



Linguaskill

General and Business

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Test Overview

Linguaskill 
from Cambridge

- Linguaskill is an online, multi-level adaptive test designed to help educational institutions and organisations assess individual or group candidates.
- It offers a complete picture of candidates' English abilities with fast accurate testing of all four language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking.
- It provides detailed results and a clear individual report.
- Linguaskill can be easily administered and invigilated either at a test centre or at home with the use of an online invigilation system.
- Linguaskill is available in two options: **General and Business** - This gives the ability to choose the sort of language that will be tested, based on the students' objectives
- Students can choose to test all 4 skills or individual skills according to their objectives (Reading & Listening / Writing / Speaking)



Linguaskill General

Linguaskill 
from Cambridge

- Linguaskill General tests language in daily life, making it ideal for university admissions, progress measurement, or as an exit test for higher education institutions and pathway programs.
- It can also be used for recruitment for roles in non-business-specific environments where the employee needs strong English skills to perform their role but will not need specialist business terminology.
- Test topics include studying and working, making future plans, travel and technology



Linguaskill Business

Linguaskill 
from Cambridge

- Linguaskill General tests English used in a business setting, and is most suitable for students who intend to join the corporate world.
- Test topics include the buying and selling for products and services, the office, business travel and human resources.
- This test is ideal for **Business** (higher education or vocational programs) students who would like to assess their level of knowledge of Business English and who would like to join organisations that require a report stating their English level according to the CEFR.



Test Format

Reading & Listening → one test

The Reading and Listening module is adaptive: questions become easier or more difficult depending on an individual's previous answer. As a result, every candidate receives a unique version of the test tailored to their ability level. This means that the test is suitable for all abilities and offers a personalised experience.

- Length: About 60-85 minutes
- Types of questions:
 - **Read and select** - candidates read a notice, label, memo or letter containing a short text and choose the sentence or phrase that most closely matches the meaning of the text.
 - **Gapped sentences** - candidates read a sentence with a missing word and choose the correct word to fill the gap.
 - **Multiple-choice gap-fill** - candidates choose the right word or phrase to fill the gaps in a text
 - **Open gap-fill** - candidates read a short text in which there are some words missing and write in the missing word in each gap

Test Format

Reading & Listening → one test

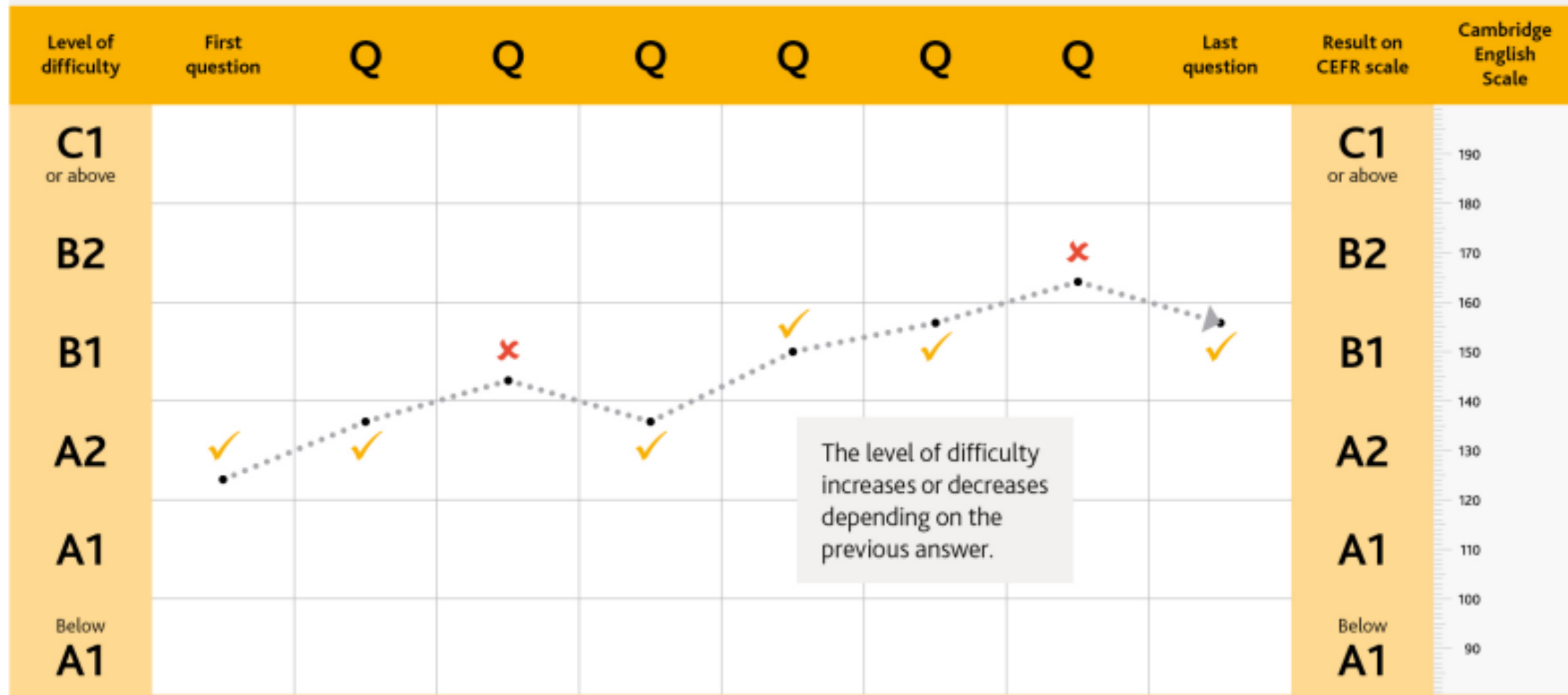
- Types of questions:
 - **Extended reading** - candidates read a longer text and answer a series of multiple-choice questions.
 - **Listen and select** - candidates listen to a short audio recording and answer a multiple-choice question with three options
 - **Extended listening** - candidates listen to a longer recording and answer a series of multiple-choice questions based on it.

[Take a Linguaskill General Reading and Listening Sample Test](#)

[Take a Linguaskill Business Reading and Listening Sample Test](#)

How adaptive testing works in Linguaskill

This graph simplifies the process of adaptivity over a limited number of questions. In the real test, there is no set number of questions; questions continue until the algorithm determines the test taker's ability level.



Test Format

Writing

- Length: 45 minutes (2 parts)
- Types of questions:
 - **Part 1 (Email)**: The candidate will be asked to write a minimum of 50 words
 - Candidates read a short prompt, usually an email. They use the information in the prompt and the three bullet points to write an email of at least 50 words. They should spend about 15 minutes on this.
 - **Part 2 (Long text)**: The candidate will be asked to write a minimum of 180 words
 - Candidates read a short text outlining a scenario and respond using the information in the scenario and the three bullet points.
 - Linguaskill General candidates will write at least 180 words to a wider audience and may be asked to produce a variety of text types (e.g. review, article, web post).
 - Linguaskill Business candidates will write a letter or report of at least 180 words, often to a manager or staff within the company or to external clients.

Test Format

Speaking

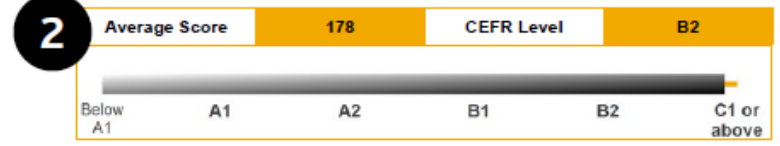
- Length: 15 minutes (5 parts)
- Types of questions:
 - **Part 1 (Interview)**: The candidate answers 8 questions about themselves (the first 2 questions are not marked)
 - **Part 2 (Reading aloud)**: The candidate reads 8 sentences aloud.
 - **Part 3 (Long turn 1)**: The candidate is given a topic to talk about for one minute. 40 seconds are allowed for preparation.
 - **Part 4 (Long turn 2)**: The candidate is given one of more graphics (for example a chart, diagram or information sheet) to talk about for one minute. One minute is allowed for preparation.
 - **Part 5 (Communication activity)**: The candidate gives their opinions in the form of short responses to five questions related to one topic. 40 seconds are allowed for preparations.

Test Report

5 Linguaskill General

Candidate name: Example Candidate Candidate number: []

Date of birth: 01 January 2000 Organisation: Example Organisation



1

Skill	Test Date	Score	CEFR Level
Listening	10 March 2020	180+	C1 or above

Can follow complex spoken language related to daily life and work and unfamiliar topics. Can extract details and key information, and infer intentions that are not explicitly stated. Can follow the sense of spoken information even when it is not clearly structured.

3

Skill	Test Date	Score	CEFR Level
Reading	10 March 2020	180+	C1 or above

Can understand long and complex texts on a wide range of topics in daily life and work, including unfamiliar and abstract. Can extract key information and details, and comprehend information that is implied. Can detect the writer's tone and point of view.

4

Skill	Test Date	Score	CEFR Level
Speaking	10 March 2020	166	B2

Can exchange views on familiar topics, accounting for and sustaining opinions. Can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of topics with a degree of fluency and spontaneity.

Skill	Test Date	Score	CEFR Level
Writing	10 March 2020	177	B2

Can write clear and detailed texts on a range of subjects, which follow standard layout and paragraphing conventions.

Results Report

- 1 the CEFR level for each skill tested and a Cambridge English Scale score
- 2 an overall CEFR level and Cambridge English Scale score if more than one skill has been taken
- 3 a graphical representation of the test taker's ability within a CEFR level
- 4 an explanation of what each score means in terms of English language ability – you can see where test takers have performed well, and where they can improve
- 5 whether the candidate took the General or Business test

Alignment of Linguaskill to the CEFR

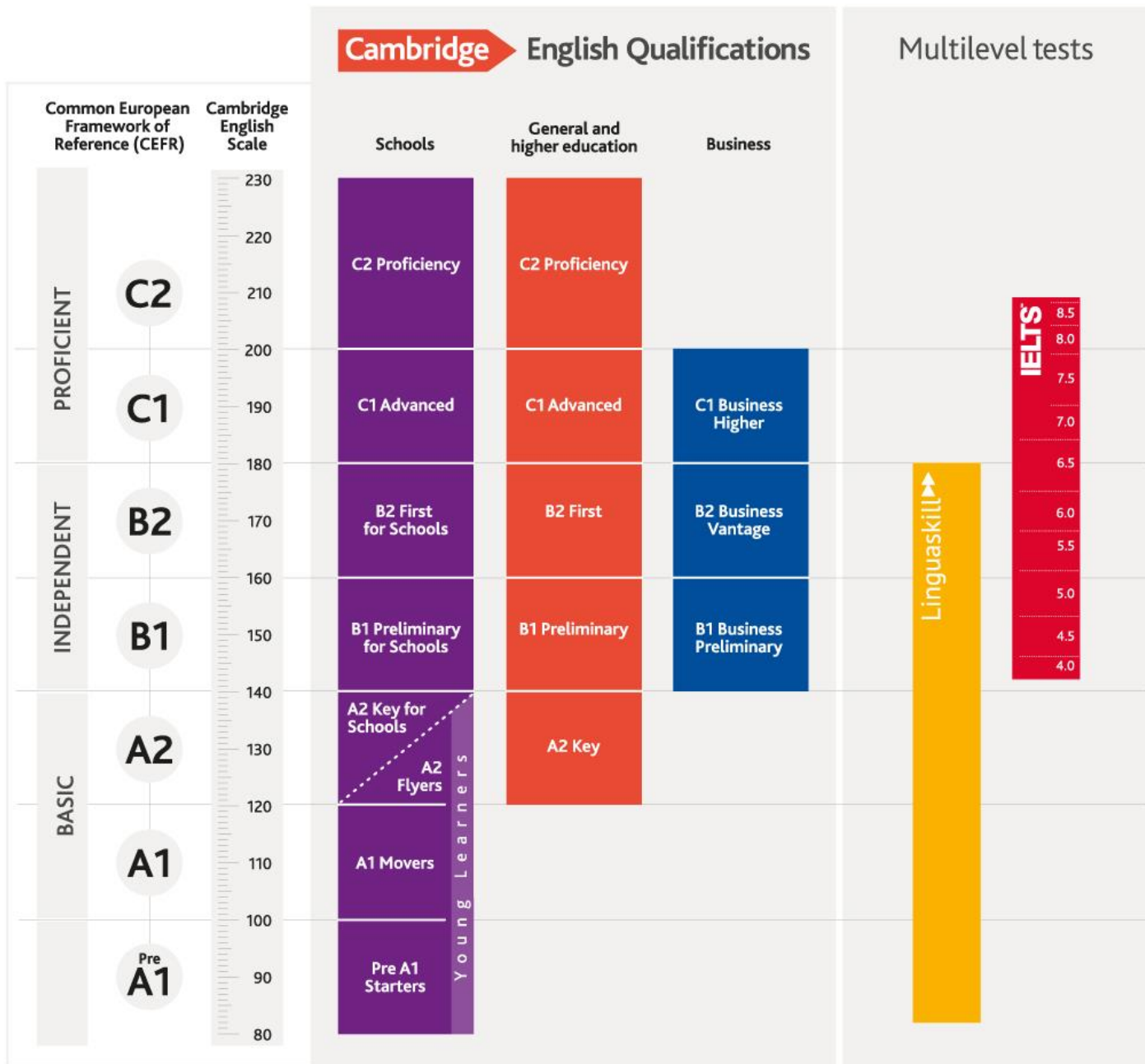


- Historically, Cambridge English Exams were the basis for defining some CEFR levels – it started with CPE in 1913, which has become C2 and in 1939 Cambridge introduced FCE, which is now associated with B2.
- Because Cambridge English Exams informed the development of the CEFR from the beginning, the links between these exams and CEFR levels have always been well established.
- The alignment of Linguaskill to the CEFR was carried out in the following five stages in 2019-20:
 1. Familiarisation (equipping expert judges with robust knowledge of the CEFR)
 2. Specification (expert judgement on the relevance of the Linguaskill test to the CEFR)
 3. Standardisation training (achieving consensus on performances and test tasks associated with each CEFR level)
 4. Standard setting (determining cut scores)
 5. Validation (collecting validity evidence about standard setting)

Alignment of Linguaskill to the CEFR



- Reading and Listening – receptive skills – the standard setting approach used was test-centred.
 - The judges reviewed the tasks in the test and decided on the level of performance on these tasks that would indicate successful achievement of the CEFR standards.
- Writing and Speaking – productive skills – the standard setting approach used was examinee-centred.
 - Examinee-centred methods are based on the performance of a representative sample of real candidates, who were evaluated according to the CEFR standards, and whose Linguaskill test scores were used to set the cut scores.
- Cambridge English views standard setting as a regular ongoing process in which the links between exams and the CEFR are constantly monitored and maintained. So far, two Linguaskill standard setting exercises have been performed, one in 2017 and the other in 2019.



Validity of LinguaSkill



- Rigorous test content review performed by language testing professionals ensures high-quality test questions which assess critical language knowledge and skills that are essential for real-world communication
- Approximately 4,000 participants of a trial study on Linguaskill reported that the test assesses language knowledge and skills that are essential for real-world communication
- The Reading and Listening modules yield highly reliable test scores, with reliability estimates of 0.94 for Reading and 0.93 for Listening. Regular checks are done to maintain this high level of test reliability

Validity of LinguaSkill



- The writing component of Linguaskill is marked by an auto-marker developed based on machine learning technology – Institute of Automated Language Teaching and Assessment (ALTA) at the University of Cambridge.
- Work with researchers from the Department of Engineering, Computer Laboratory and the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics to create the next generation of AI-empowered assessment and learning tools.
- Research has indicated that the automated scores are highly correlated with those awarded by certified human assessors, which are considered gold standard. This suggests that the auto-marker has achieved the marking accuracy of a highly trained Cambridge English examiner

Validity of LinguaSkill



- The Speaking component of Linguaskill adopts a hybrid approach to marking in which candidates' oral responses are marked by either an auto-marker or human assessors.
- When the automarker indicates low confidence in marking, the test response is flagged up and escalated to human examiners.
- Research has found that hybrid marking resulted in a good agreement with exclusive human marking in terms of 95.6% exact agreement and 100% adjacent agreement on the CEFR.
- During test construction all questions are aligned with the CEFR standards in all components of the test

Cognitive Validity of the Linguaskill Writing test



- Cognitive validity concerns the extent to which the cognitive process required to complete test tasks resemble those that a test taker would normally employ in non-test situations (Weir 2005).
- **Eberharter et al., 2020** – 30 L2 English learners of various proficiencies responding to two writing tasks: short informal email address to a person familiar to the writer and a longer and more formal piece of writing addressed to an unknown reader.
- The study demonstrated that the test takers engaged in a range of planning, translation, execution and monitoring processes. These processes, according to the researchers, reflect cognitive processes that one would engage in real-life writing tasks as specified by theoretical models of writing.
- Example: eye-tracking and keystroke-logging data suggested that the 2 writing tasks are of appropriate complexity and thus result in different cognitive processes behaviours and text features, which helps distinguish writers' proficiency levels

Cognitive Validity of the Linguaskill Reading and Listening



- **Latimer and Chan (2020)** – 65 B1, B2 and C1 level students of different universities in the UK.
- Eye-tracking, stimulated recall interviews and questionnaires were used to provide insight into students' cognitive processes involved in completing the Linguaskill Reading and Listening tasks.
- One of the conclusions was that computer-adaptive tests such as Linguaskill open up opportunities for better learning and assessment experiences when prompt-individualised feedback can be provided to direct more effective teaching and learning.

Validity evidence for the Linguaskill Speaking test



Test Content

- **Xu and Gallacher (2017)** – conducted a survey on 3,601 adult English language learners from 23 countries in a global trial of the Linguaskill Speaking test.
 - The majority of the participants reported that the speaking tasks were similar to how they used English in the real world (65.3%) and that the speaking topics were closely related to their life (57.9%). In addition, approximately 70% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Linguaskill Speaking test allowed them to demonstrate their English-speaking ability.

Reliability of examiner marking

- **Xu and Gallacher (2017)** – Five Linguaskill speaking examiners were asked to mark test responses produced by 60 candidates of various proficiency levels. Reliability was estimated using interclass correlation coefficients (ICC)
 - ICC value between 0.75 and 0.90 is considered good reliability and a value above 0.90 indicates excellent reliability
 - The study shows that the reliability of single human marking varies from 0.84 to 0.91 in different parts of the test and 0.91 for the whole test
 - **Brenchley (2020)** re-examined inter-rater reliability using a larger dataset of 204 Linguaskill Speaking tests marked independently by 3 examiners. The study reported a single-marker ICC of 0.90 for the whole test

Validity evidence for the Linguaskill Speaking test



Reliability of the auto-marker on its own

- **Jones, Brenchley and Benjamin (2020)** conducted an evaluation study on the current version of the auto-marker on its own. The evaluation was based on a dataset of 9,286 Linguaskill Speaking tests reflecting live candidature.
- The study found that when the same CEFR cut-off values are applied to auto-marker and human raw scores, the auto-marker awarded the same CEFR grade as the examiners in 56.8% of the tests. In 96.6% of the tests, the difference between computer marking and human marking was equal to or smaller than one CEFR. In 3.4% of the tests, the auto-marker and human examiners differed by more than one CEFR level.

Reliability of Hybrid Marking

- Hybrid marking is about escalating to human examiners any responses which the auto-marker may have ‘mismarked’ – defined as cases where the auto-marker and human scores are likely to be further than one CEFR level apart on the scoring scale.
- **Jones et al (2020)** conducted research on the reliability of the flagging system used in the Linguaskill speaking test. The study shows that 90% of the samples flagged by the system indeed needed remarking.

Test Security



- Linguaskill can be delivered in a Test Centre – using the centre’s computer laboratory.
 - All centres receive a set of instructions developed by Cambridge Assessment English to ensure all invigilators are trained to identify potential breaches of rules and regulations.
- Linguaskill can also be delivered online (at home) – using an online invigilation system - Proctortrack

ProctorTrack



- 3 level security invigilation system
 - Artificial intelligence screening
 - Human general screening
 - Human specific screening
- Onboarding process with face and ID (passport) scanning to ensure the candidate taking the test matches the ID provided
- Audio, Video and Screen recording of the entire test
- Recording is first scanned by the AI system, which flags all soft and hard violations during the test
- Next, the recording is checked by the ProctorTrack team who remove all the soft violation flags (e.g – background noise) and keep the hard violation flags to be reviewed.
- Finally, the recording is checked by the TestED English team in Australia who assess the violations kept by the ProctorTrack team and make a final decision to validate or cancel the results.
- Candidates who are caught violating the test are reported to Cambridge Assessment English and can be banned from taking Linguaskill in the future.

References



- Eberharter, K., Guggenbichler, E., Holzknrecht, F., Zehentner, M., Schwarz, V., & Kremmel, B. (2020). Probing the cognitive validity of the Linguaskill writing component: Exploring test takers' cognitive processes using eye tracking and keystroke logging (Funded Research Programme Report Series). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment.
- Latimer, N. and S. Chan (2020). The cognitive processes of B1, B2 and C1 students performing the Linguaskill extended listening and reading tasks: an eye tracking investigation (Funded Research Programme Report Series). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment.
- Xu, J and Gallacher, T (2017) Linguaskill Speaking trial report, Cambridge Assessment English internal research report.
- Jones, E, Brenchley, M and Benjamin, T (2020) An investigation into the hybrid marking model for the Linguaskill Speaking test, Cambridge Assessment English internal research report.
- Brenchley, M (2020) Re-examining the reliability of human marking in the Linguaskill Speaking test, Cambridge Assessment English internal research report.

Useful Links

- [Linguaskill – The science behind the test](#)
- [Linguaskill – Testimonials and case studies](#)
- [Linguaskill – Practice materials](#)

THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?