

John H.A.L. de Jong

Unwarranted claims about CEF alignment of some international English language tests

This presentation will offer reflections and data on the alignment of some of the major international tests of English designed to provide information on students expected ability to cope with language demands in university settings.

With the popularity of the Common European Framework for Languages (CEF) it has become almost a requirement for any international language test to express results in terms of the level definitions provided in the CEF and indeed the major international tests of English have presented claims regarding the alignment of their reporting scales with the CEF. In spite of the precise guidelines offered in the Manual for relating Language Examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference major test providers have based their claims on insubstantial evidence.

One of the basic goals of the Common European Framework, namely to create international comparability of language diploma's and certificates is undermined by this irresponsible use of the CEF. In an effort to safeguard the common currency value of the CEF I will provide convincing proof that some of the claims about alignment are unwarranted and even completely wrong. Evidence will be based on publicly available information on the tests, and on ability estimates and responses to survey questions gathered from the administration of a new international test of English for academic purposes to more than 10 000 subjects from 126 different nationalities.