

12 MARCH

HOW TO GRADE OUR ENGLISH LEVEL

The Non Native Speaker



Writing and Speaking components

Writing and Speaking components are marked by trained, standardised examiners according to a set of analytic scales, covering a range of assessment criteria. The assessment criteria are linked to the CEFR and form an overlapping 'ladder'. The criteria for each level are the same across all our exams. For example, the criteria required to meet CEFR Level B2 are identical for both B2 First and C1 Advanced.

	B2 First	C1 Advanced	Example assessment criteria
C2			Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.
C1			Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas as appropriate.
B2			Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas.
B1			Uses the conventions of the communicative task in generally appropriate ways to communicate straightforward ideas.

This is what we want to see:

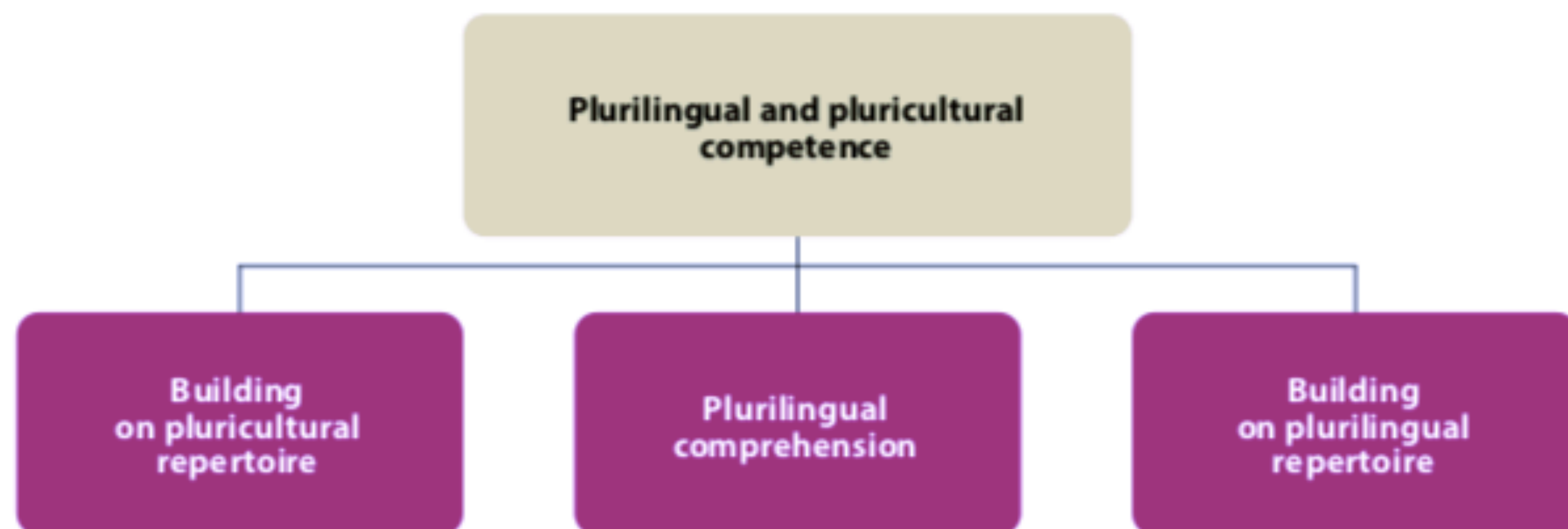
It should be emphasised that the top level in the CEFR scheme, C2, has no relation whatsoever with what is sometimes referred to as the performance of an idealised “native speaker”, or a “well-educated native speaker” or a “near native speaker”. Such concepts were not taken as a point of reference during the development of the levels or the descriptors. C2, the top level in the CEFR scheme, is introduced in the CEFR as follows:

Level C2, whilst it has been termed “**Mastery**”, is not intended to imply native-speaker or near native-speaker competence. What is intended is to characterise the degree of precision, appropriateness and ease with the language which typifies the speech of those who have been highly successful learners. (CEFR 2001 Section 3.6)

Changes to A1-C1 descriptors

A few changes are proposed to other descriptors. It was decided not to “update” descriptors merely because of changes in technology (e.g. references to postcards or public telephones). The scale for “Phonological control” has been replaced (see below). The main changes result from making the descriptors modality-inclusive, to make them equally applicable to sign languages. Changes are also proposed to certain descriptors that refer to linguistic accommodation (or not) by “native speakers”, because this term has become controversial since the CEFR was first published.

Figure 15 – Plurilingual and pluricultural competence



The vision of the learner as a social agent in the action-oriented approach takes these concepts further in relation to language education, considering that:

the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve “mastery” of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the “ideal native speaker” as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. (CEFR 2001 Section 1.3)

In the development of descriptors, the following points mentioned specifically in the CEFR 2001 were given particular attention:

- ▶ languages are interrelated and interconnected, especially at the level of the individual;
- ▶ languages and cultures are not kept in separated mental compartments;
- ▶ all knowledge and experience of languages contribute to building up communicative competence;
- ▶ balanced mastery of different languages is not the goal, but rather the ability (and willingness) to modulate their usage according to the social and communicative situation;
- ▶ barriers between languages can be overcome in communication, and different languages can be used purposefully for conveying messages in the same situation.

SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES TO SPECIFIC DESCRIPTORS PUBLISHED IN 2001

Overall listening oral comprehension	
C2	Can understand with ease virtually Has no difficulty with any kind of spoken/signers language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast native-natural speed.
Understanding conversation between other native people	
B2+	Can keep up with an animated conversation between native speakers/signers of the target language .
B2	Can with some effort catch much of what is said around them, but may find it difficult to participate effectively in discussion with several native speakers/signers of the target language who do not modify their language in any way.
Listening-Understanding as a member of a live audience	
C2	Can follow specialised lectures and presentations employing a high-degree-of colloquialism, regional usage or unfamiliar terminology.
Overall reading comprehension	
C2	Can understand and interpret critically virtually all forms-of-the-written-language types of written/signed texts including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings.
Overall oral interaction	
B2	Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction, and sustained relationships with speakers/signers of the target language native-speakers quite possible without imposing strain on either party. Can highlight the personal significance of events and experiences, account for and sustain views clearly by providing relevant explanations and arguments.

Understanding **a native-speaker** an interlocutor

C2	Can understand any native-speaker interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond their own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a non-standard less familiar variety accent-or-dialect .
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Conversation

B2	Can sustain relationships with users of the target language native-speakers without unintentionally amusing or irritating them or requiring them to behave other than they would with another native proficient speaker/signer .
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C2	Can hold their own in formal discussion of complex issues, putting forward an articulate and persuasive argument, at no disadvantage to native speakers other participants .
Interviewing and being interviewed	
C2	Can keep up their side of the dialogue extremely well, structuring the talk and interacting authoritatively with complete effortless fluency as interviewer or interviewee, at no disadvantage to native speakers. other participants .

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THE NEXT EVENT**



the_non_native_speaker

LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING