

# RELANG

## Relating language examinations to the common European reference levels of language proficiency

*Promoting quality assurance in education and facilitating mobility*

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**European Centre for Modern Languages and European Commission  
Cooperation on Innovative Methodologies and Assessment in Language  
Learning**

## RELANG Team Members

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## Basic Documentation

The Training and Consultancy is based on two Council of Europe / ECML publications dealing with the construction and validation of language tests linked to the CEFR:

- The ALTE Manual for Language Test Development and Examining
- Relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR): Highlights

## Linking Procedures in the Manual

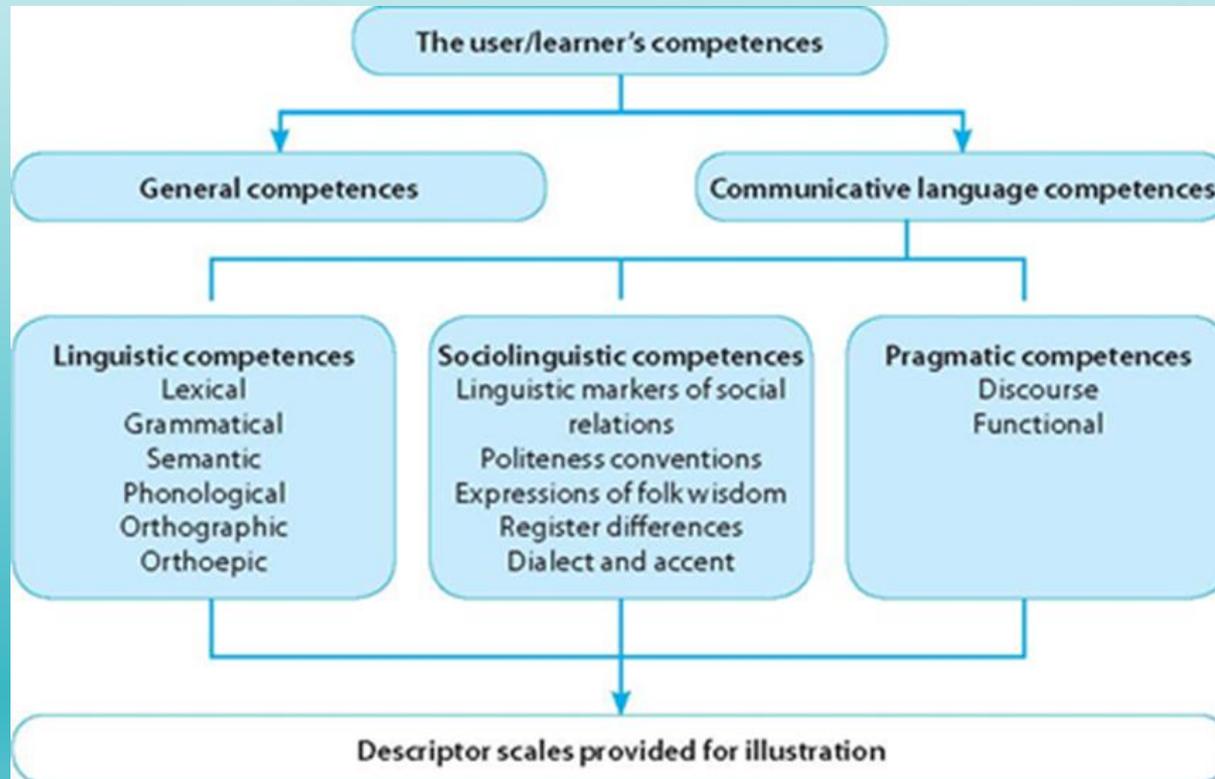
- Familiarisation with the CEFR
- Linking on the basis of specification of examination content
- Standardization and Benchmarking
- Standard setting
- Validation: checking that exam results relate to CEFR levels as intended

## The CEFR Model of Language Use

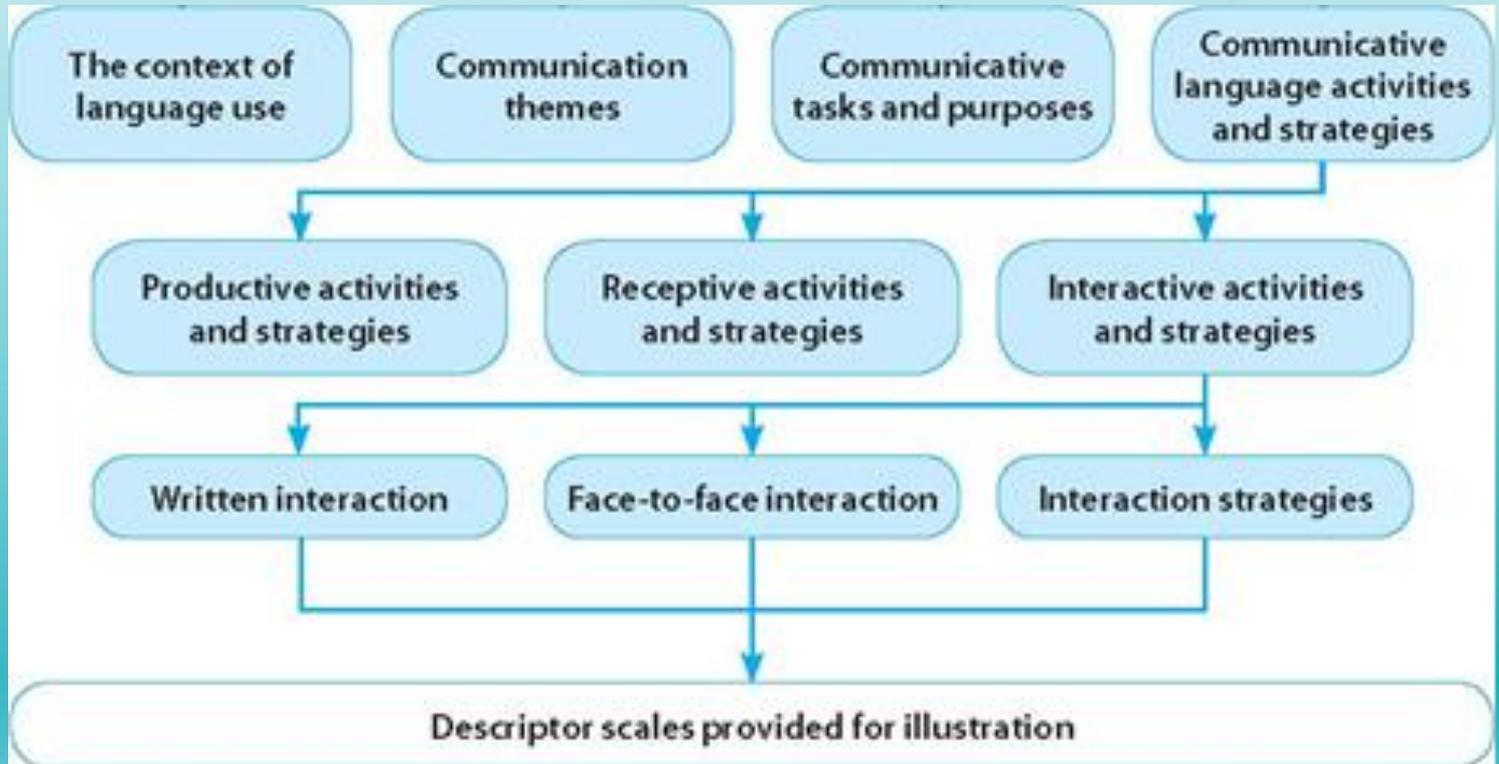
Elements in action-oriented approach:

- Actions performed by persons - individuals and social agents
- A range of competences, both general and in particular communicative language competences
- Various contexts under various conditions and constraints to engage in language activities
- Language processes to produce and/or receive texts in relation to themes in specific domains

# The user/learner's Competences



# Language use and the user/learner



## What is Validity?

- A test is valid if it measures what we intend it to measure.
- This definition has been extended in recent years to encompass the way tests are *used*, i.e. validity relates to: ‘the degree to which evidence and theory support the interpretations of test scores entailed by proposed uses of tests’ (AERA, APA, NCME 1999).

## Validity and the CEFR

- Validity comes down to demonstrating that what we claim is true: that a learner reported to be at B1 actually *is* at B1 according to the evidence we can provide.
- If the focus is more on *use*, then validity evidence will relate to language actually being used for various communicative purposes.
- If the focus is more on *competence*, then validity evidence will relate to cognitive skills, strategies and language knowledge.

## What is Reliability?

- Reliability in testing means consistency: a test with reliable scores produces the same or similar results on repeated use. This means that a test would always rank-order a group of test takers in nearly the same way.
- Note that high reliability does not necessarily imply that a test is good or interpretations of the results are valid. A bad test can produce highly reliable scores.

## Reliability in Practice

- Be aware of the likely sources of error, and do what is possible to minimise it.
- Using statistics to estimate the reliability of a test's scores is an important *post-hoc* step.
- There can be no reliability target for the scores of all tests, because reliability estimates are dependent on how much test taker scores vary.
- Reliability estimates can depend on the item or task type and the way it is marked.

## Fairness

- An objective for all test and examination providers is to make their test as fair as possible.
- Various bodies have produced Codes of Practice or Codes of Fairness to assist test providers in the practical aspects of ensuring tests are fair.
- Test providers can try to minimise bias when designing tests. A list of topics to avoid in test items can be given to item writers.

## Ethical Concerns

- High-stakes language tests can have negative consequences for individuals, e.g. in the context of migration, where decisions made about a person on the basis of a test score can have serious and far-reaching consequences.
- Test providers must ensure that the relevant principles are widely disseminated and understood within their organisations. This will help to ensure that the organisation complies with ethical guidelines.