

Potential problems concerning the empirical validation of linking exams to the CEFR

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ECL Examinations



*Reflection on the use of the preliminary pilot version of the Manual for
“Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR”*

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Overview

- Background
 - The Hungarian context
 - The ECL linking project
- External empirical validation
 - Design
 - Problems encountered
 - Results and suggested solutions
- Conclusions

Background

- The Hungarian context
 - National accreditation for language exams
 - Ministerial Decree on alignment of exams to CEFR
 - Constraint
 - time limitation
 - Opportunity
 - Manual and Reference Supplement translated
 - Professional development

Background

- The ECL linking project
 - Multilingual examination system
 - Linking the exam(s) to the CEFR in accordance with the Manual
 - Familiarization
 - Specification
 - Standardization
 - Empirical validation

External empirical validation

- Design
 - Applying tests already linked to the CEFR as point of reference

ECL task

Reference task

- Analyses

External empirical validation

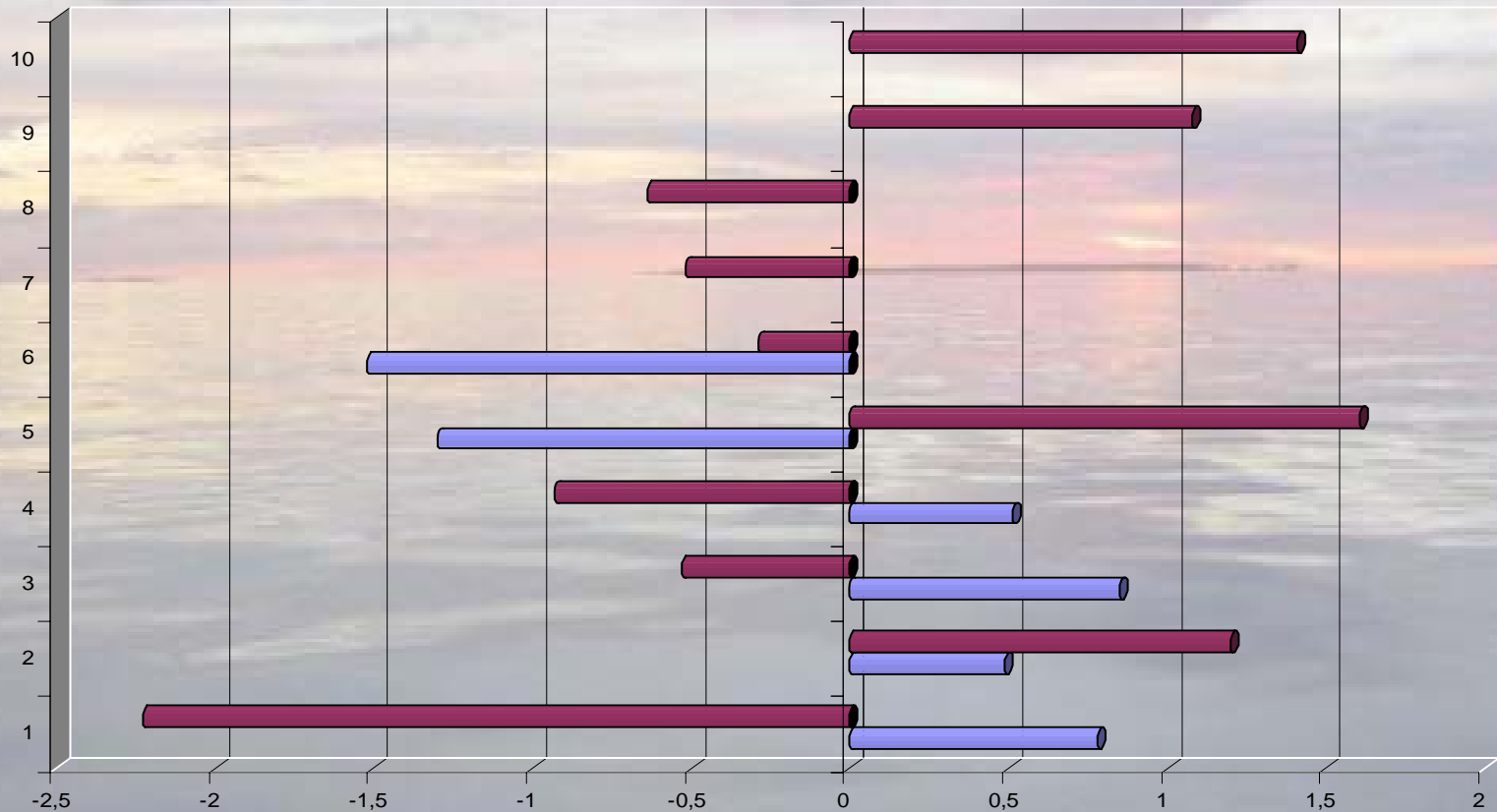
- Problems encountered
 - Availability of reference tests
 - "less frequently taught languages" (LFTL)
 - Acceptance of reference tests
 - Increasing criticism of reference tests
 - Problems with reference tests
 - Often little or no evidence of actual link between reference tests and CEFR
 - Task properties (item number)

External empirical validation

- Results and suggested solutions
 - Alternative approach
 - Estimating IRT-based item difficulties
 - Comparing item difficulty logits in the two tasks

External empirical validation

Reference task ECL task



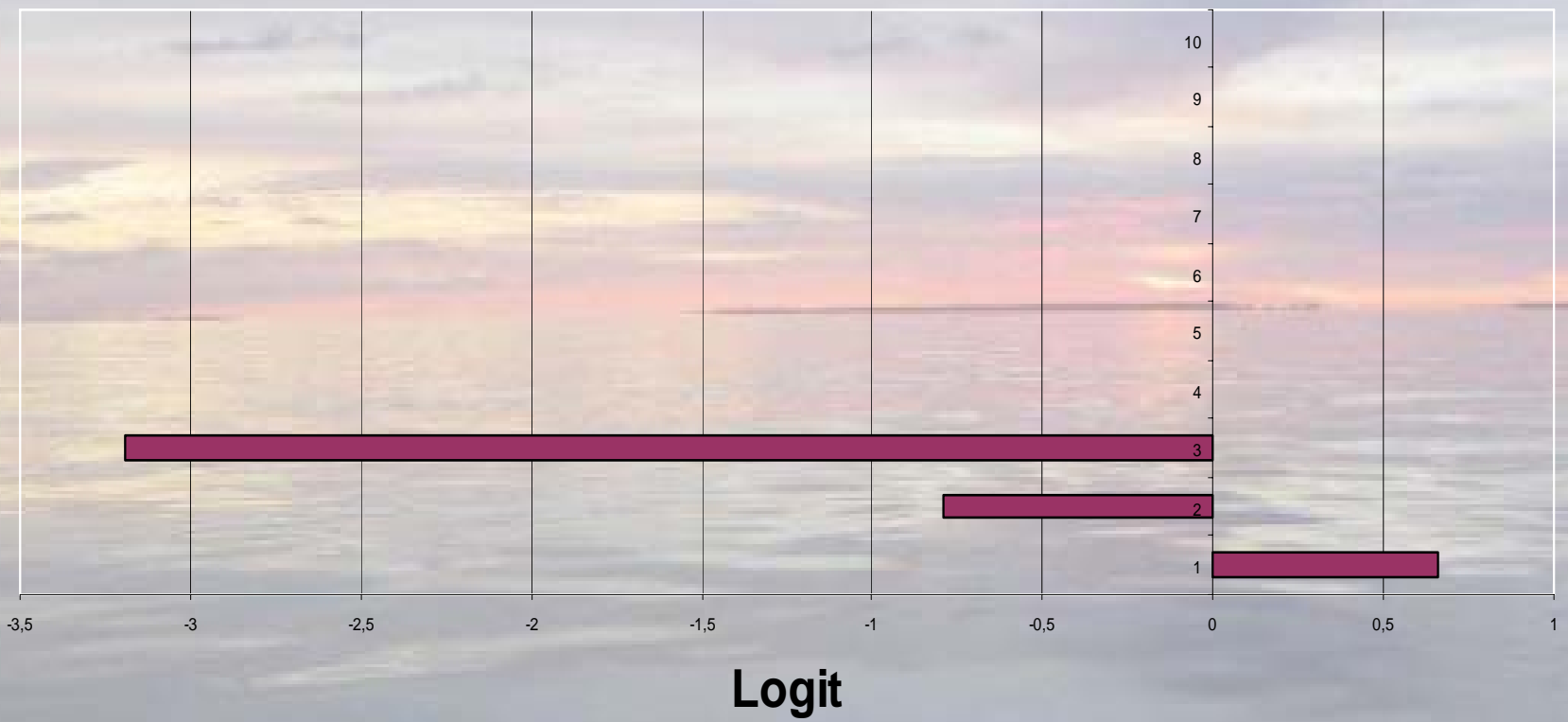
English B2 reading

External empirical validation

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
VAR00001	Equal variances assumed	,224	,643	-,077	14	,939	-,04767	,61555	-1,36789	1,27256
	Equal variances not assumed			-,081	11,977	,937	-,04767	,59201	-1,33783	1,24249

External empirical validation



German B2 reading



External empirical validation

- Results and suggested solutions
 - Availability
 - Support to LFTL to develop and share tasks
 - Acceptance
 - Setting up transparent, consensus-based criteria for tasks to be accepted as reference points (would handle task quality issue)
 - Emphasize candidate-centered methods
 - But only where judges'/teachers' familiarity with CEFR is documented and guaranteed

Conclusions

- Test-centered empirical validation can only be accomplished in certain languages
- More cooperation needed in developing reference tests
- Candidate-centered methods of empirical validation to be given more emphasis