

Unwarranted claims about CEF alignment of some international English language tests

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June, 2009

Founding Pearson Language Tests



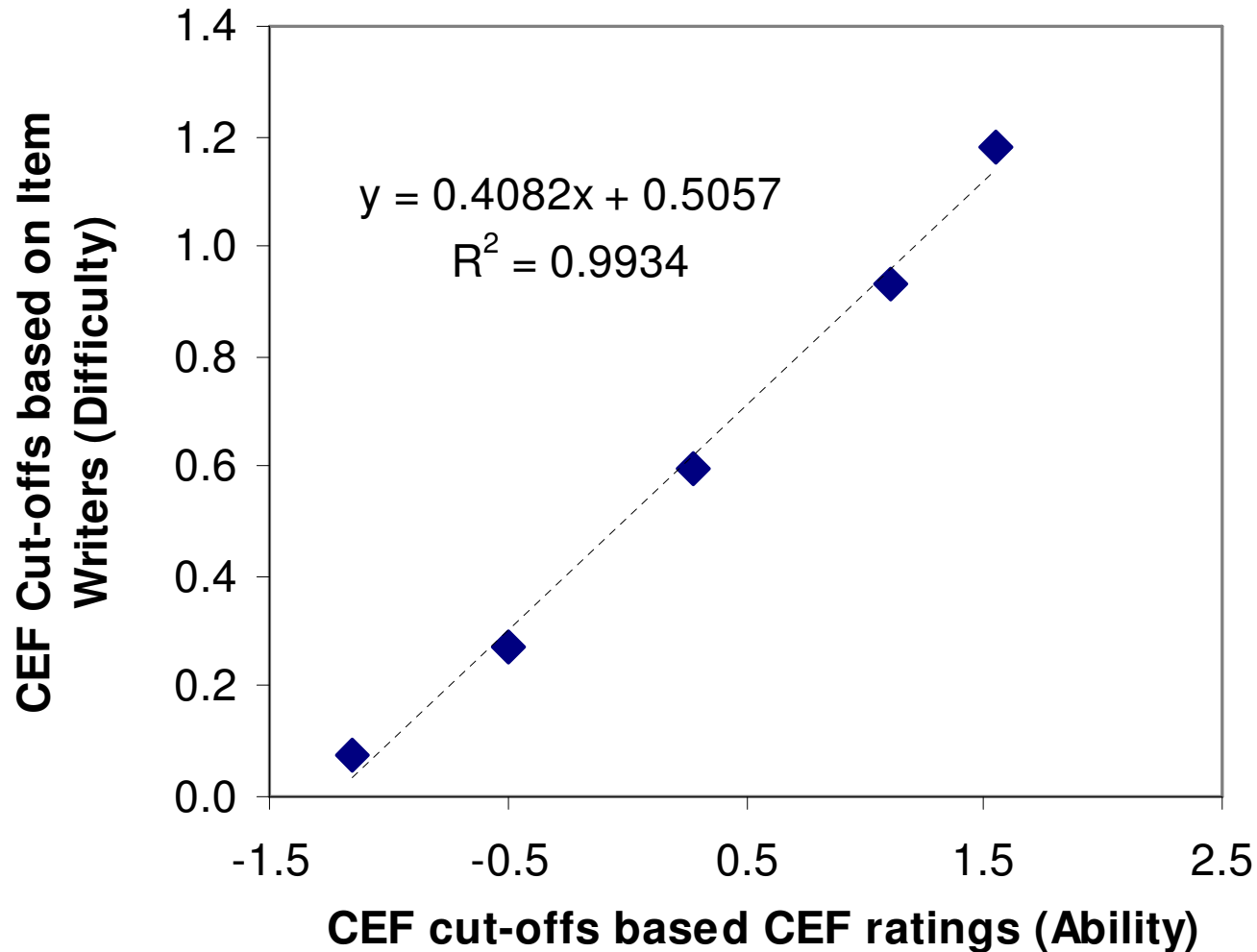
- 2004 Start-up & planning
- 2005 Recruitment
- 2006 October: Start development of PTE Academic
- 2007 First field test
- 2008 Second field test
- 2009 Launch

- Total of > 10,400 candidates in 2 Field tests
- Total of 158 countries of birth
- Total of 126 languages spoken at home
- Thousands of items trialled
- Close to 300 human markers trained
- Items rated on up to 7 different traits
- Total of 2.6m human ratings gathered
 - 2m for Speaking
 - 0.6m for writing

Four methods

- Item writer training & writing to CEF
- Item estimates of CEF level in reviewing process
- Inclusion of DIALANG anchors in field test
- Human rating on CEF scale of candidates

Two independent estimates of CEF cut-offs



If we have preliminary mapping of PTE Academic to

➤ CEF

AND to

➤ Existing English tests for Academic admission

- TOEFL
- IELTS

AND they already have linking claims to CEF

THEN **B2 on PTE A** = **B2 on TOEFL** = **B2 on IELTS**
etc.

Cambridge ESOL exams and the CEFR

Our exams are linked to the CEFR

**Mapping TOEFL iBT® on the
Common European
Framework Reference (CEFR)**

Beware of misunderstandings

Being at a CEF level means:

Being more likely than not be able to perform language activities at the level of efficiency such as captured in the exemplary descriptors provided in the CEF.

It CANNOT be

Being able to perform ALL language activities for a particular level provided in the CEF.

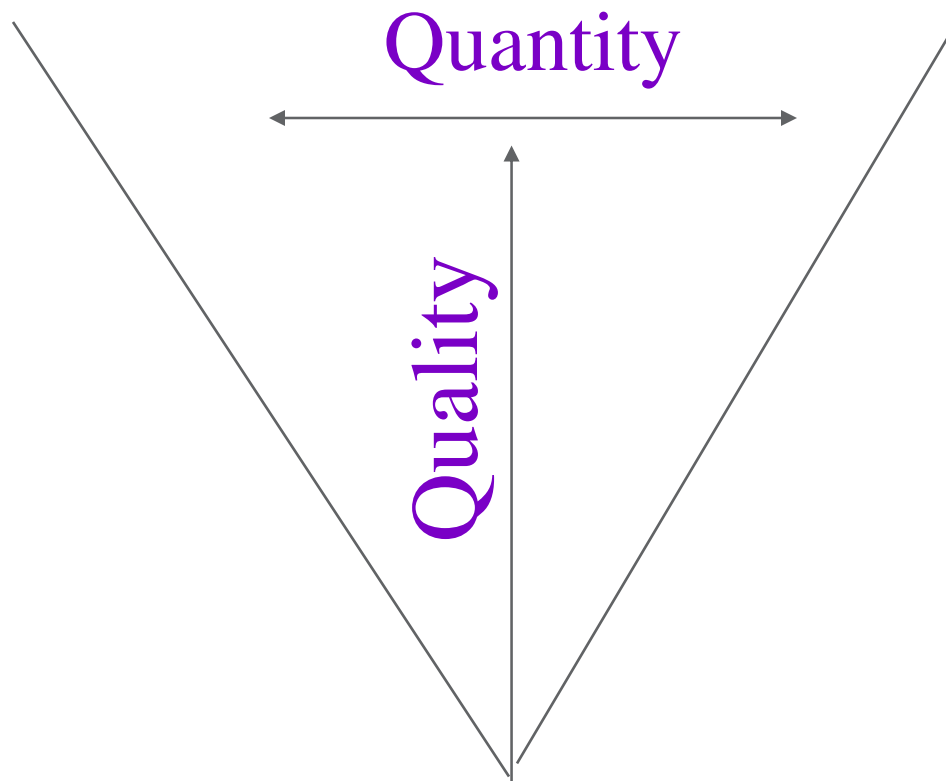
Simply because the CEF only contains exemplary descriptors.

For example all descriptors for Mediation are missing.

Beware of misunderstandings



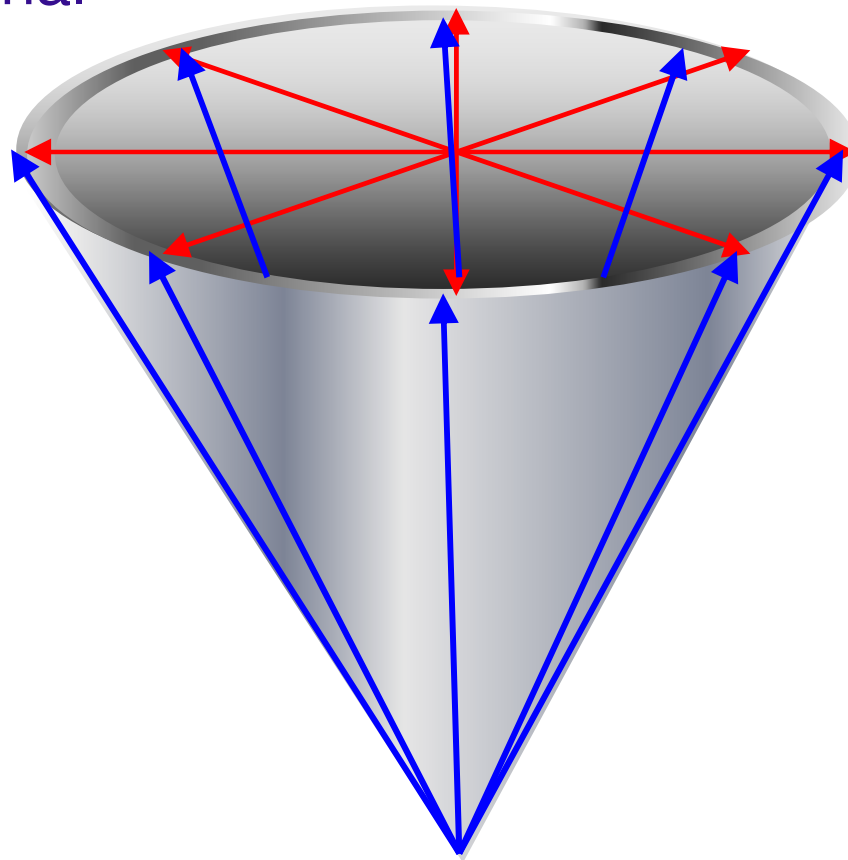
follows two basic dimensions



Dimensionality

The **quantity** development is in fact multidimensional

and **quality** can develop along each of the dimensions

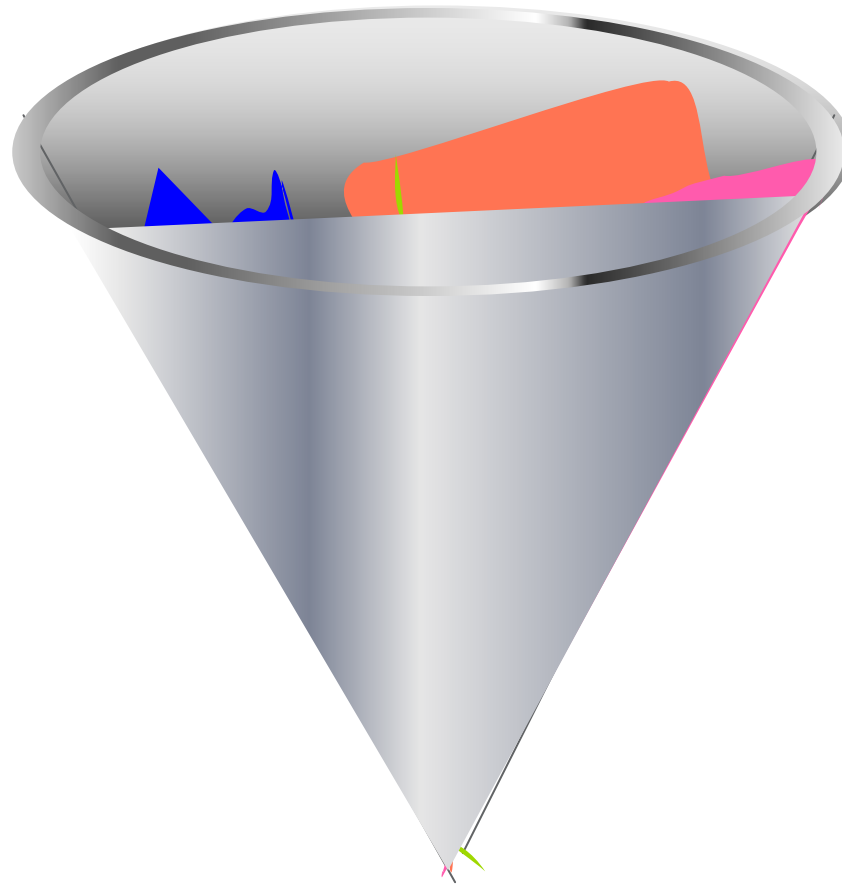


A quote from the CEF:

(...) all knowledge of a language is **partial**, however much of a ‘mother tongue’ or ‘native language’ it seems to be. (...) In addition, a given individual **never has equal mastery** of the different component parts of the language in question, for example, of oral and written skills, or of comprehension and interpretation compared to production skills.

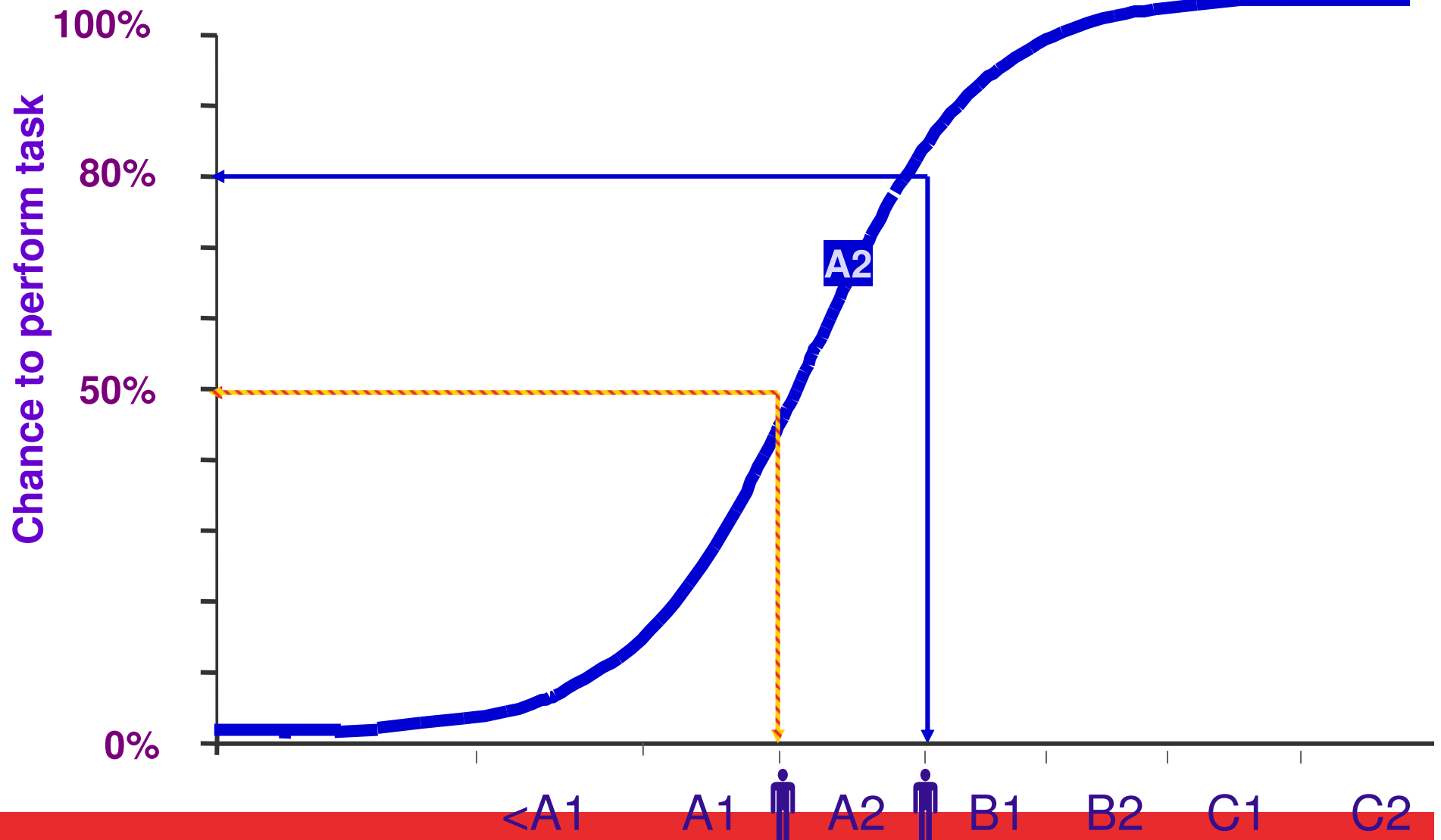
(CEF, page 169; emphasis added, JdJ).

Profiled development

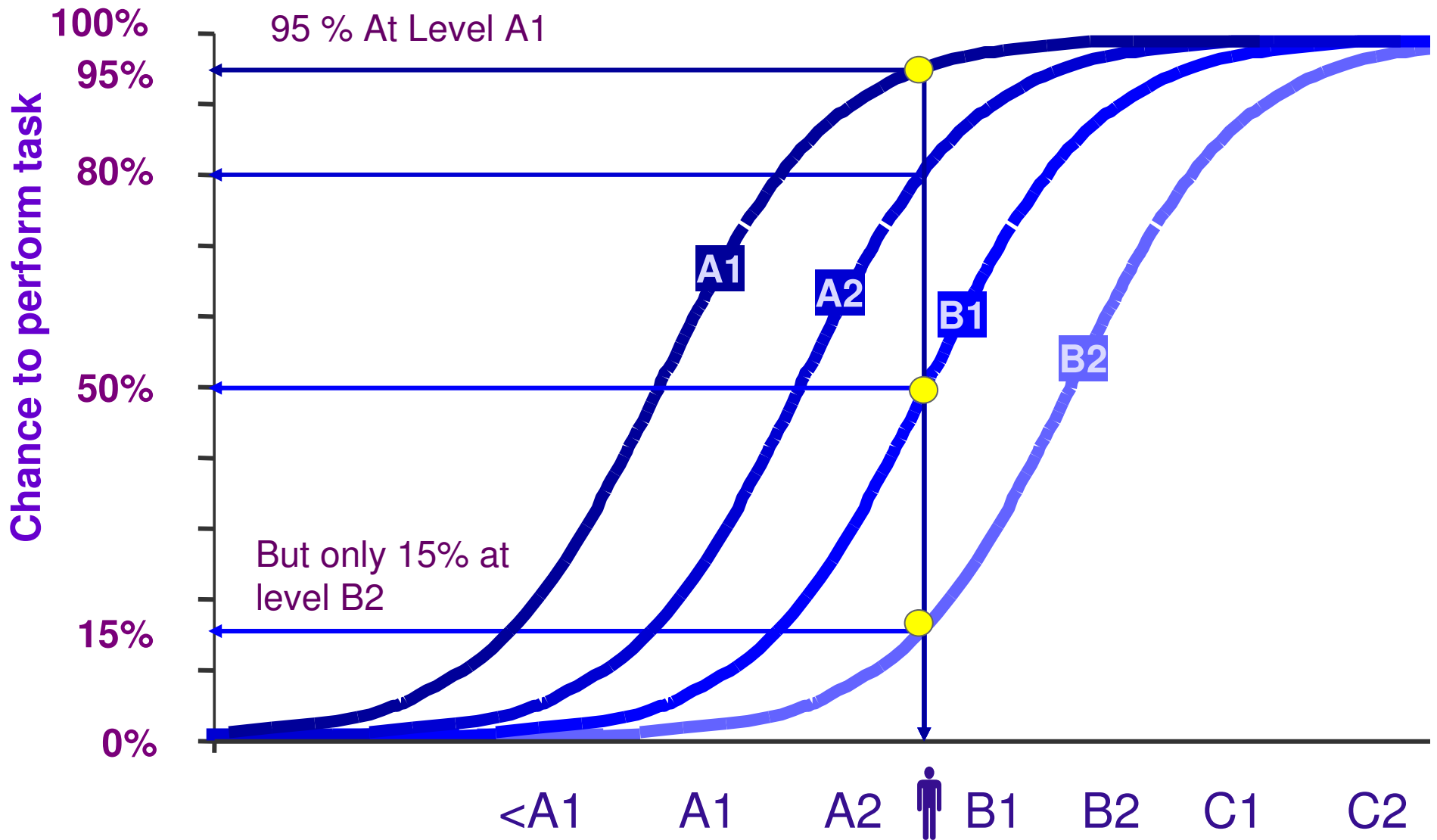


CEF scaled on IRT model

PEARSON



CEF scaled on IRT model



Then what are the claimed relationships for

- TOEFL
- IELTS

And how do they relate to evidence?

Claims and (incoherent) evidence

Top 50 ¹⁾ USA	IELTS U	TOEFL U	IELTS P	TOEFL P	IELTS P-U	TOEFL P-U
51	28	33	29	34	24	29
100%	55%	65%	57%	67%	47%	57%
Average	6.8	87	6.8	87	0.1	1
stdev	0.5	14	0.3	12	0.3	14
max	7.0	111	7.0	111	1	21
min	5.0	57	6.0	61	-0.5	-39

1) There are 51 schools because 2 schools are ex aequo at rank 50

Figure 2: Indicative IELTS band scores at CEFR and NQF levels

Corresponding NQF Level	Corresponding CEFR Level	IELTS approximate band score
Level 3	C2	7.5+
Level 2	C1	6.5/7.0
Level 1	B2	5.0/5.5/6.0
Entry 3	B1	3.5/4.0/4.5
Entry 2	A2	3.0

Taylor, L (2004) IELTS, Cambridge ESOL examinations and the Common European Framework. *Research Notes 18*, November: pp 2-3.

Claims ets



Test Section	Total Score Scale Range	Minimum Score					
		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
TOEFL iBT Total¹	0–120			57–86	87–109	110–120	
TOEFL iBT Reading	0–30			8	22	28	29
TOEFL iBT Listening	0–30			13	21	26	
TOEFL iBT Speaking	0–30	8	13	19	23	28	
TOEFL iBT Writing	0–30		11	17	21	28	

¹ TOEFL scores are reported in 1-point increments.

... and (incoherent) evidence

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1) There are 51 schools because 2 schools are ex aequo at rank 50

**=C1 says
Cambridge**

**=B2 says
ETS**

No different in the UK ...

Top 10 UK	IELTS U	TOEFL U	IELTS P	TOEFL P	IELTS P-U	TOEFL P-U
10	10	9	10	9	10	9
100%	100%	90%	100%	90%	100%	90%
Average	6.5	94	6.7	97	0.3	2
StDev	0.4	6	0.3	6	0.4	4
Max	7.0	100	7.0	107	1.0	10
Min	6.0	85	6.5	89	0.0	0

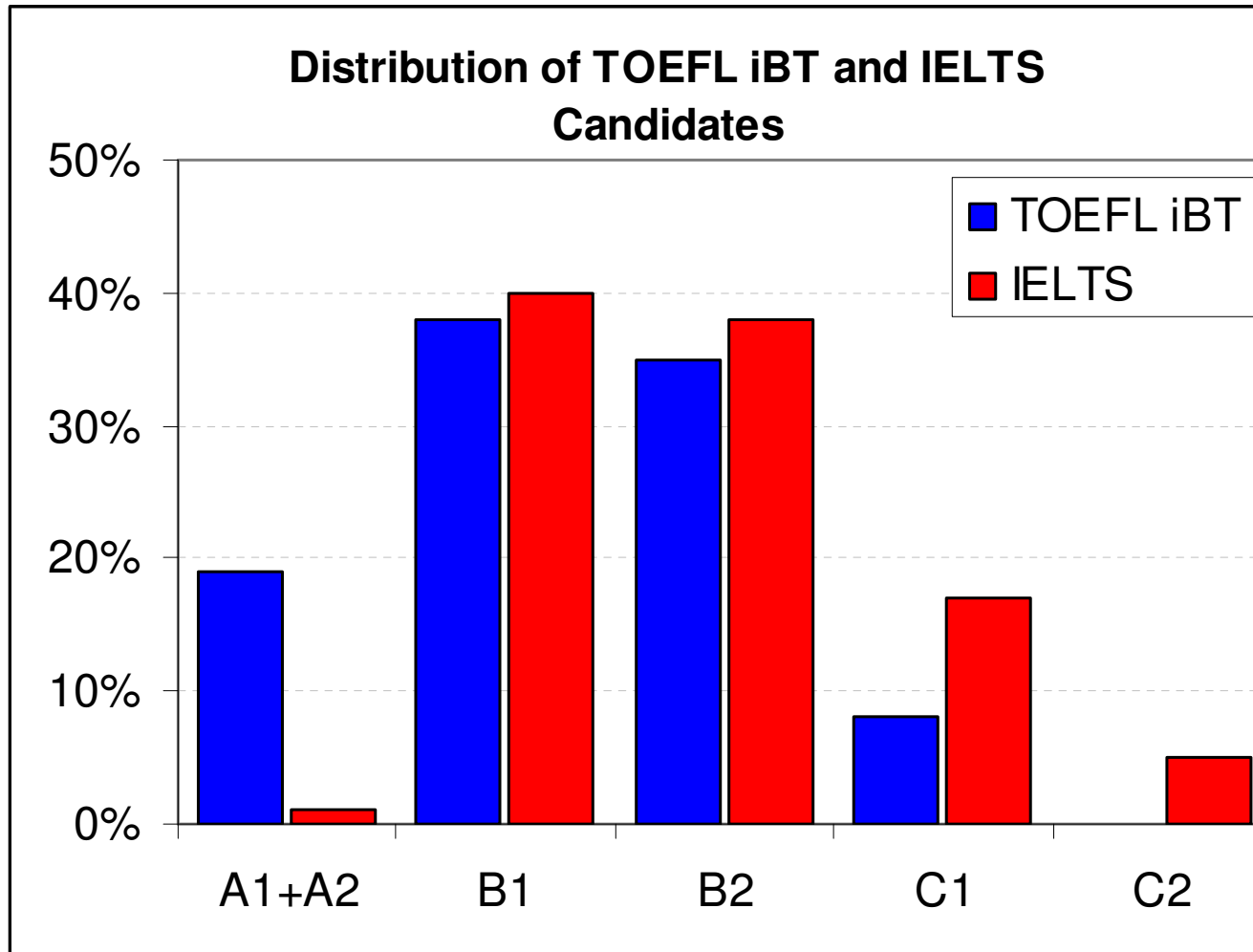
=C1 says Cambridge

=B2 says ETS

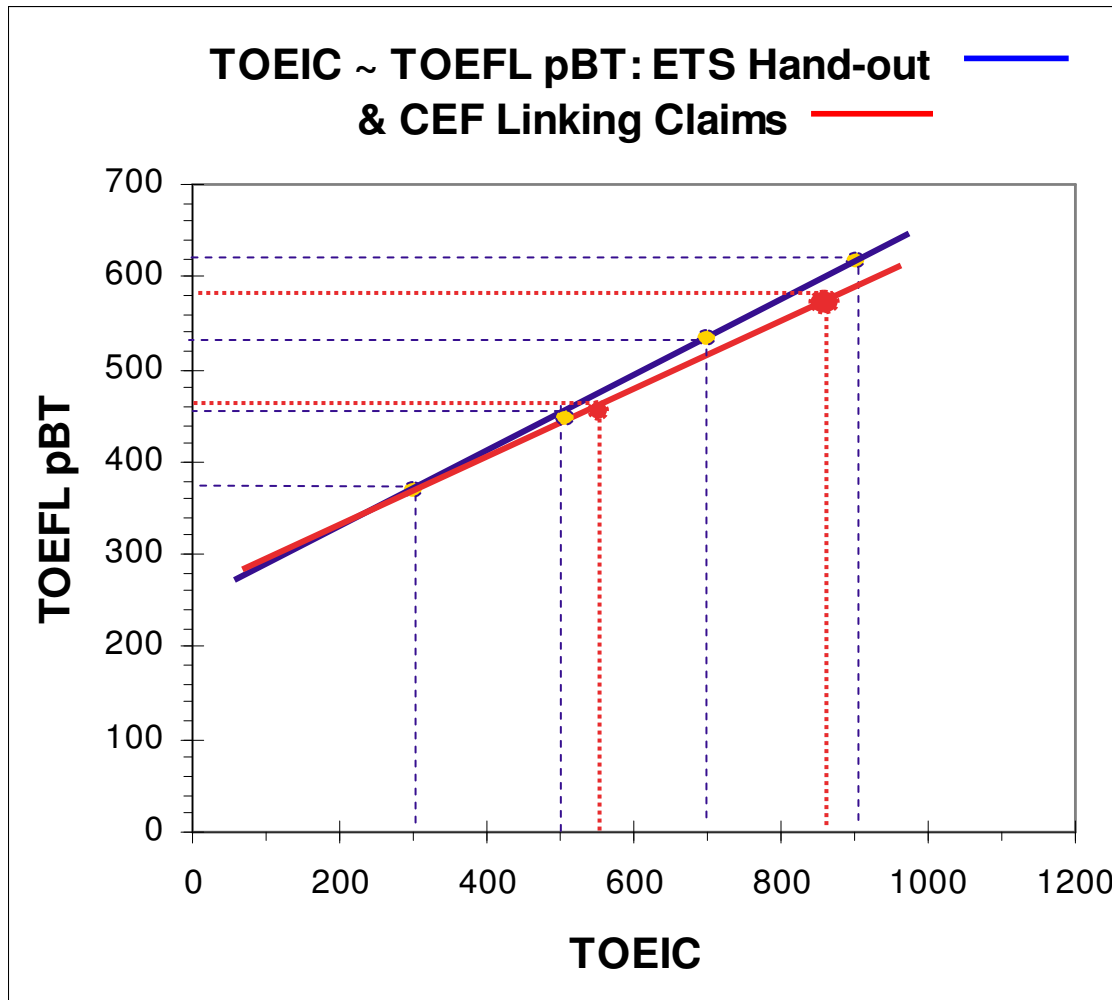
Lynda Taylor (2004) concludes her article:

The current alignment is based upon a growing body of **internal research**, combined with **long established experience** of test use within education and society, as well as **feedback from a range of test stakeholders** regarding the uses of test results for particular purposes. As we grow in our understanding of the relationship between IELTS, other Cambridge ESOL examinations and the CEFR levels, so the frame of reference may need to be revised accordingly.

So is who is dumb?



ETS: TOEIC ~ TOEFL Concordance

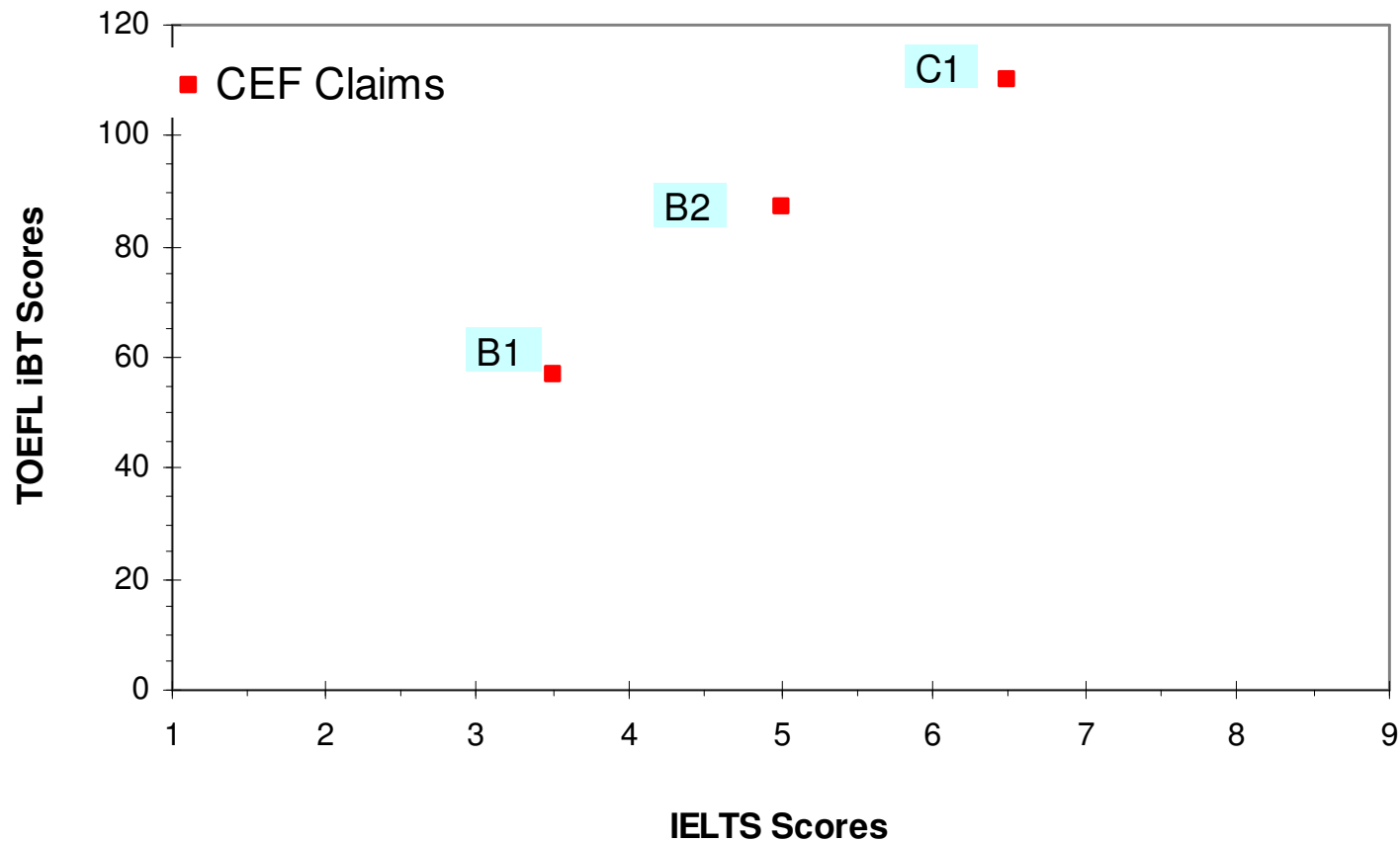


TOEIC	TOEFL
300	371
500	450
700	529
900	608

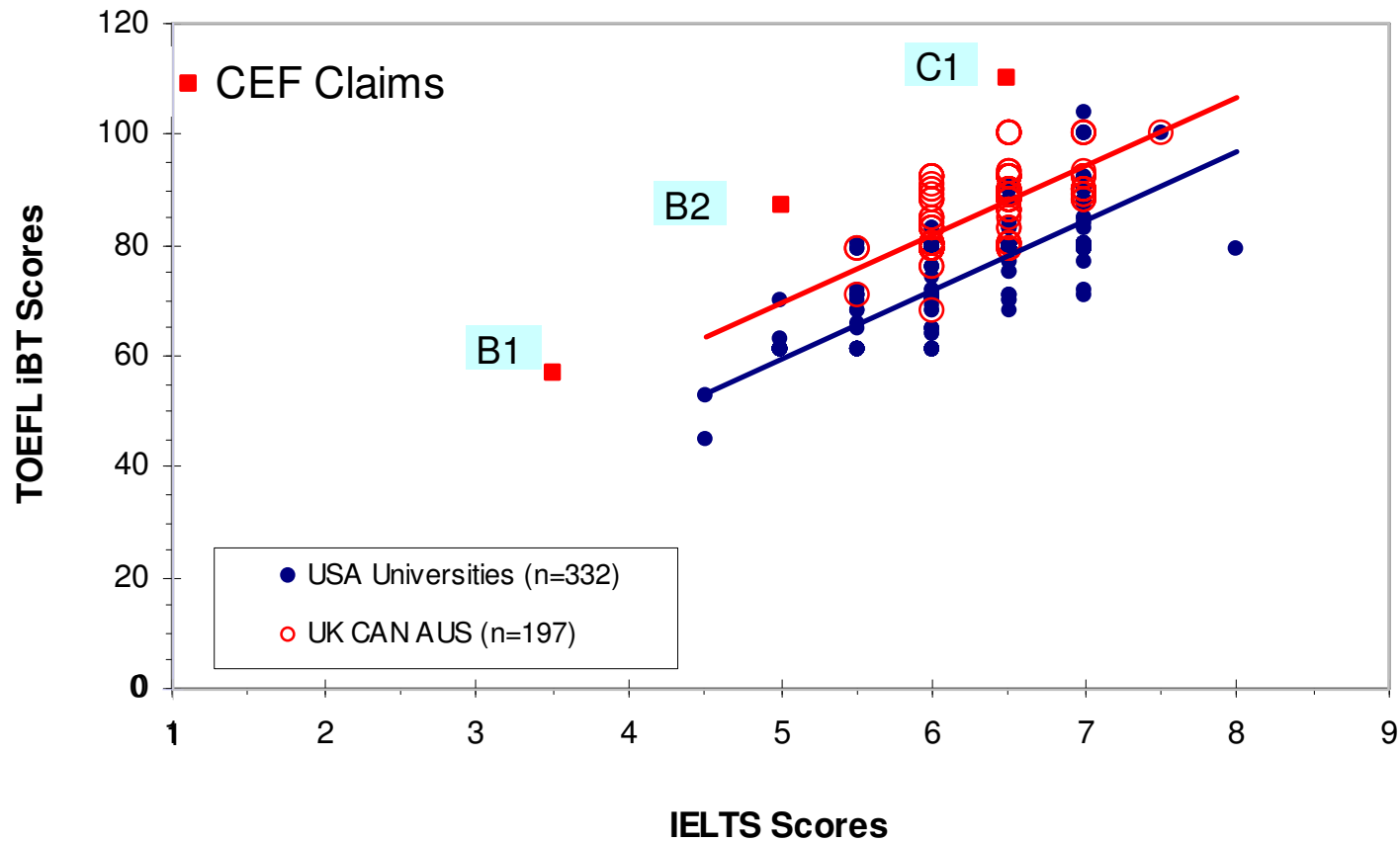
CEF	TOEIC	TOEFL (pBT)
B1	550	457
C1	880	560

So: TOEFL and TOEIC mapping to CEF corresponds to earlier concordance of TOEFL & TOEIC

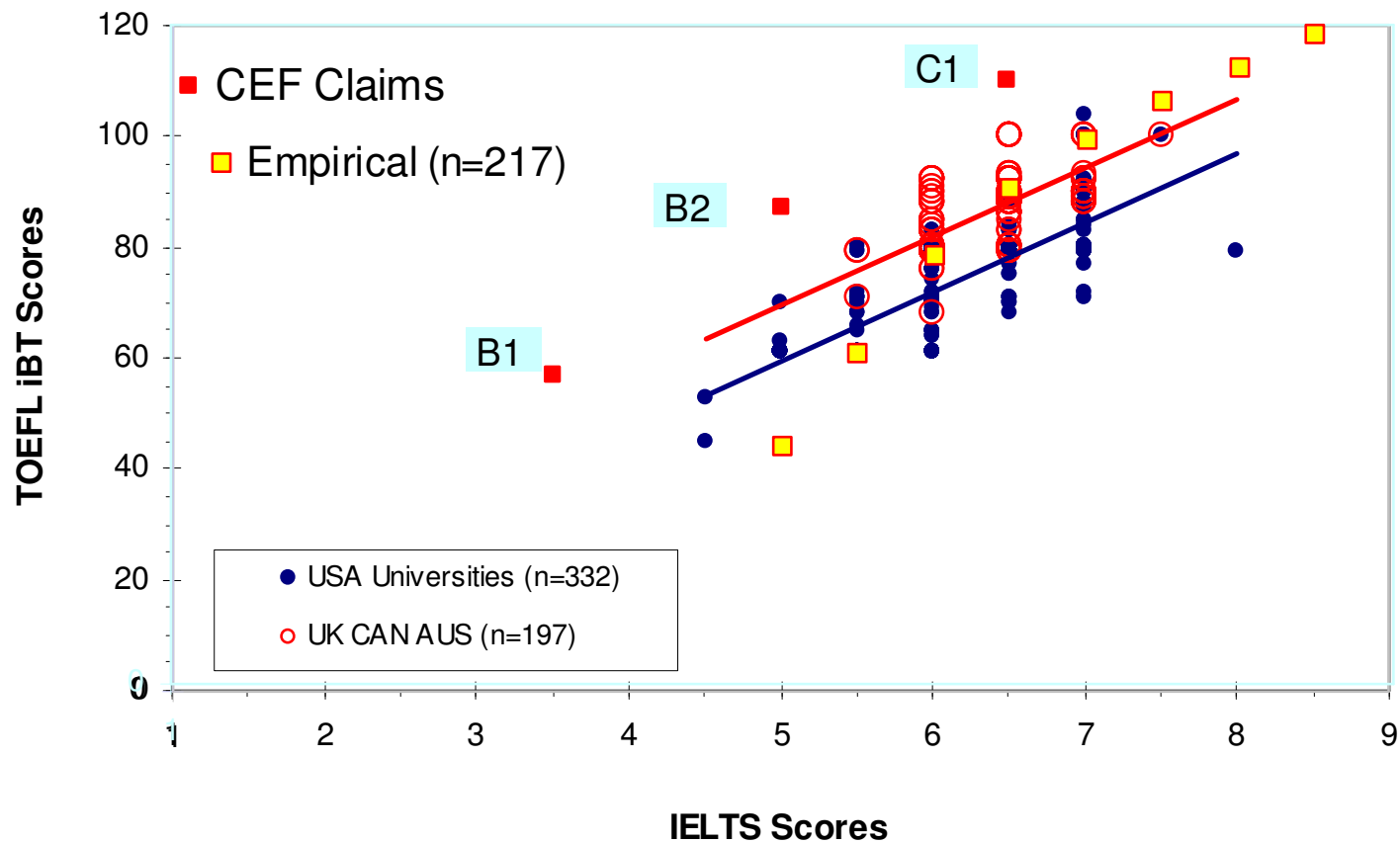
Comparing IELTS ~ TOEFL iBT



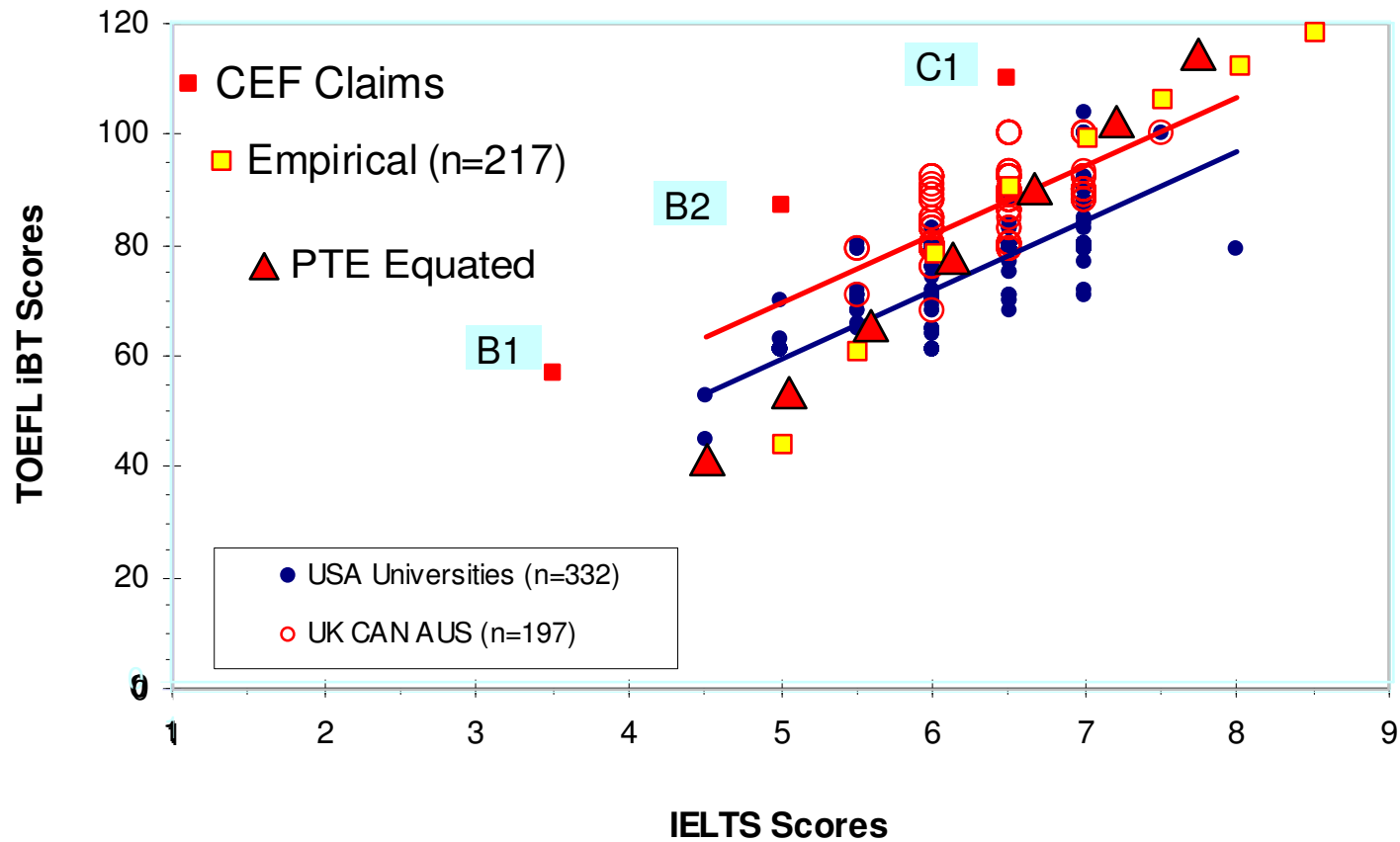
Comparing IELTS ~ TOEFL iBT



Comparing IELTS ~ TOEFL iBT



Comparing IELTS ~ TOEFL iBT



So what appears?

Data from

1. USA Universities
2. UK Australian and Canadian Universities
3. International student distributions
4. Equating study run by ETS
5. Equating results using PTE Academic as anchor

All agree to suggest that

B2 on PTE A = B2 on TOEFL = C1 on IELTS

Underestimate explained

Retrieved from:

<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/exams/exams-info/cefr.html>

06/09/2008 at 23:16:41

Common European Framework	Guided Learning Hours
A2	approximately 180-200
B1	approximately 350-400
B2	approximately 500-600
C1	approximately 700-800
C2	approximately 1,000-1,200

Underestimate explained



Sent: Fri 12/09/2008 15:35

Dear John de Jong,

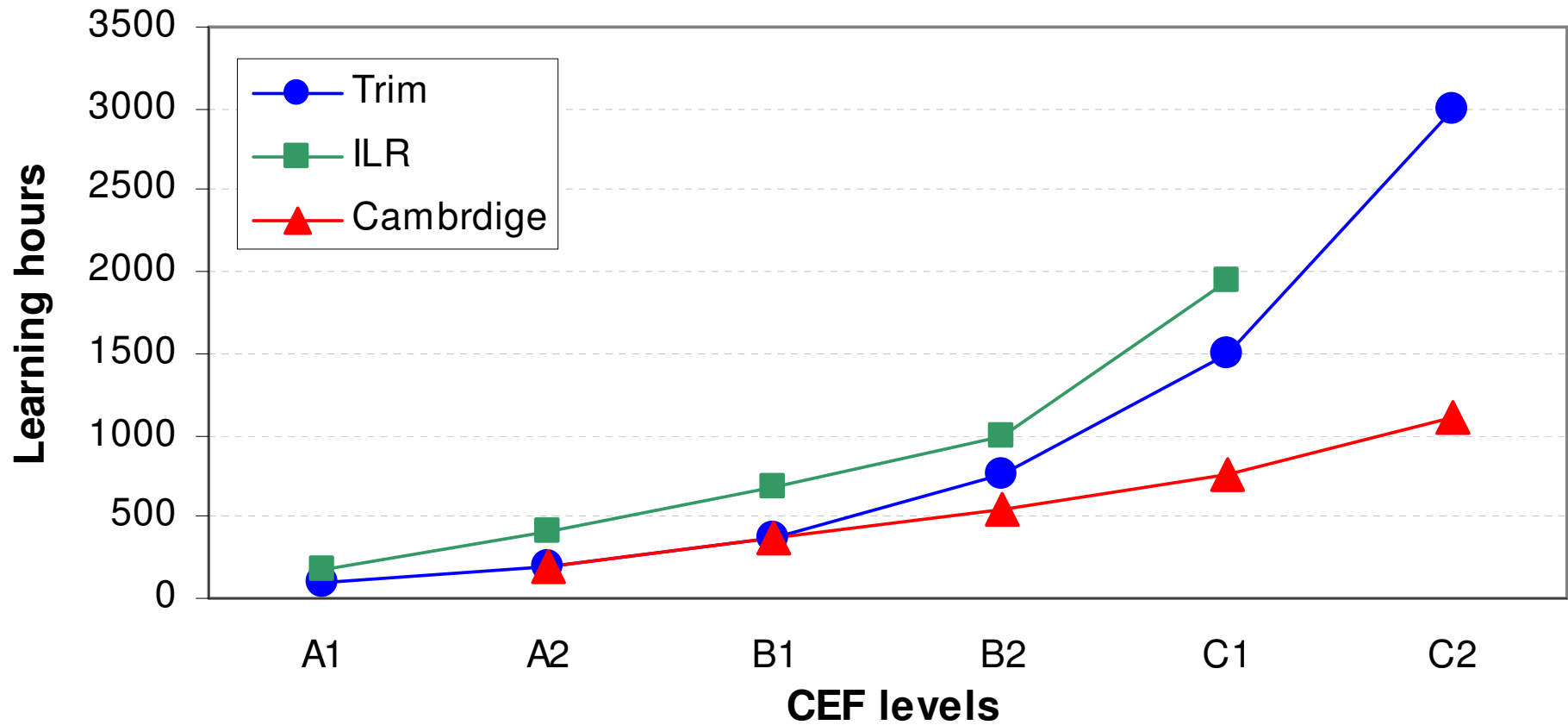
The numbers quoted on this page are an approximate figure for how long it might take to prepare a candidate for each level of the CEFR if they have little/no previous experience. A candidate who was already of C1 standard therefore, may only require a further 200-400 guided learning hours to reach level C2, rather than an additional 1000-1200.

I hope that this is of assistance.

Kind Regards

Terry Knox
ESOL Helpdesk
Cambridge ESOL Customer Services

Underestimate explained



IELTS 8 Very Good User: C2 or B2?



Band 8 Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

B2 Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and **explain** a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

C2 Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations

Questions?

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