2 Comparing the 'Can Do' and Common European Framework statements

In 2.2.4 above it was noted that the 'Can Do' statements in their present form operate on a shorter scale; that is, are less discriminating than the Common European Framework statements. This is not surprising, because the Common European Framework statements tend to be longer, and composed of pre-calibrated selected and grouped elements. This produces a very coherent pattern of responses, with a consequently longer scale. The 'Can Do' statements in the form used in the questionnaires are by contrast relatively short, atomic, statements, deconstructed from the original paragraph-length level descriptions. They do not 'epitomise' levels in the same way. A subsequent stage of development will group them again into more rounded, holistic descriptions of levels.

This difference means that to equate the 'Can Do' and Common European Framework scales a linear transformation is needed, to compensate for this difference in discrimination. The scaling adopted distributes the 'Can Do' statements more as expected, so that they cover every level. They range from the very easy, pre-Breakthrough level, e.g.:

CAN ask very simple questions for information, such as 'What is this?'

CAN understand 1 or 2 word answers.

to Level 5 (Council of Europe level C2), e.g.:

CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.

It is still the case that there are more 'Can Do' statements at the middle levels. This generally reflects the range of tasks and situations included in

the 'Can Do' statements. However, the relatively low number of tasks at ALTE levels 4 and 5 is not wholly consistent with the intention of the writers of the 'Can Do' statements.

As noted in 2.2.3 above, the highest-level "Fluency" statements were also not well distinguished in the analysis reported here. The problem of identifying 'Can Do' statements to describe high levels of proficiency may be specific to these response data, which are based on self-ratings.

3.3 Comparing self-ratings and exam grades

There is a close relationship between exam grade achieved and self-rating, both on the 'Can Do' and the Common European Framework 'Fluency' statements. Despite the fact that the 'Fluency' statements are more highly discriminating than the 'Can Dos', the 'Can Do' statements actually correlated more highly with exam grade. This effect is possibly due to the fact that the 'Can Do' statements, like the exams, embrace a broad range of language skills. 'Fluency' has a narrower focus.

At the level of the individual candidate the relationship between exam grade and self-rating is weaker, due to the considerable variability in respondents' overall perception of their own abilities. That is, people tend to understand 'can do' somewhat differently.

It is worth stressing that this is not a problem with the coherence of the 'Can Do' scales themselves (or the Common European Framework 'Fluency' scales, which behave in a generally similar way): people agree well about the relative difficulty of statements, and in consequence the measurement scales are clearly defined. The problem is probably a particular feature of the present data, based on self-report. Where ratings are supplied by experienced raters, using standardised procedures, then we can expect much higher correlations with exam grades. Further research using experienced raters will probably be necessary to fully characterise the relationship between exam grades and typical 'Can Do' profiles of ability.

4. Conclusions

The Council of Europe and ALTE have invested much effort in the development of Framework systems for describing language proficiency because they see that such systems meet the needs of language learners, language teachers, and end users of language qualifications.

This paper has discussed issues that arise in developing a framework, and more particularly, in relating different frameworks to each other. How concrete can a description of language levels be, while still being generalisable?

Implicit in this is the idea of context, of a target population of language users for whom the framework is intended to be relevant. The context of the work discussed in this paper is clearly European. This does not necessarily make it irrelevant to other contexts.

The work described here has adopted a measurement viewpoint: we have used Latent Trait methods to attempt to construct measurement scales, on

the understanding that features of interest to us can be adequately characterised as relating to unidimensional scales. By attempting to fit into this useful simplifying framework data from different instruments (CE statements, 'Can Do' statements, language exams) relating to different target areas of use, and collected from respondents from a variety of backgrounds, we are able to explore the limits of generalisability.

In this paper we have focused on a statistical approach to equating different assessment scales. This approach is useful. It enables us to verify and improve the internal consistency of each scale, and to see how the scales relate to each other, and whether they appear to measure the same general aspect of proficiency.

But the statistical approach is also useful precisely because it identifies problems with how people understand and use assessment scales. In this paper we have found evidence that a range of effects relating to groups of respondents – their age, first language, proficiency level, area of language use – may affect their understanding of a scale and of the meaning of level descriptors expressed in 'Can Do' terms. This complicates the task of relating scales to each other, but also has implications for the use of such descriptive frameworks.

The statistical approach must be complemented by a qualitative, analytical one. In the present case, an equating of the ALTE 'Can Do' scale to the ALTE Framework as defined by language exams, or to the Common European Framework, will be successful to the extent that the scaled statements accord with the judgement of qualified assessors, and the picture of language proficiency which well-constructed, communicatively oriented language exams provide.

The work described in this paper thus suggests that in order to construct and work with frameworks of language proficiency, the descriptive approach – even where based on empirical evidence – needs to be complemented by an approach based on assessment through formal systems of language examinations.

5. Appendix: An introduction to Rasch modelling

The approach followed in constructing the Can Do scale draws on *Latent Trait Theory* (Wright and Stone 1979, Hambleton et al. 1991, Henning 1987). It aims to construct a measurement scale for psychological traits such as language proficiency, in the same way that is possible for physical properties such as length, weight or temperature. We hypothesise that *ability* and *difficulty* are mutually defining properties which people and test tasks respectively possess in certain *quantities*. The probability of a person succeeding on a task is held to be a function of the difference between the ability of the person and the difficulty of the task (i.e. the greater the ability, the higher the probability of success). Figure 7 illustrates this with a test item and three people located on a scale. The person who is higher than the item is likely to succeed; the person who is lower is likely to fail. We have no expectation about the person at the same level as the item: he has a 50 per cent chance of success.

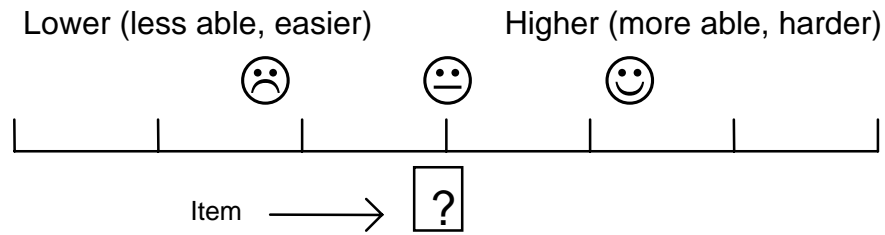


Figure 7: A logit scale with an item and three persons on it.

This function can take various mathematical forms, but the model used in the work reported here, as in the empirical work on the development of the CE scale, is a particularly robust and tractable one called the Rasch model. Given a set of responses by people to test items, we can estimate abilities and difficulties, and represent these as values on a measurement scale. The units of the measurement scale are called logits. The distance in logits between a person and an item implies a specific probability that the person would succeed on the item.

5.1 Assumption of a single dimension

As with all measurement in the strict sense, the model assumes that you are only attempting to measure one thing at a time (e.g. you can measure length, or weight, or temperature). However, psychological traits are always complex and to some extent multidimensional. We can treat language proficiency as a single dimension, or if necessary break it down, for example into separate dimensions by skill (reading, writing etc).

5.2 Length of a scale: discriminability

The more logits in a scale, the more shades of ability it discriminates. The length of a scale reflects two things:

1. The substantive range of ability of the population it relates to;
2. The discriminability of the trait being measured.

5.3 Model fit

As noted above, an assumption made is that responses depict a single dimension. This assumption is tested by an analysis of *model fit*, which identifies items or persons whose response patterns do not conform to what the model predicts. To the extent that responses reflect more than one dimension (for example, where different skills such as listening, reading or grammatical knowledge are assessed in a single test) then there will be less coherence in the pattern of responses, and consequently the scale will tend to be shorter.

A particular analysis of model fit is used to identify *groups* of persons who respond in a systematically different manner to particular items. For example, a group of French L1 respondents may find a particular test item significantly harder or easier (this is referred to as *Differential Item Function*, or DIF). This may indicate some feature of the item which makes French native speakers react differently to it.

5.4 Linking different data sets

The great advantage of using a latent trait approach is that it provides techniques for comparing different sets of data and linking them to a common scale. This process is known as *anchoring*. Anchoring depends on having a link, usually of common items, in the responses to be anchored. Figure 8 illustrates anchoring through the example of three tests linked by an anchor test. It represents a data matrix in which the responses to items are in the columns, and the responses of persons are in the rows. All the respondents completed the anchor test. The first third of them also completed Test A, the second third did Test B and the rest did Test C. We can directly link Tests A B and C to the Anchor, and indirectly, (via the Anchor) to each other.

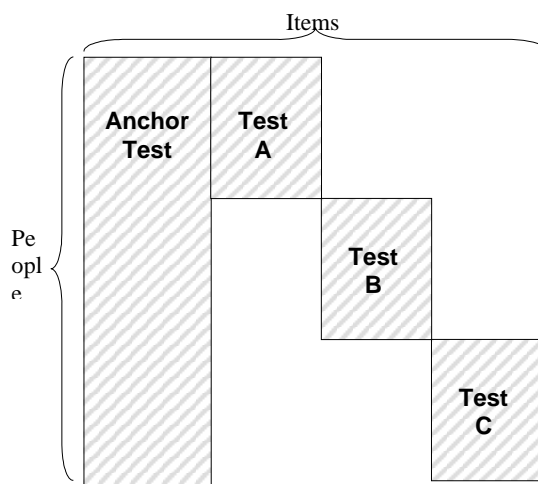


Figure 8: Responses to three tests linked by an anchor test

5.5 Scaling

Latent trait scales are linear, and so equating one scale to another involves a linear transformation of the values on one of the scales. The formula for a linear transformation is:

$$y = Ax + B$$

which means: to change each x value to a y value on the new scale, multiply it by A and add B . That is, the transformation may make the scale longer or shorter, as well as shift the values on it up or down by a constant amount. When anchoring using Rasch analysis, it is often sufficient to assume that the scale does not change in length – that is, that A has a value of 1. This should be the case where two tests measure the same skill using the same methods and are given to candidates from the same general population. However, where one test is more discriminating than another, it is possible that linear transformation will be necessary to put them both on the same scale.

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Part 3

Full set of ALTE Can Do statements

This is a provisional listing of the calibrated Can Do statements in English only.

Statements are grouped under three headings:

A: Social and Tourist

B: Work

C: Study

Each of these general areas comprises a number of particular concerns. Statements within each concern are first ordered by skill:

LS = Listening/Speaking

R = Reading

W = Writing

and within these are ordered by Council of Europe and ALTE level (ascending).

ALTE Levels relate to the Council of Europe Framework as follows:

| ALTE Level | Common European Framework Level |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0 (Breakthrough) | A1 |
| 1 | A2 |
| 2 | B1 |
| 3 | B2 |
| 4 | C1 |
| 5 | C2 |

This listing is made available pending completion and publication of the ALTE Can Do statements. Please do not quote in publication without seeking permission from UCLES.

The calibration of statements and their equating to ALTE/CEF levels represents the outcome of extensive empirical research, but minor revisions may yet be made as further data become available.

Further Can Do statements may also be added to these to improve description of particular areas or levels.

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Day-to-day survival 1 |
| Activity: | Shopping |
| Environment: | Self-service shops, counter service shops, market place |
| Language Skill: | Listening/Speaking |

CEF A1 CAN go to a department store or other shop where goods are on display and ask for what (s)he wants.
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN ask for what is required, if it is something which the shopkeeper can readily understand. CAN exchange basic information, related to place in the queue, etc., with other customers. CAN, where appropriate, bargain in the market place to a minimal extent, with the help of body language (fingers, nod/shake of head, etc.).
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN go to a counter service shop and ask for most of what (s)he wants. CAN understand where the shopkeeper explains the difference between two or more products all serving the same basic purpose. CAN bargain in the market place where what is purchased is a relatively straightforward item and where the transaction is restricted to the exchange of the item for cash.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN ask effectively for refund or exchange of faulty or unwanted goods. CAN bargain for what (s)he wants and reach an agreement.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN deal with complex or sensitive transactions, for example the export of an antique.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 1
Activity: Shopping
Environment: Self-service shops, counter service shops, market place
Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 CAN understand store guides (information on which floors departments are on) and directions (e.g. to where to find lifts).
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand price labels and a range of advertisements such as 'Special Offer' in a department store or counter service shop. CAN understand product labels at the level of 'Tissues', 'Toothpaste', etc.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN follow simple instructions given on packaging (e.g. cooking instructions on a packet of pasta).
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand operating instructions on appliances, e.g. an electric razor.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 2
Activity: Eating out
Environment: Restaurants, self-service establishments (Canteens, fast food etc.)

Language Skill: Listening /Speaking

CEF A1 CAN go to a self-service or fast food establishment and order a meal, especially where the food on offer is either visually illustrated or can be pointed to.
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN get the attention of staff in an appropriate way and order a meal in a restaurant. CAN ask simple questions about the menu and understand simple answers. CAN express an opinion about food. CAN make simple complaints, for example, 'The food is cold'.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN order a meal in a restaurant. CAN ask basic questions about the food in relation to the menu, and about the services available (e.g. use of credit cards, availability of high-chairs or half-portions for children). CAN ask basic questions about the food and understand most explanations that are likely to be given in such establishments (e.g. when a vegetarian or someone keeping dietary laws or forbidden certain foods for medical reasons has to check the contents of a dish). CAN make a complaint about straightforward matters, for example, the service or the bill.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN order a meal and ask for clarification about dishes on the menu. CAN maintain an interaction related to the nature and quality of the food. CAN understand most explanations of what is on the menu, but will require a dictionary for culinary terms. CAN complain effectively about most situations that are likely to arise in a restaurant.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 2
Activity: Eating out
Environment: Restaurants, self-service establishments (Canteens, fast food etc.)

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 CAN understand most descriptions of common dishes that are predictably available in self-service and fast food establishments, especially where such establishments are internationally known (e.g. MacDonalds).
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand most of what is on a standard menu, especially in restaurants where, by their nature, the menu is to a large extent predictable. CAN understand bills, e.g. whether service is included.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand a fairly wide range of items on a standard restaurant menu.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand a restaurant menu including a wide range of culinary terms.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 3
Activity: Hotel-type accommodation
Environment: Hotels, Bed & Breakfast, etc.

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough)
CAN ask simple questions of a factual nature and understand the answers provided these are expressed in simple language (for example, 'Where is the dining-room?' 'It's on the first floor', etc.). CAN make simple complaints, for example 'The water is cold'.

CEF A2
(ALTE 1)
CAN book a room (face-to-face) in a hotel, bed and breakfast, etc. CAN make a complaint about simple matters, for example 'The light in my room doesn't work.'

CEF B1
(ALTE 2)
CAN book a room in a hotel over the phone. CAN establish to his/her own satisfaction that the accommodation on offer fulfils all his/her needs. CAN deal with most situations likely to arise in a hotel, such as messages, ordering, etc.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3)
CAN argue/complain effectively about most problem areas that are likely to occur.

CEF C1
(ALTE 4)
N/A

CEF C2
(ALTE 5)
N/A

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 3
Activity: Hotel-type accommodation
Environment: Hotels, Bed & Breakfast, etc.

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 CAN understand basic hotel rules and signs, for example
(ALTE Breakthrough) 'Dining-room'. CAN understand basic hotel information, for example, times when meals are served.

CEF A2 CAN understand a simple letter as to the (non-)availability of
(ALTE 1) a hotel room. CAN understand advertisements and brochures for hotels.

CEF B1 CAN understand simple literature found in hotels on tours,
(ALTE 2) etc. CAN understand routine letters from a hotel.

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 3
Activity: Hotel-type accommodation
Environment: Hotels, Bed & Breakfast, etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN complete most forms related to personal information.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write a simple fax or letter enquiring as to the availability of accommodation, provided this is restricted to the booking of a room and similar matters. CAN write to a hotel in order to confirm accommodation, etc.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write most letters that (s)he will need in order to find satisfactory hotel or B & B accommodation.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN enquire about the availability of services, for example facilities for the disabled, or the provision of a special diet.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 4
Activity: Renting temporary accommodation
Environment: Agency, private landlord

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand the basics of renting a room/flat/house, for example the cost per week, simple rules for the use of a shared kitchen etc. CAN make a simple complaint, for example 'The cooker is broken. Can you replace it?' CAN establish to his/her own satisfaction that the accommodation on offer fulfils all his/her needs.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand the main points of a tenancy agreement, for example deposits, payment of bills etc., and ask straightforward questions about such matters. Can state requirements, e.g. installing a telephone. CAN argue/complain effectively about most problem areas that are likely to occur.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand a tenancy agreement in detail, e.g. technical details and their legal implications.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 4
Activity: Renting temporary accommodation
Environment: Agency, private landlord

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN locate accommodation advertisements in newspapers and on notice boards and understand prices, contact names and numbers and locations. CAN extract basic information from a tenancy agreement, for example cost per week.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand the main points of a tenancy agreement, provided that this is written in everyday language.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN deal with accommodation advertisements and understand most of the abbreviations and terms used.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand a tenancy agreement in detail, e.g. technical details and their legal implications.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 4
Activity: Renting temporary accommodation
Environment: Agency, private landlord
Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN complete most forms related to personal information.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write most letters that (s)he will need in order to find satisfactory accommodation.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 5
Activity: Settling into accommodation
Environment: Host families

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough) CAN understand straightforward explanations of, for example, the members of the host family and the layout of the house. CAN take part in a conversation of a basic factual nature on a predictable topic, i.e. her/his home country, family, school, etc.

CEF A2
(ALTE 1) CAN understand, and ask questions about, house rules/conventions, such as the time of meals. IS LIKELY to need explanation with demonstration and/or access to a dictionary for matters such as, for example, how to turn the hot water boiler on. CAN express opinions in a limited way. CAN take part in 'small talk' with peers.

CEF B1
(ALTE 2) CAN keep up a casual conversation for a reasonable period of time, provided that this is of a mainly familiar, predictable nature. CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3) CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, e.g. personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news. CAN handle most of the requirements of entertaining or being entertained. IS LIKELY to appear awkward when talking about complex or sensitive issues.

CEF C1
(ALTE 4) CAN keep up conversations of a casual nature for an extended period of time and discuss abstract/ cultural topics with a good degree of fluency and range of expression.

CEF C2
(ALTE 5) N/A

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 5
Activity: Settling into accommodation
Environment: Host families

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 CAN leave a simple message for host family saying, for example, where (s)he has gone, what time (s)he will be back (e.g. 'Gone to school: back at 5 p.m.).
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN write a short, simple letter introducing her/himself to a host/exchange family containing basic, factual information such as name, age etc. CAN write a note of thanks or congratulations.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 6
Activity: Using financial and postal services
Environment: Banks, post offices, bureaux de change
Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN ask for simple post office services (e.g. 'I want to send this to Oman', 'One first class stamp, please'). CAN ask to change money at a bank (e.g. 'Can I change these here?').
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN ask to open an account at a bank provided that the procedure is straightforward.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN ask questions related to different types of post office services and understand answers if sympathetically expressed. CAN understand (for example) routine explanations such as when statements will be issued, notice of withdrawal required on certain kinds of account etc. provided that the explanation is given simply.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN deal effectively with most routine transactions in a bank or post office.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 6
Activity: Using financial and postal services
Environment: Banks, post offices, bureaux de change
Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand where to go in a bank or post office by reading the signs
(ALTE 1) e.g. 'Queue here', 'Foreign Exchange'. CAN, with the help of bank personnel, complete a form, e.g. for the purpose of opening an account.

CEF B1 CAN understand messages on automatic cash machines. CAN
(ALTE 2) distinguish between personal and promotional mail from banks.

CEF B2 CAN understand most routine bank literature and written communications
(ALTE 3) received from a bank.

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Day-to-day survival 6
Activity: Using financial and postal services
Environment: Banks, post offices, bureaux de change
Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN fill in personal details on forms, e.g. to join a bank. CAN fill in a post office form (e.g. for sending a letter recorded delivery).
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Health
Activity: Getting / staying well
Environment: Chemist's, doctor's, hospital, dentist's

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN ask (face-to-face) for a medical appointment and understand the reply. CAN indicate the nature of a problem to a health professional, perhaps using gestures and body language. CAN understand simple questions and instructions, e.g. 'take this to a pharmacy', 'stay in bed'.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN ask over the phone for a medical appointment and understand the reply. CAN explain what is wrong in straightforward terms at a chemist's, doctor's, hospital or dentist's, especially if symptoms are visible. WILL require a dictionary to describe less obvious symptoms. CAN ask for advice and understand the answer, provided this is given in everyday language.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN enquire effectively about health services provided, entitlements and procedures involved.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN describe non-visible symptoms such as different kinds of pain, for example 'dull', 'stabbing', 'throbbing' etc.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Health
Activity: Getting / staying well
Environment: Chemist's, doctor's, hospital, dentist's
Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN extract basic information from the labels of off-the-shelf medicines, for example 'Not to be taken if driving', etc.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN identify an off-the-shelf medicine suitable for common complaints (for example a sore throat, a headache etc.) as sold by a chemist.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Travel
Activity: Arriving in a country, touring, getting / giving directions, hiring a car
Environment: Airport, port, railways / bus station, street, garage etc., travel agency, rental firm

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 CAN understand simple directions, e.g. 'turn left at the end of the road'.
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN, on arrival in a foreign country, answer routine questions such as 'How long are you staying?' and respond appropriately to instructions such as 'Open your suitcase', etc. CAN give and understand straightforward directions, provided that these are not lengthy and/or complex. CAN go to a travel information centre at, for example, a railway/bus station and ask for information as to how to get from A to B. CAN ask to book tickets.

CEF B1 CAN go to a rental firm and ask to hire a car, boat etc. CAN understand basic information such as cost per hour/day. CAN deal with most routine situations likely to arise when either making travel arrangements through a travel agent or when actually travelling (e.g. buying tickets, checking in at an airport).

CEF B2 CAN deal with most situations likely to arise when hiring a car/boat etc.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand detailed, complex conditions of hire, e.g. conditions relating to break-down or theft of a hired car.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Travel
Activity: Arriving in a country, touring, getting / giving directions, hiring a car
Environment: Airport, port, railways / bus station, street, garage etc., travel agency, rental firm

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand timetables, flight arrival and departure screens, etc. CAN understand simple forms, for example landing-cards, required for entry into a foreign country. CAN understand information given in brochures and maps.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand information given in guide books.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand the main points of a car rental agreement.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand a car rental agreement in detail.
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Travel
Activity: Arriving in a country, touring, getting / giving directions, hiring a car
Environment: Airport, port, railways / bus station, street, garage etc., travel agency, rental firm

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN complete standard forms such as landing-cards
(ALTE 2) required when travelling.

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Emergencies |
| Activity: | Dealing with emergency situations (accident, illness, crime, car breakdown, etc) |
| Environment: | Public places, private places, hospital, police station |
| Language Skill: | Listening/Speaking |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN call an emergency number, give location and ask for relevant service.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN indicate nature of problem and understand simple instructions and questions.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN give a report of an emergency incident, e.g. describe the circumstances of a theft to the police, give details of vehicle breakdown.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Emergencies |
| Activity: | Dealing with emergency situations (accident, illness, crime, car breakdown, etc) |
| Environment: | Public places, private places, hospital, police station |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand notices describing emergency services and how to call them.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN read, understand and give approval to a police statement.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Sightseeing
Activity: Getting information, going on tours, showing people round
Environment: Tourist office, travel agency, tourist sights, towns/cities/schools/colleges /universities

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN ask for and understand the required information from a tourist office, provided this is of a familiar, non-specialised nature. CAN understand the outline of simple information given on a guided tour in a predictable situation, for example 'This is Buckingham Palace, where the Queen lives'. CAN give simple explanations about familiar places.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand the general outline of a guided tour where the type of place visited (cathedral, art gallery etc.) is familiar. CAN answer questions of a routine nature and provide simple explanations.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand most of what is said on most guided tours. CAN ask for clarification and further explanation, and is likely to understand the answer.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN show visitors round and give a detailed description of a place.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Sightseeing
Activity: Getting information, going on tours, showing people round
Environment: Tourist office, travel agency, tourist sights, towns/cities/schools/colleges/universities

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 CAN understand key points, such as dates, departure times and costs, in a brochure or leaflet in a tourist information centre.
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand the main points of information given on posters. CAN understand what the principal attractions of a city, area etc. are, as described in a brochure or leaflet. CAN understand public signs.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand most tourist brochures, guidebooks etc. CAN read descriptive notes on museum exhibits, and explanatory boards in exhibitions.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 N/A
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Socialising
Activity: Casual meeting / getting on with people, entertaining
Environment: Discos, parties, schools, hotels, campsites, restaurants etc., Home, away from home

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN socialise casually, by taking part in routine, predictable
(ALTE 1) conversations e.g. at discos, in hotels etc.

CEF B1 CAN participate in a conversation in a casual or semi-formal situation for
(ALTE 2) a short time.

CEF B2 CAN keep up a conversation on a fairly wide range of topics, e.g.
(ALTE 3) personal and professional experiences, events currently in the news.
CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters, and defend them.

CEF C1 CAN participate in casual conversations with appropriacy and good
(ALTE 4) understanding of humour, irony and implicit cultural references. CAN
pick up nuances of meaning/opinion.

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | The media / cultural events |
| Activity: | Watching TV, films, plays etc., listening to the radio, reading newspapers, journals etc. |
| Environment: | Home, car, cinema, theatre, son et lumière, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Listening |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN follow the plot of a film or play where action clearly illustrates the dialogue, for example a 'western'. CAN identify the main topic of, for example, a news broadcast on TV where there is a strong visual element.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand most of what is said in a TV or radio programme, or in a film.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN understand in detail an argument in a discussion programme.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | The media / cultural events |
| Activity: | Watching TV, films, plays etc., listening to the radio, reading newspapers, journals etc. |
| Environment: | Home, car, cinema, theatre, son et lumière, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN identify topics of TV programmes, etc., especially if helped by visual clues. CAN identify the sections of a newspaper. CAN understand the general meaning of a newspaper report of events, where the topic is known and there is a high level of predictability.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand a factual article or report in a newspaper/magazine.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand opinions where these are simply expressed. CAN read the media for information quickly and with good understanding.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN understand complex opinions/arguments as expressed in serious newspapers.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Personal contacts (at a distance) |
| Activity: | Reading and writing letters, postcards, etc |
| Environment: | Home, away from home |
| Language Skill: | Listening/Speaking |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| CEF A1 (ALTE Breakthrough) | CAN understand simple phone messages, e.g. 'We're arriving tomorrow at half past four'. |
| CEF A2 (ALTE 1) | CAN understand a simple phone message and confirm details of the message. |
| CEF B1 (ALTE 2) | CAN participate in a simple phone conversation with a known person on a predictable topic, e.g. travel arrangements. |
| CEF B2 (ALTE 3) | CAN participate in casual conversation over the phone with a known person on a variety of topics. |
| CEF C1 (ALTE 4) | N/A |
| CEF C2 (ALTE 5) | N/A |

Category A: Social and Tourist

Concern: Personal contacts (at a distance)
Activity: Reading and writing letters, postcards, etc.
Environment: Home, away from home

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 CAN understand simple information, for example, from a prospective
(ALTE Breakthrough) pen friend (e.g. 'My name is Anita. I'm 16 and I go to school at ...').

CEF A2 CAN understand a letter which describes people or events. CAN
(ALTE 1) understand ideas and opinions if they are stated simply. CAN understand opinions simply expressed, for example 'I don't like football.'

CEF B1 CAN understand a letter expressing personal opinions.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand what is said in a personal letter, even where colloquial
(ALTE 3) language is used.

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category A: Social and Tourist

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Personal contacts (at a distance) |
| Activity: | Reading and writing letters, postcards, etc. |
| Environment: | Home, away from home |
| Language Skill: | Writing |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN write simple letters of the 'Thank you' type. CAN convey personal information of a routine nature to, for example, a pen friend, and CAN express opinions of the 'I don't like..' type.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write letters of a generally routine nature. CAN write simple letters relating facts and events.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN express opinions and give reasons. CAN write letters of thanks, sympathy and congratulations.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN write letters on any subject with good expression and accuracy.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Work-related services 1
Activity: Requesting work-related services
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.)

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough)
CAN understand simple replies, for example 'Yes. We will deliver on Friday.'

CEF A2
(ALTE 1)
CAN state simple requirements within own job area, for example 'I want to order 25 of'. CAN exchange opinions on familiar, predictable matters, for example, involving straightforward discussions of the 'This is better because...' type.

CEF B1
(ALTE 2)
CAN state routine requirements within own area of work (e.g. asking for typing to be done). CAN ask questions of a fact-finding nature, for example establishing what is wrong with a machine, and understand simple replies.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3)
CAN put her/his point across persuasively when talking, for example about a familiar product.

CEF C1
(ALTE 4)
CAN give detailed information and state detailed requirements within familiar area of work. CAN argue his/her case effectively, justifying, if necessary, a need for service and specifying needs precisely.

CEF C2
(ALTE 5)
CAN ask questions outside own immediate area of work (e.g. asking for external legal or financial advice).

Category B: Work

Concern: Work-related services 1
Activity: Requesting work-related services
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.)

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough) CAN write a simple routine request to a colleague, of the 'Can I have 20 x, please?' type.

CEF A2
(ALTE 1) CAN write a short, comprehensible note of request to a colleague or known contact in another company.

CEF B1
(ALTE 2) CAN write requests for goods, services, etc. on a range of routine matters, but MAY need to get these checked.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3) N/A

CEF C1
(ALTE 4) CAN deal with all routine requests for goods or services.

CEF C2
(ALTE 5) CAN handle a wide range of routine and non-routine situations in which professional services are requested from colleagues or external contacts.

Category B: Work

Concern: Work-related services 2
Activity: Providing work-related services
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Customer's home

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand simple instructions such as 'Send this letter to Ms X'. CAN take and pass on simple messages of a routine kind, for example 'Fri. Mtg. 10 a.m. CAN offer some help to a client/customer, for example, 'I'll give you our new catalogue'.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN greet a visitor and engage in a limited conversation for a short period of time, for example enquiring about a visitor's journey, hotel etc. CAN deal with predictable requests from a visitor, for example 'Can you arrange a taxi for the airport?' CAN take a routine order, provided that this is restricted to matters such as quantity, delivery date, etc. CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters (e.g. 'This model will give you better copies, but it is more expensive').
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN take dictation provided that the dictation is delivered clearly, at a reasonable pace and the opportunity is given to check what has been dictated. IS LIKELY to have to check some of the vocabulary dictated. CAN take and pass on most messages that are likely to require attention during a normal working day.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN answer questions outside own immediate area of work. CAN engage in an extended conversation with a visitor on matters within her/his authority/competence. CAN give detailed information and deal with most routine problems that are likely to arise.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN advise on/handle complex, delicate or contentious issues, e.g. legal or financial situations.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Work-related services 2
Activity: Providing work-related services
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Customer's home

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN make notes for his/her own purposes. CAN note down simple, predictable instructions/requests, for example the quantity required by a client, delivery date etc.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN record a routine order with little risk of inaccuracy, provided that the opportunity is given to check the order against the client's wishes. CAN make notes on routine matters, such as taking/placing orders. CAN make notes for his/her own use on non-routine matters, such as a customer's requests.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN make notes for her/his own purposes with little risk of substantial inaccuracies, provided that the subject matter is familiar and predictable. CAN make notes while a customer/client is talking.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN take reasonably accurate notes during meetings.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make full and accurate notes on all routine meetings.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Meetings and seminars
Activity: Participating in meetings and seminars
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Conference centre

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN express opinions in simple terms, for example, 'I don't agree', provided that the question/issue has been put clearly and simply.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand most of what takes place. CAN make a limited contribution to meetings on practical matters, for example problem-solving, where the level of language employed is relatively simple. CAN express her/his own opinion, and present arguments to a limited extent.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work. CAN follow discussion and argument with only occasional need for clarification. MAY NOT always know appropriate technical terms, but possesses good compensation strategies to overcome inadequacies.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN argue effectively for or against a case, and has sufficient language to be able to talk about/discuss most aspects of her/his work.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Meetings and seminars
Activity: Participating in meetings and seminars
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Conference centre

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN make notes on unfamiliar matters.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make full and accurate notes and continue to participate in a meeting or seminar.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Formal presentations and demonstrations
Activity: Following and giving a presentation or demonstration
Environment: Conference centre, exhibition centre, factory, laboratory etc.

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand the general meaning of a presentation made at a conference if language is simple and backed up by visuals or video.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN follow a simple presentation/demonstration and understand explanations with reference to a product or topic within own area of expertise.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN follow a presentation/demonstration concerning a physical object, e.g. a product. CAN ask for factual information and understand the answer. CAN give a simple, prepared presentation/demonstration on a familiar topic, for example a product, and answer most questions of a factual nature about it. CAN answer predictable questions.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN deal with unpredictable questions.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN both follow and give a presentation, demonstration or explanation of, for example, a product or system, dealing with information of a complex nature.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Formal presentations and demonstrations
Activity: Following and giving a presentation or demonstration
Environment: Conference centre, exhibition centre, factory, laboratory etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN make notes on unfamiliar matters, but IS LIKELY to make notes which contain inaccuracies, particularly where the presentation continues while note-taking takes place. Such notes may not be comprehensible or complete.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN make notes on most matters likely to arise during a presentation/demonstration within own area of expertise.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make notes that are useful to both her/himself and to colleagues, even where the subject matter is complex and/or unfamiliar.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Correspondence |
| Activity: | Understanding and writing faxes, letters, memos, e-mail, etc. |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand and act on a standard letter, for example an order, within own work area. CAN recognize and understand at least partially the general meaning of a non-routine letter within own work area.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN deal with routine letters. CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters, and understand most of the content.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN understand correspondence expressed in non-standard language.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand correspondence, including letters etc. of a specialist nature, for example those dealing with legal points, contracts and similar specialist letters.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Correspondence |
| Activity: | Understanding and writing faxes, letters, memos, e-mail, etc |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) |
| Language Skill: | Writing |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN leave a simple message giving information on e.g. where he/she has gone, what time he/she will be back.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write straightforward, routine letters of a factual nature, for example a letter of enquiry; but her/his work will require to be checked.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write a non-routine letter where this is restricted to matters of fact.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN write most letters (s)he is likely to be asked to do; such errors as occur will not prevent understanding of the message. (Letter types are, for example: enquiry, request, application, complaint, apology, giving advice, asking for and giving information).
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN write any type of letter necessary in the course of his/her work.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Reports (of substantial length and formality)
Activity: Understanding and writing reports
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.)

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand a short report on a familiar matter, provided that it is clearly expressed in simple language, the contents are predictable, and enough time is given.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand most short reports of a predictable nature that (s)he is likely to meet, provided enough time is given.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand the general meaning of a report even if the topic is not entirely predictable.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN, within a reasonably short time, understand most reports that (s)he is likely to come across.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand the reports that (s)he is likely to come across, including the finer points, implications etc. of a complex report.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

Concern: Reports (of substantial length and formality)
Activity: Understanding and writing reports
Environment: Workplace (office, factory, etc.)

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write a simple report of a factual nature and begin to evaluate, advise etc.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN write a report that communicates the desired message. WILL need more time to write the report than a native speaker would.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN write quite lengthy reports with only the occasional, minor error, and without taking much longer than a native speaker.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Publicly available information |
| Activity: | Getting relevant information from e.g. product literature, professional and trade journals, advertisements etc. |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Home |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand a short product description within own work area, provided that this is expressed in simple language and does not contain unpredictable detail.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand basic, factual information within own work area, for example from plans and diagrams. CAN understand the general meaning of a theoretical article within own work area.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand most factual product literature within own work area.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN understand at least the general meaning of more complex articles without serious misunderstanding.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN understand most articles likely to be encountered during the course of her/his work, including complex ideas expressed in complex language.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Instructions and guidelines |
| Activity: | Understanding notices (e.g. Safety), understanding and writing instructions (e.g. in installation or maintenance manuals) |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand instructions, given some means of checking understanding, as long as they are simple, brief and illustrated in some way. CAN understand standard notices at work, for example safety instructions, where these are expressed in the form of a command.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand instructions, for example in a manual, in the form of a continuous text, provided that (s)he is familiar with the type of product, equipment etc. being explained. CAN understand instructions, procedures etc. within own job area.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN understand the intention of instructions etc. outside own immediate job area.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN understand instructions giving detailed warnings, advice, conditions etc.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Concern: | Instructions and guidelines |
| Activity: | Understanding notices (e.g. Safety), understanding and writing instructions (e.g. in installation or maintenance manuals) |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.) |
| Language Skill: | Writing |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write a continuous set of instructions, for example a section of an operating manual, provided that they are simple and of limited length.
(ALTE 3) WILL need to have work checked.

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN write a set of instructions with clarity and precision, addressing the reader effectively.
(ALTE 5)

Category B: Work

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Telephone |
| Activity: | Making outgoing calls, receiving incoming calls, taking messages / writing notes |
| Environment: | Workplace (office, factory, etc.), Home, hotel room, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Listening/Speaking |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN receive simple messages. CAN make an outgoing call and pass on simple, prepared messages, for example 'Mr X's flight is late; he will arrive this afternoon'.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN take more complex messages, provided that the caller dictates these clearly and sympathetically.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN take or leave routine messages, ask for clarification or elaboration where these are not expressed clearly, with only occasional misunderstanding of facts.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN use the telephone for most purposes.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN use the telephone confidently, even if the line is bad or the caller has a non-standard accent.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Lectures, talks, presentations and demonstrations 1
Activity: Following a lecture, talk, presentation or demonstration
Environment: Lecture hall, classroom, laboratory, etc.

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough)
CAN ask very simple questions for information, such as 'What is this?'.
CAN understand 1 or 2 word answers.

CEF A2
(ALTE 1)
CAN follow a very simple presentation or demonstration, provided that it is illustrated with concrete examples or diagrams, there is repetition and the field is familiar. CAN understand some parts of a lecture, if the speaker makes careful adjustments for non-native speakers.

CEF B1
(ALTE 2)
CAN understand the general meaning of a lecture, demonstration or presentation on a familiar or predictable topic, where message is clearly expressed in simple language.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3)
CAN ask questions, for example for reasons, clarification etc.

CEF C1
(ALTE 4)
CAN follow much of what is said in a lecture, presentation or demonstration. CAN make decisions about what to note down and what to omit as the lecture proceeds. CAN ask detailed questions.

CEF C2
(ALTE 5)
CAN follow a lecture, presentation or demonstration with good understanding CAN follow abstract argumentation, for example the balancing of alternatives and the drawing of a conclusion. CAN make appropriate inferences when links or implications are not made explicit. CAN get the point of jokes or allusions with cultural content.

Category C: Study

Concern: Lectures, talks, presentations and demonstrations 1
Activity: Following a lecture, talk, presentation or demonstration
Environment: Lecture hall, classroom, laboratory, etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write down some information at a lecture, if this is more or less dictated (for example further reading matter) or written on the board.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN begin to make notes in second/foreign language that will be of some limited use for essay or revision purposes.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN make notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make accurate and complete notes during the course of a lecture, which meet requirements.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Lectures, talks, presentations and demonstrations 2
Activity: Giving a lecture, talk, presentation or demonstration
Environment: Lecture hall, classroom, laboratory, etc.

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand and answer simple predictable questions.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN give a short, simple presentation or demonstration on a familiar topic.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN give a clear presentation on a familiar topic, and CAN answer predictable or factual questions.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN rebut criticisms without causing offence.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN give coherent explanations of a theoretical nature. CAN generally handle questions confidently. CAN answer unpredictable questions of a factual nature.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Seminars and tutorials
Activity: Participating in seminars and tutorials
Environment: Classroom, study

Language Skill: Listening/Speaking

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN ask simple questions and understand simple answers. CAN express simple opinions using expressions such as 'I don't agree'.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN take a limited part in a seminar or tutorial, provided that this is conducted sympathetically, using simple language. CAN ask for clarification, but this needs to be given sympathetically in order for it to be understood.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN present her/his own opinion, and justify opinions. CAN distinguish main themes from irrelevancies and asides.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN follow the development of a discussion during a seminar. CAN follow up questions by probing for more detail. CAN reformulate questions if misunderstood. CAN make critical remarks / express disagreement without causing offence.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN take an active part in most kinds of seminars or tutorials. IS LIKELY to understand cultural references. CAN deal with hostile questioning confidently. CAN get and hold on to his/her turn to speak. CAN rebut counter-arguments. CAN understand jokes, colloquial asides and cultural allusions.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Seminars and tutorials
Activity: Participating in seminars and tutorials
Environment: Classroom, study

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN write down some information, provided that this is more or less dictated (for example, further reading matter) and time is given for writing.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 N/A
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN make notes that will be of some limited use for essay or revision purposes, but IS UNLIKELY to be able to take notes accurately unless time is given to write them down.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN make notes that are of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make accurate and complete notes during the course of a seminar or tutorial.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Textbooks, articles, etc.
Activity: Gathering information
Environment: Study, library, etc.

Language Skill: Reading

CEF A1
(ALTE Breakthrough)
CAN understand the general meaning of a simplified textbook or article, reading very slowly.

CEF A2
(ALTE 1)
CAN understand simple textbooks, articles etc., understanding most key points. CAN follow simple argumentation. CAN understand visuals if they are predictable and if understanding depends on simple keys that can be looked up in a dictionary.

CEF B1
(ALTE 2)
CAN understand simple visuals on familiar topics, e.g. a weather map, if not much explanatory text is involved. CAN understand, given sufficient time, most information of a factual nature that (s)he is likely to come across during the course of study.

CEF B2
(ALTE 3)
CAN understand most visuals that (s)he is likely to come across, but MAY sometimes have difficulty with textual commentary.

CEF C1
(ALTE 4)
CAN handle most textbooks, articles etc., within own area of expertise. CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text.

CEF C2
(ALTE 5)
CAN read quickly enough to cope with the demands of an academic course. CAN understand abstract concepts and argumentation. CAN scan texts for relevant information, and grasp main topic of text, reading almost as quickly as a native speaker.

Category C: Study

Concern: Textbooks, articles, etc.
Activity: Gathering information
Environment: Study, library, etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN make notes from simple sources that will be of some limited use
(ALTE 2) for essay or revision purposes.

CEF B2 CAN make simple notes that are of reasonable use for essay or
(ALTE 3) revision purposes, capturing most important points.

CEF C1 CAN make useful notes from written sources, capturing abstract
(ALTE 4) concepts and relationships between ideas. CAN select the most salient and relevant ideas and represent them clearly and briefly.

CEF C2 CAN paraphrase or summarize effectively. CAN make notes
(ALTE 5) selectively, abbreviating sentences successfully.

Category C: Study

Concern: Essays
Activity: Writing essays
Environment: Study, library, examination room etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write a simple narrative or description, for example, 'My last holiday', with some inaccuracies in vocabulary and grammar.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN present arguments, using a limited range of expression (vocabulary, grammatical structures).
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN write an essay with only occasional difficulties for the reader, whose message can be followed throughout.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN write an essay that shows an ability to communicate with few difficulties for the reader. The essay shows a good organizational structure, which enables the message to be followed without much effort. CAN write with an understanding of the style and content appropriate to the task. CAN produce text which is proof-read and laid out in accordance with relevant conventions. CAN present and support arguments well. IS UNLIKELY to make more than occasional errors of grammar, vocabulary or punctuation.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

Concern: Accounts
Activity: Writing up accounts (e.g. of an experiment)
Environment: Study, laboratory, etc.

Language Skill: Writing

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN write a simple account of an experiment (methods, materials).
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN write an account of an experiment and demonstrate basic understanding of work done. CAN explain results in practical terms.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN write an account of an experiment with only occasional errors, and support conclusions adequately.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN write a fully adequate account of an experiment, present a theoretical background and draw conclusions. CAN use conventional report structure. CAN display sensitivity to the conventions of presentation and 'politeness' (impersonal style, appropriate use of modality to reflect the degree of confidence with which the conclusions are presented).
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Reference skills |
| Activity: | Accessing information (e.g. from a computer database, library, dictionary, etc.) |
| Environment: | Library, resource centre, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN assess whether a textbook or article is within the required topic area. CAN understand basic instructions and messages on e.g. computer library catalogues, with some help.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN use a bilingual dictionary and establish the first language equivalent of concrete words. CAN follow central ideas in abstracts.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN assess the relevance of most textbooks and articles within own subject area of study. CAN scan articles, textbooks etc. in own or related areas of study to form reliable judgements as to their relevance / usefulness, at a moderate speed.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make full and effective use of dictionaries for productive and receptive purposes. CAN interpret multiple entries and understand cultural nuances. CAN assess appropriacy of source material quickly and reliably. CAN access all sources of information quickly and reliably.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Reference skills |
| Activity: | Accessing information (e.g. from a computer database, library, dictionary, etc.) |
| Environment: | Library, resource centre, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Writing |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN make simple notes from written sources.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN make notes from simple sources that will be of some limited use for essay or revision purposes.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN select the most salient and relevant ideas and represent them clearly and briefly.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 CAN make useful notes from written sources, capturing abstract concepts and relationships between ideas. CAN paraphrase and summarize effectively.
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Management of study |
| Activity: | Making arrangements, e.g. with college staff on deadlines for work to be handed in |
| Environment: | Lecture hall, classroom, study, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Listening/Speaking |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN understand basic instructions on class times, dates and room numbers, and on assignments to be carried out. CAN check instructions with teacher or lecturer by virtually repeating them.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN understand instructions on classes and assignments given by teacher or lecturer.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN check that all instructions are understood.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 CAN make all necessary arrangements regarding practical arrangements for study in or out of classroom with teachers, lecturers, lab and library staff, etc.
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Management of study |
| Activity: | Making arrangements, e.g. with college staff on deadlines for work to be handed in |
| Environment: | Lecture hall, classroom, study, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Reading |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 N/A
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN read basic details of arrangements such as lecture, class and exam times, dates and room numbers from classroom boards or notice boards.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN read all information related to practical arrangements for study which teachers or lecturers are likely to write.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Category C: Study

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Concern: | Management of study |
| Activity: | Making arrangements, e.g. with college staff on deadlines for work to be handed in |
| Environment: | Lecture hall, classroom, study, etc. |
| Language Skill: | Writing |

CEF A1 N/A
(ALTE Breakthrough)

CEF A2 CAN copy times, dates and places from notices on classroom board or notice board.
(ALTE 1)

CEF B1 CAN note down times, dates and places given by teachers and lecturers.
(ALTE 2)

CEF B2 CAN cope with writing down changes to arrangements given by teachers and lecturers. CAN write down details of all standard arrangements for assignments to be handed in, etc., as given verbally or in notices by teachers and lecturers.
(ALTE 3)

CEF C1 N/A
(ALTE 4)

CEF C2 N/A
(ALTE 5)

Part 4

CB Can Do

CB Can Do is a CD-based program designed for self-assessment, or as a tool for conducting an audit of language needs or current language competence in an organization. The first release version of CB Can Do will be aimed primarily at users of the business test BULATS, which is itself available in English, French, German and Spanish.

A subset of the Can Do statements have been selected focussing on the Work scales but also including some aspects of transactional language use from the Social and Tourist scales.

CB Can Do differs from the research-oriented questionnaires which have been used so far to collect empirical data on the Can Do statements. Each scale consists of a series of level descriptions, presented on a screen so that the respondent can scroll through them. Level descriptors are composites, assembled from selected statements which in terms of content and also statistical performance contribute to a clear characterisation of each level. Thus they are expected to discriminate well and show good stability.

Unlike the research-oriented questionnaires, the respondent's task is to select the one description which best approximates his/her level (or the level of proficiency seen as necessary for a particular job, etc). Thus it takes a relatively short time (usually not more than 15 minutes) to complete the assessment.

The feedback stage provides an opportunity to review and perhaps modify responses to particular scales. Overall level is shown as a block graph, with outlying responses (higher or lower than expected) displayed as points on this graph. Clicking on one of these points takes respondents back to the scale in question and allows them to review their choice and possibly change it. Respondents might change their choice if they felt that indeed it did not correspond to the general level they had been trying to describe. Alternatively, the outlying statement might be seen to indicate some specific competence that is clearly required, though it may not be typically found in a person of the overall level described.

Responses from CB Can Do will be collected for validation. This will include as far as possible comparison with performance in the BULATS test, and will be useful in the continuing cross-language validation of this test system.