



Using the Common European Framework of Reference in the evaluation of educational achievement in foreign and second languages

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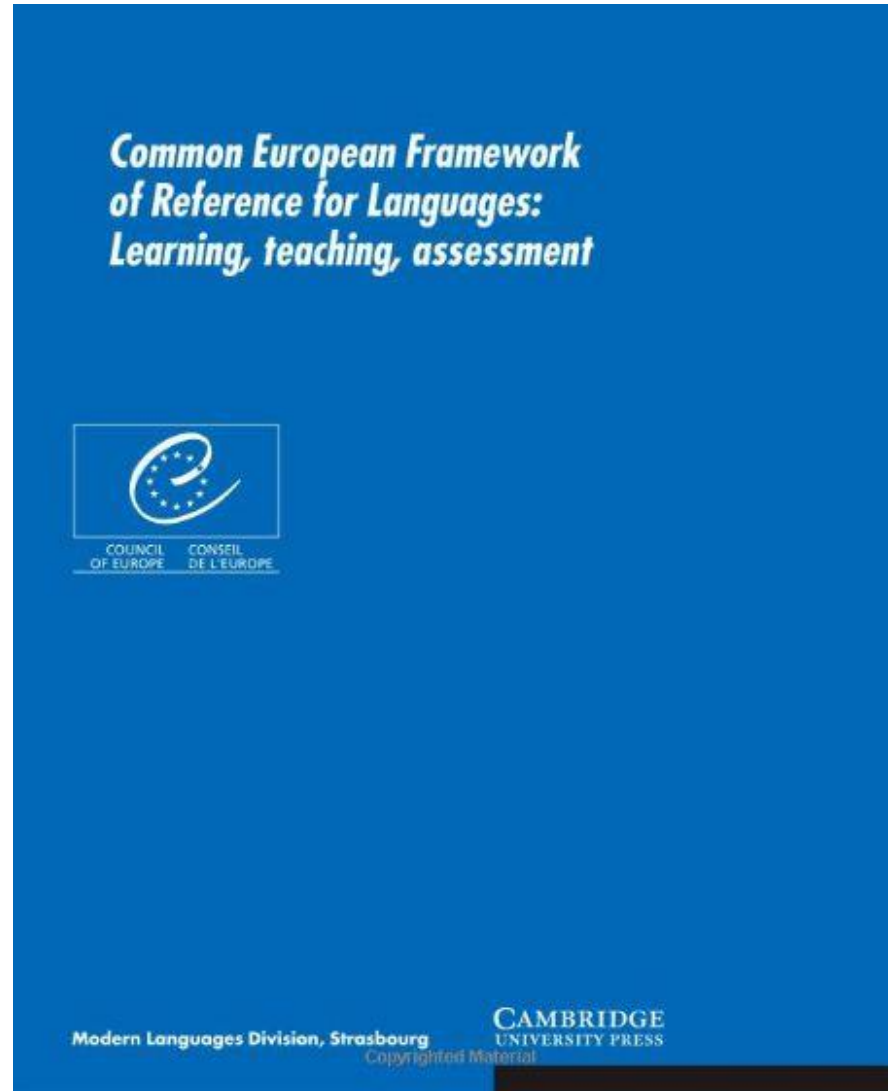
Outline

- Common European Framework of Reference
- Definitions of levels of language proficiency
- CEFR in national and international evaluations of educational achievement in languages
- How was the CEFR made use of in them?
- Advantages and challenges

CEFR

Common European
Framework of
References for
Languages: Learning,
Teaching, Assessment

Council of Europe 2001



Functional language proficiency: levels and areas

Framework defines:

1. **Levels** of knowing / mastering a language (levels of proficiency)
 - from basic to very advanced proficiency
2. Various **areas of language use & proficiency**:
 - speaking, writing; sociolinguistic ability
 - areas of life / language use
 - contexts, activities, situations, texts, ...

Levels of proficiency in the CEFR

Skillful language user C	C2	Flawless, precise and appropriate use in demanding situations
	C1	Versatile and effective language use
Independent language user B	B2	Comprehension of novels and different factual texts; can argue for an opinion.
	B1	Can manage in everyday contexts
Basic language user A	A2	Simple social interaction
	A1	Most basic needs and very simple interaction

What is the CEFR?

- Not a coherent 'theory' or 'model' of language proficiency
- Not a 'recipe' for designing language tests
- A resource: support for different learning, teaching and assessment needs
- Common **metalanguage** (terms, concepts) to talk about language for everybody working or interested in languages
 - Council of Europe encourages people to adapt the Framework for different purposes

Why are common levels of language proficiency useful?

- Proficiency scale = definition of the quality of language proficiency
 - A common understanding of language proficiency, progress in language learning and quality of language ability
- Intelligibility, transparency and comparability
- learning objectives
 - achievement of objectives / quality of ability
 - assessments and certificates (nationally and internationally)
- **criterion-related** assessment

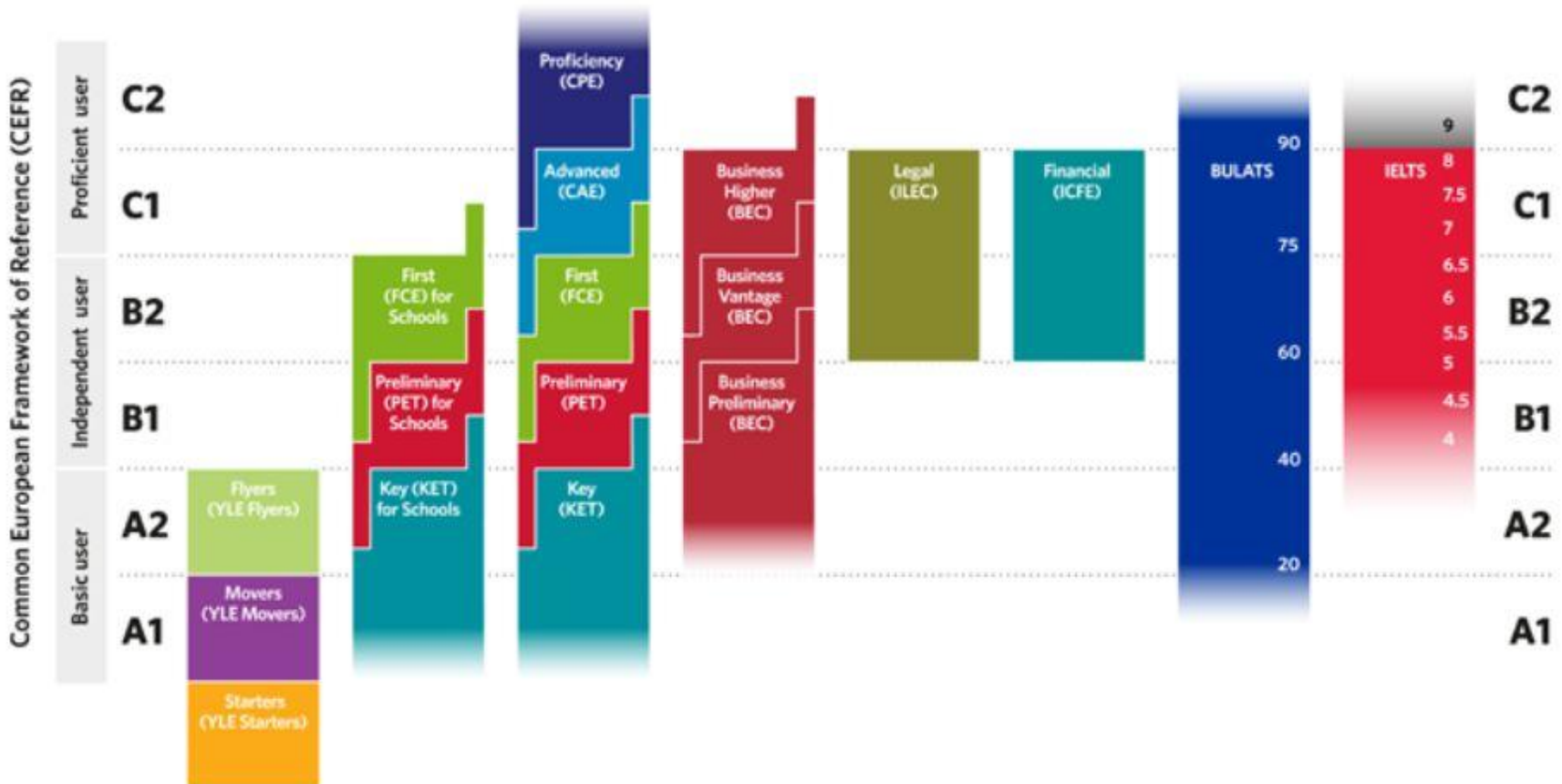
Linking tests and assessments to the CEFR

- linking = linking to the 6-point CEFR scale
- practically all major international language examinations (TOEFL, IELTS, Goethe Institut,...)
- also recent national and international assessments of educational achievement in foreign & second languages
 - The European Survey of Language Competences
 - The Finnish study of foreign language achievement

Example of international English language examinations and the CEFR scale

Cambridge English

A range of exams to meet different needs



The European Survey of Language Competences (ESLC)

- by the European Commission, in 14 EU countries / regions, in 2012
- over 50 000 students (mostly) at the end of compulsory education
- English, French, German, Italian, Spanish
 - two languages per country
- reading, listening, writing

The Finnish study of foreign language achievement

- by Finnish national educational authorities, in 2013
- students at the end of compulsory education
- English, French, German, Russian, Swedish
 - one or two different curriculum levels / types
- reading, writing, listening, speaking

How was the CEFR used in the ESLC and Finnish studies? 1

- CEFR provided the overall assessment framework

(1) target level specifications

- A1/A2, A2/B1, B1/B2 in ESLC (routing procedure)
- specific target levels in Finland, depending on language & curriculum (e.g. A2.2)
- standard setting procedures for items & performance samples

(2) content selection

checklists for topics, functions, text types, etc



How was the CEFR used in the ESLC and Finnish studies? 2

(3) rating learners' speaking and writing performances

- directly or indirectly

(4) reporting the results of the assessments

- ESLC: proportion of students in different countries (and in EU overall) at below A1, A1, A2, B1 and B2, in different skills and languages
- Finland: proportion of students at A1.1, A1.2, A1.3, A2.1, A2.2, B1.1, B1.2, B2.1 and B2.2 or above, in different skills and languages

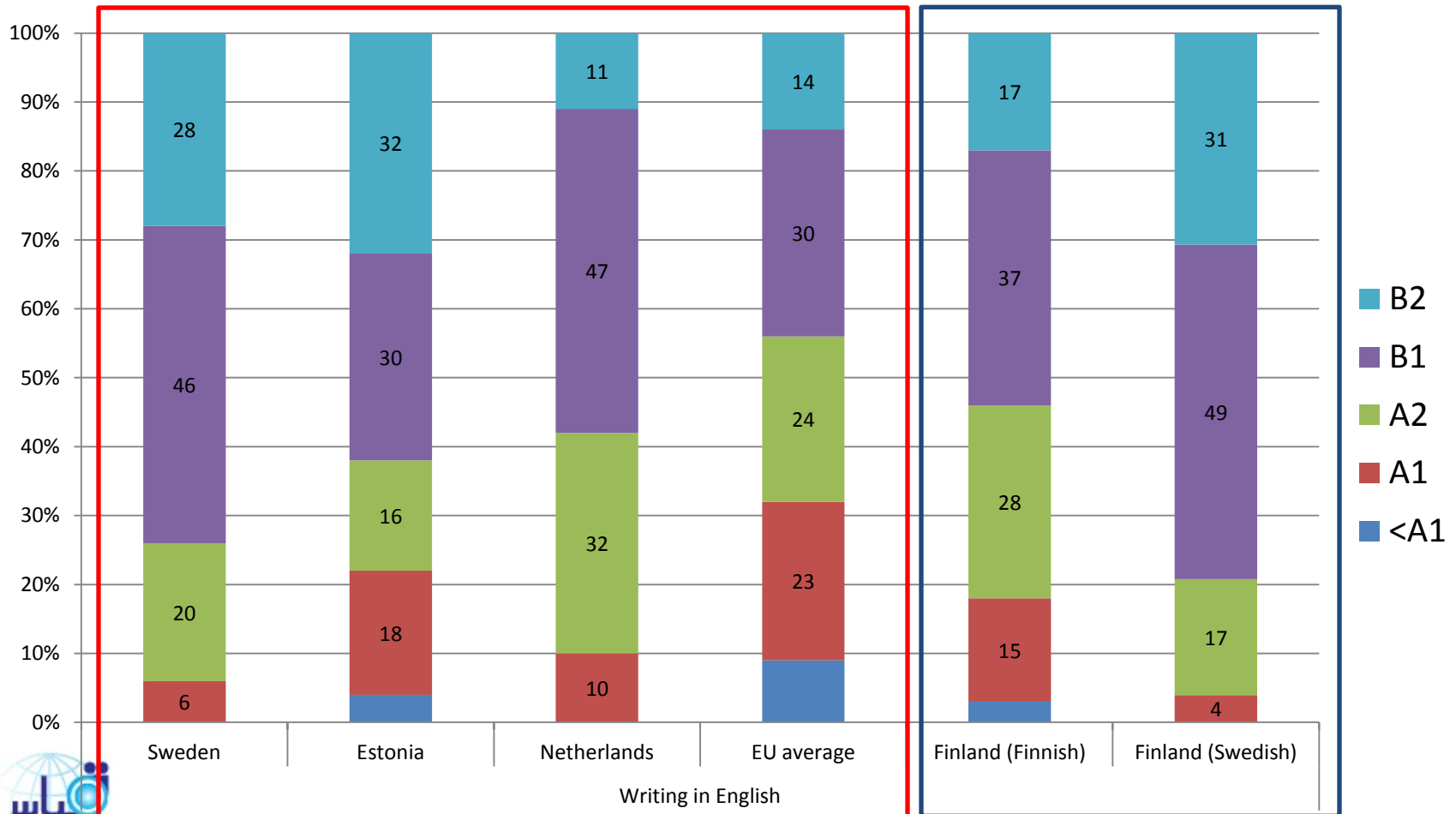
Advantages in using the CEFR

- CEFR as the assessment framework
 - defining content and test & item difficulty
 - reporting results
- Transparency and comparability of different tests and assessments
 - e.g. the ESLC and the Finnish study

Comparing results from different assessments

ESLC 2012

FINLAND 2013



Challenges in using the CEFR

- CEFR is limited as a basis for designing assessments (e.g., defining comprehension and item difficulty, test design & quality)
- standard setting: methods, definition of comprehension, definition of mastery
- comparability of CEFR levels for speaking and writing vs reading and listening

Conclusion

- Impact of the CEFR on language education and particularly on assessments has been high
- CEFR in evaluations of educational achievement in foreign & second languages: examples of ESLC and Finland
- How the CEFR was made use of in them
- **Advantages** and challenges in the use of the



THANK YOU!



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