

The City and Guilds Communicator Linking Project: Work in Progress

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Seminar for a joint Reflection on the use of the preliminary pilot version of the Manual for “Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR” 2004-2007: insights from Case Studies, Pilots and other projects

Cambridge, United Kingdom, 6-7 December 2007



Outline of this talk

- City & Guilds International ESOL examinations
- Background to CEFR link
- Scope of the CEFR Alignment Project
- Benchmarking and standard setting
- Empirical Validation
- Impressions of the process

City & Guilds International ESOL examinations

- Two suites of proficiency examinations:
 - International ESOL (IESOL)
 - International Spoken ESOL (ISESOL)
- 6 levels in each suite – targeted at CEFR levels
- Blue book reference tool for:
 - standards
 - assessment criteria / rating scale
 - exam tasks
- Development started 2001 – launched October 2004

CEFR Alignment Project

- Pre Manual activities
- Post Manual City & Guilds CEFR Alignment Project – registered with Council of Europe
- Project to follow the Manual methodology i.e. 4 steps to CEFR alignment:
 - Familiarisation
 - Specification
 - Standardisation
 - Validation

The Expert Panel – benchmarking

- Objective of the benchmarking activity
- The Expert Panel
 - internal / external – stakeholders / non stakeholders
 - independent chair
 - experts in the CEFR
 - experienced in teaching and assessment – EAP and general English
- The procedure
 - pre event preparation – Familiarisation / Standardisation / exam evaluation
 - feedback analysed
 - order of priority for discussion during meeting

Specific observations from benchmarking I

- Small spread in the productive skills – easier to reach agreement
- Wider spread for reading and listening – lower consistency

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	SPEAKING
OC	Lenient	-.47	Good	
OS	Harsh	.61	Good	
OD	Harsh	.28	Good	
IR	Lenient	-.04	Good	
IS	Lenient	-.38	Good	

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	READING
OC	Harsh	1.56	Good	
OS	Lenient	-.34	Good	
OD	Harsh	2.20	Good	
IR	Harsh	.53	Good	
IS	Lenient	-3.94	Fair	

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	WRITING
OC	Lenient	-.17	Good	
OS	Harsh	.11	Good	
OD	Harsh	.26	Good	
IR	Lenient	-.03	Good	
IS	Lenient	-.17	Good	

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	LISTENING
OC	Harsh	1.08	Good	
OS	Harsh	.70	Good	
OD	Harsh	1.08	Narrow spread of scores	
IR	Lenient	-1.11	Fair	
IS	Lenient	-1.76	Good	

SMALL SPREAD

VERY CONSISTENT

LARGE SPREAD

QUITE CONSISTENT

Specific observations from benchmarking II

- Stakeholder in the exam tended to agree with the internal claim

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	SPEAKING
OC	Lenient	-.47	Good	
OS	Harsh	.61	Good	
OD	Harsh	.28	Good	
IR	Lenient	-.04	Good	
IS	Lenient	-.38	Good	

Judge	Trend	Level	Internal Consistency	READING
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Main issues from benchmarking

- Composition of 'expert panel' is crucial
- Strong & impartial chair is required
- Local and external participants
 - different dimensions and agendas
 - **BOTH** important to its success
- Only very weak claims at best on this phase of any linking project
- Benchmarking is linked to the specification phase - a natural conclusion
- No progression to the standardisation phase until benchmarking has been satisfactorily completed
- Likely that phases are not linear, but iterative in nature

Standardisation sessions

Reading & Listening

Define least able candidate at this level

Dichotomous decisions by item (this candidate can or cannot do this item)

Discussion

Second round of dichotomous decisions by Item

Set agreed critical boundary

Main issues from the standardisation sessions

- Experience of participating in sessions improves efficiency - confidence and accuracy of judgements
- Little meaningful difference between the 'local' participants and the 'external' participants
- Vital that participants participate in, and agree with, the definition of the 'least able candidate'
- Vital that time is not an issue – though with practice, less time required
- Group dynamics are likely to impact on process, so it is important to have a strong and impartial chair

Validation phase

Reading & Listening

Identify population as well as test tasks & CofE tasks

Administer all tasks, manage and analyse data

Use this as an element of the validation claim

Use theoretical framework to develop and present validation argument

Publish validation argument, with evidence

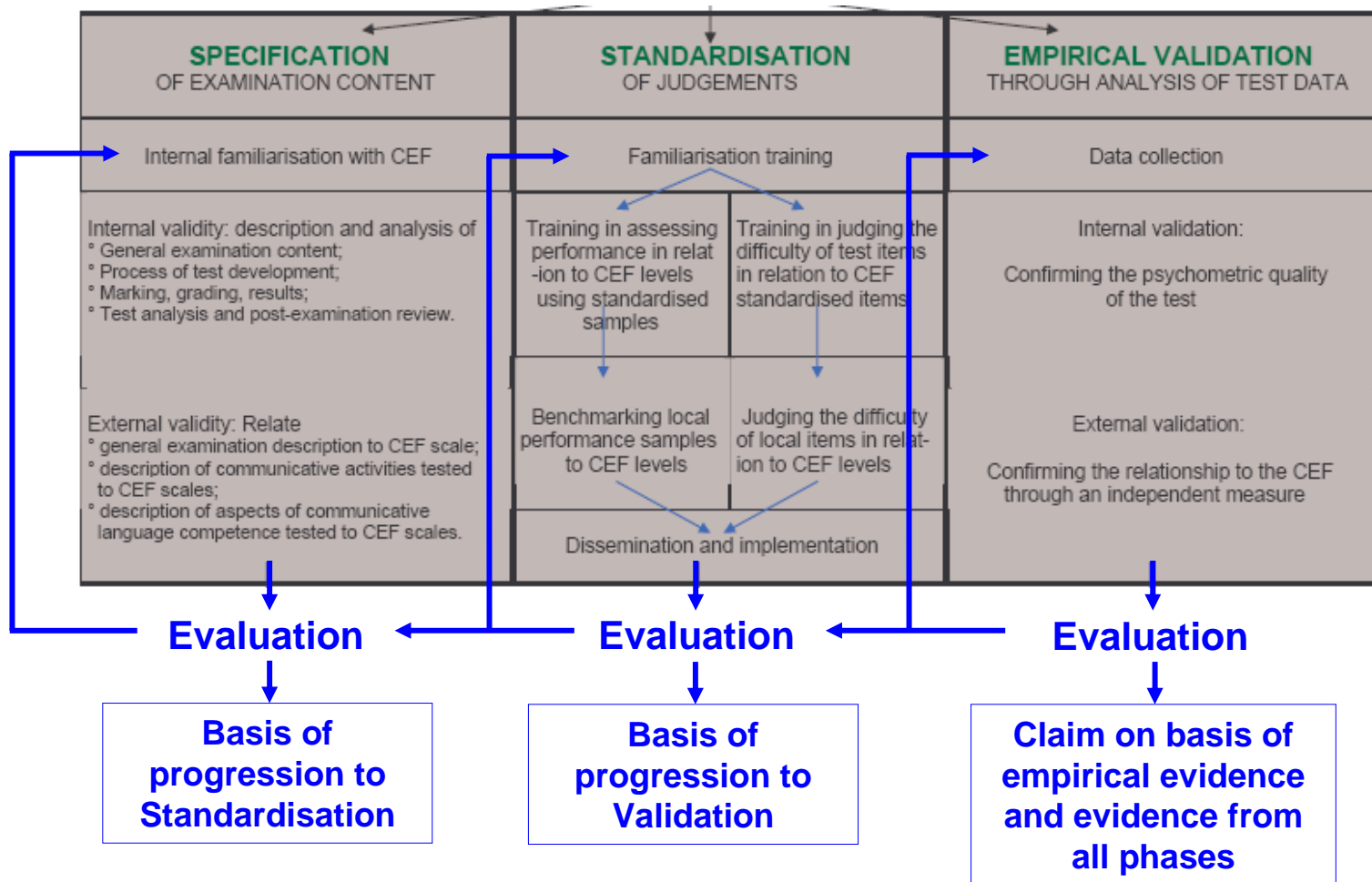
Implications for interpreting linking claims (& Manual)

- How 'strong' can claims be?
- Only final evidence-based claims hold value
- Some external input at the various levels to assure stakeholders that any claims will not suffer from institutional bias

'Ask me brother am I a liar'

- Evidence of comparison of psychometric qualities to accepted standardised tasks vital but not enough
- Evidence of cognitive processing expected at CEFR level

Implications for the process



Implications for the Draft Manual

- Need more guidance on the composition of the panel (internal/external ratio; internal stakeholders; roles – solo work, group work etc.)
- Many of the CEFR descriptors need to be expanded
- Currently assumes the exam is or will be perfectly linked – needs to clarify that the process is iterative, particularly when issues of non-agreement arise
- Needs to offer more concrete proposals for dealing with feedback from expert panel (qualitative and quantitative)
- Needs more ‘public domain’ standardised tasks (greater range on-level)

Further details

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