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Jumping through hoops and keeping the human-in-the-loop —Interview with Dr Nick Saville

At the JALT International Conference in Tsukuba, Japan, in November 2017, two of the *CEFR Journal*'s editors delighted in being offered the opportunity to interview Dr Nick Saville (Director of Research and Thought Leadership at Cambridge Assessment English). At the conference, Dr Saville presented a keynote speech entitled *Data & Devices: the 4th Industrial Revolution & Learning*, as well as a workshop focusing on *LOA: Understanding & Using Assessment to Support Learning*. LOA here stands for *Learning Oriented Assessment*.

In the interview, we were hoping to elicit some insights and answers about dealing with technology in language learning, teaching, and assessment, as well as on issues related to the CEFR in general, and the Cambridge English Profile[1] series in particular. Towards the end of the interview, we asked some self-referential questions. To make our intentions very clear, we were hoping they might further aid our readers in understanding what we are aiming to achieve by launching this journal. To whom is the journal addressed? And, most importantly, why are we seeing a need for such a journal to fill a space previously sparsely filled at best? We would be delighted were the kind reader to overlook this insolence and not mistake it for improper indulgence or undue navel gazing. Thank you.

Keywords: Japan, CEFR-J, assessment, artificial intelligence, Cambridge Maxims, productive skills

Morten Hunke: Thank you for agreeing to talk to us and answer a few questions! Let's see if we can get through most of them, but of course we have a bit of a priority list. I'll just start with an open question on the CEFR: what was your first contact with the CEFR? What do you think are the strengths and the weaknesses of the framework?

Dr Nick Saville: I trace the CEFR back to the early '70s (1970-1972) when the modern languages project of the Council of Europe (CoE) started. It was an evolution of *learning objectives* and *levels* which started at that time.

My first interaction with the CoE level system was in 1987, when I first came to Japan. At the time, I used the Waystage and Threshold[2] (van Ek and Trim 1991a, 1991b) levels to inform the specifications for two tests—the Pre-PET and the PET (Preliminary English Test)—which are now A2 Key[3] and B1 Preliminary respectively[4] in the Cambridge English Qualifications, named for their CEFR level.

Interestingly, both those tests were designed and evolved from the Japanese context, when I was working here with local partners to introduce a more communicative approach. It was based on the understanding at the time of communication and levels, which were the forerunner of the CEFR that finally came out in 2001.

In addition to that, in 1990, Cambridge University Press (CUP) published the revision of the Waystage and Threshold levels and it was around that time that I began my association with John Trim. Also, independently of the CoE, a group of test providers set up ALTE[5], the Association of Language Testers in Europe, and published a 5-level system in 1991 that incorporated the Waystage at Level 1. Level 2 was the Threshold Level, and in the course of the 1990s, ALTE added in a Breakthrough Level (now A1)

1. English Profile: https://www.englishprofile.org/?
2. T-series Books: https://www.englishprofile.org/component/content/article?id=119&lt=.
3. A2 Key: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/key/
4. B1 Preliminary: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/preliminary/
5. Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE): https://www.alte.org/.

through a project carried out by the so-called FINGS Group—the Finnish, Irish, Norwegian, German and Swedish members—that had an interest in developing this lower level.

So ALTE was developing a 5- or 6-level system (depending on how you think of it) at the same time as the Rüschlikon Conference in 1991 (Little, Gollier and Hughes 2011). This conference was the impetus for developing the CEFR as we now know it—as well as the European Language Portfolio Project.

So through Cambridge and ALTE, I have been working on the CEFR concept since that time. My colleague Michael Milanovic, who was then the manager of ALTE, represented Cambridge and ALTE on the Sounding Board Group. This was a group of invited experts that helped the authors and the CoE put together the CEFR. I remember going to the launch of the pre-publication version in 1996 in Strasbourg as an expert in a wider consultation group of experts.

In the period between 1996 and the publication date (end of 2000), we interacted with the CoE in various ways to help them collect data about the Pilot Versions. I was on a group that was consulted about the editing of the final document, and ALTE provided one of the appendices. ALTE and DIALANG had both developed Can Do statements in parallel to the CEFR and these were included as additional examples (CoE 2001).

In the earlier publication (dated 1995/96), the Can Do statements that Brian North had validated were seen as exemplars and appeared in the appendix rather than in the body of the text. By 2001, only the ALTE (2002) and DIALANG ones remained as appendices, and the others were incorporated into the body of the CoE text as we currently know it (2001, 2002).

Morten Hunke: According to Little (2011), the CEFR was initially intended to facilitate closer interdependency between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. He also goes on to suggest working towards an assessment culture in which external tests and exams exist in a continuum with teacher assessment, peer assessment and learner self-assessment. Do you think the four maxims[6] that Cambridge English (2016) stipulate, provide all the stakeholders with opportunities to refer back to the action and reflection principles that underpin the CEFR?

Dr Nick Saville: Well, yes, I agree with David. In fact, his vision of the relationship with learning and teaching assessment has actually evolved in Cambridge English around the notion of Learning Oriented Assessment or LOA, which as you know, I call a *systemic approach*. It is one that brings together all stakeholders to facilitate learning and to allow learners and teachers to demonstrate their skills—it aims to create an effective *ecosystem of learning.*

The Cambridge English maxims for achieving *positive impact by design*—which we designed back in in 1995 or 1996—were aimed at achieving positive impact of our exams in local contexts. So, it is really an approach that enables assessment providers to ensure that stakeholders are consulted and informed, and that we demonstrate through collecting evidence that the intended impacts, including washback and so on, are achieved when implementing a testing project.

Morten Hunke: I see, but what does this mean in practice?

Dr Nick Saville: The idea is that you need a rational and well-planned approach to your assessment design that allows you *ab initio* to come up with an impact-by-design concept. In other words, you have a clear idea at the start of the impact that you hope to achieve.

In implementing your testing project, there's no point coming up with a great test if the majority of the stakeholders fail to understand what the constructs are, or what the intended impacts should be when we put it into practice in context.

Communication with the stakeholders is therefore fantastically important. I think there's typically not enough focus on helping people to understand assessment in their own contexts—what is now known as assessment literacy.

This requires a lot of support from the assessment providers themselves—an infrastructure to provide

6. Maxim 1: Plan, Maxim 2: Support, Maxim 3: Communicate, Maxim 4: Monitor and Evaluate

relevant materials, to train stakeholders, to 'hold their hand' if you like, to check back that they 'get it'. This 'rational model' is an iterative one, where you are collecting information and adjusting things as you go along.

Of course, monitoring doesn't just stop at a certain point; it's a cyclical process. So, after five years, for example, you need to know whether the effects and consequences are still the ones that you observed at the beginning. Or if you discern that things don't go as planned, or there are unexpected or unintended consequences—which is typical in most social and educational behaviours—you must be able to adjust your system to respond to this evidence. As a responsible body involved in implementing educational reforms, you cannot carry on regardless. That is a recipe for negative impact.

Morten Hunke: So, that includes you trying to have as much communication as possible with the test centres, people who are facilitators in the countries who are then talking to the examiners-to-be and the current examiners?

Dr Nick Saville: Yes. I mean it's a systemic, networking approach. You can't do exams *to* people; exams and other forms of assessment are always embedded within an educational context. This means that all forms of assessment need to be both externally valid and locally implemented, so that what is determined to be the outcomes actually get implemented in practice with the stakeholders in the contexts where they are used.

Of course, education reform is always a slow process. Often, it is not longitudinally planned with enough 'runway' to achieve what is needed. You need to have active participation and to take your stakeholders with you. Working side-by-side, assessment providers can help them bring about intended improvements to the educational outcomes.

Morten Hunke: On that note, you said earlier that KET (Key English Test) was 'begotten' in the Japanese context—that it developed from ideas you and other people had while working here in the 1980s.

And someone who runs a test centre here in Japan told me, the one thing that prevents people—especially high school students—from taking the test is that most test centres offer the tests on Saturdays only. Of course, this is a very concrete thing, but it's also a communication thing.

Dr Nick Saville: You're right, it's an issue of making international exams more accessible in local contexts. International assessment providers like Cambridge English tend to have international dates, and this can sometimes be a problem locally.

When we designed Pre-PET for Japan, its early trials and implementations were on Sundays to fit local preferences. At that time, we could fit in with the Japanese school system. Later the Pre-PET model was adapted as an international test and it became Key (or KET) in 1994. The Sunday dates were suspended as they are not popular in most countries.

Going forward, I think one of the things that is going to change is that technology and computer-delivered tests will enable more frequent dates and greater flexibility to meet local needs. This is what we're increasingly attempting to do—to customise and personalise our service to respond to local requirements. This means becoming increasingly 'learner-centric'.

I think over the next few years you will see more Cambridge English centres opening up in Japan, and a growing interest amongst Japanese learners in taking international tests beyond the ones that are currently available.

Thirty years ago, EIKEN[7] was particularly strong and their tests were embedded in the school system—I imagine this is still the case to some extent? With the test dates published in staff rooms and with the teachers being EIKEN-trained examiners, it meant that the EIKEN approach actually became part of the education system. Similarly, in the world of work, TOEIC[8] has occupied that space for more than 30 years.

It seems that there's now an appetite for alternative approaches and more choice—and there is an

7. Eiken Foundation of Japan: http://www.eiken.or.jp/eiken/en/
8. TOEIC: https://www.ets.org/toeic

impetus from the Japanese government to promote four-skills tests as ways into university. This will mean that the Cambridge English learning-oriented approach may become both more relevant in the local context, and more widely recognised. This will give it the currency needed to make it worth the effort to prepare for our exams.

Morten Hunke: What about the communicative mission the CEFR has? That very much permeates the Cambridge English tests. How does that relate to the simultaneous use of technology?

How do you think using technology for rating—writing and/or speaking—can actually be something that sends us on a path towards the future? What role do human raters still have to play in a scenario where artificial intelligence (AI) is rating writing and speaking, and potentially other parts of tests as well?

Dr Nick Saville: That's a very good question. But I think there's a way to go before humans are not part of the equation anymore.

At the moment, in Cambridge English we don't see our auto-rating system as a replacement for humans. Currently IELTS[9]—which, as you probably know, is the biggest international examination for academic proficiency testing, with more than three million candidates—still has an obligatory face-to-face oral test. And actually, it's one of the things the learners like best. Some test takers have a negative attitude towards current speaking tests based on 'talking to a computer'. This may be because current computer-based speaking tests do not provide interactive communication. I think it can feel very similar to 'talking to the wall', not dissimilar to the experience of using the old kind of language lab we had in the 1970s. It's not very motivating and it's not very much like real conversation.

However, the combination of humans and machines—what I call the 'virtuous combination' of what the human can do backed up by what the machine can do—is how I see AI going in Cambridge English. In other words, we aim to put humans and computers together to get improved benefits for both learning and assessment.

We already have a tool for assessing writing which works very well for low-stakes testing in learning contexts—it is known as Write & Improve[10]. The AI tool which underpins it is an auto-rater which can rate learners' writing as accurately as human raters for this purpose, and can provide learning-oriented feedback as well. This makes it very useful for use in certain contexts—for the lower-impact decisions that you might want to make, for institutional purposes, placement testing, benchmark testing and so on.

If you ramp up the stakes, your assessment system needs to be increasingly dependable. If you lower them, the outcomes can be mitigated by other decisions or contextual features. I think at the lower end of this continuum, you can have machine-delivered assessments, and in Cambridge English we are already there for assessing writing, and we're almost there for speaking. We are not yet there for high-stakes purposes—and we might never be if we decide that it is desirable to 'keep the human in the loop'.

Morten Hunke: I'm aware that Cambridge English is quite adamant in trying to have good communication with the people in the countries, and not only to communicate, but rather to factor in whatever special scenarios and situations exist in the country. In Japan, there is a situation where multiple-choice questions (MCQs) are king, so is it possible to marry aiming at testing productive competence and having largely MCQs? Is that something that is at all possible or would you say this is going against LOA?

Dr Nick Saville: If you're trying to test the unobservable—something going on in your brain such as the ability to understand texts through reading—you currently need to do this in an indirect way. You can't yet observe the thinking process by putting electrodes on peoples' heads or through other kinds of clever technology. Perhaps for the future?

Currently you have to elicit a response to infer how people are understanding things. In carefully designed tests of reading, for example, MCQs—particularly in a task-based context—work quite well. But I don't think there should be a role for discrete-point multiple-choice grammar items which are

9. IELTS: https://www.ielts.org/
10. Cambridge English Write & Improve: https://writeandimprove.com/

atomistic—items which are decontextualized and which can be crammed for. They don't fulfil my idea of task-based assessment and they don't fulfil the idea of something which generates the cognition akin to using the language in the target use situation. They are effectively test behaviours that can be taught as a surrogate for learning the language. So yes, I think there is a place for task-based MCQs in a communicative environment and with learning at the heart for the receptive skills.

Morten Hunke: What about productive skills or integrated tasks?

Dr Nick Saville: I think if you're talking about the productive skills, then the only way you are going to be able to test writing and speaking effectively is by getting people to speak and write, or potentially see them as integrated with other skills, i.e. 'read this and speak about it' or 'read this and write about it'.

We talk nowadays about 'six skills': reading/writing, listening/speaking, plus interaction, and mediation. Increasingly, it is seen as construct-relevant to integrate these skills to reflect real-world uses of language. For example if you were trying to recreate an academic environment, consider the following kind of scenario: 'a tutor instructs her students to read three books before their tutorial the following week, and to be prepared to talk about certain key concepts during the seminar before writing an assigned essay for assessment purposes'. How much of a student's participation in the seminar is determined by reading comprehension or fluency in speaking? We don't yet have a construct that easily accounts for this in assessment, but I think it's coming. Such constructs will be easier to operationalise using technology rather than in the traditional paper-and-pencil mode.

Morten Hunke: Coming back a little bit to the electronic online testing format, do you think there are any ethical issues in storing vast amounts of data that could be used—it could be text, it could be audio recordings—is there anything that you're concerned about?

Dr Nick Saville: Personally, I've been concerned about this for 25 years. Data protection laws have been in place at the European level, at national level and at institutional level through all kinds of codes of ethics and legal parameters. You can't keep or store people's electronic data even now without their permission, and you have to make certain things available to people if you store them. In the UK we have very strict data protection laws and even stricter European (GPDR) regulations [have] come into force in 2018.

I think people who work with us can be sure that their data is treated appropriately. It's axiomatic of educational assessment that test takers (or their guardians) must give permission for personal data to be used to make judgements and decisions about individuals. It's part of the contract of doing an international test that you sign up to giving your data to the assessment provider to make a judgment about you.

In the contract that people sign, they can also agree to their data being used for a number of legitimate purposes, such as research and validation. This will be governed by data protection regulations which are legally and institutionally validated, and may include anonymity in the way the data is stored. In Cambridge, we have built a 60 million-word corpus of learner language, taken from learners' writing—with their permission of course—and stored in such a way that meets the requirements of access and control.

As we move forward in the AI world of 'data and devices', the amount of data that will become available will make such corpora appear very small. The ethical and regulatory issues will however become increasingly complex and we will need to be more vigilant about the potential misuse of personal data.

Morten Hunke: Another question related to digitisation and especially to AI: there's a lot of talk about washback effect of tests and, as you have suggested, we know that some pretty negative washback can occur. Do you think using AI can have positive washback effects on learner autonomy—something that is especially key to the CEFR as well—and if so, how?

Dr Nick Saville: I think that the example which I'm talking about at the JALT conference is a very good example of how to implement AI in an ethical way, in order to provide learners with autonomy to learn and to get information and feedback which can help their learning progress. This information can also then can be incorporated into learning programmes.

Cambridge English's Write & Improve is basically what is called a business-to-consumer model;

it's mainly aimed at individual learners, but it can also be used by schools and teachers to aggregate information and to be used in a more programmatic way in classroom contexts. It has a feature called Classview for this.

I think you have to strive for transparency and clear explanations about your AI—how it's to be used, what its strengths and limitations are and so on. The aim should be to build trust based on sound principles—both ethical and theoretical—in order to give the public some reassurance that it is not a 'black box' doing things to people without their knowledge, awareness or consent.

There is a growing concern about this. In fact, I heard the CEO of IBM Watson—a big AI programme—talking about this on YouTube at the World Economic Forum (2017). She was saying that AI really needs to be based on these three principles—*trust,* created through *transparency,* and sound *principles*. I think that's what we are trying to do in the field of language education.

Morten Hunke: Moving back a little bit towards the CEFR and the Japanese context in particular—are you aware of research done in Japan into the CEFR and implementations of the CEFR?

Dr Nick Saville: I am indeed. In fact, leading applied linguists here have been looking at the work of the CoE for at least 20 years. I myself have welcomed delegations to Cambridge, including senior professors like Prof Ikuo Koike (Keio and Meikai University) and his associates. I introduced them to Dr John Trim, on more than one occasion in fact.

I've also been to many meetings with Japanese colleagues to discuss the underlying principles of the CEFR. Of course Prof Koike, Prof Tono and Prof Negishi (both Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) directed funded projects to investigate the adaptation of the CEFR to Japan.

The CEFR-J[11], which came out a few years ago, provides a very good example of how the CoE intended the CEFR to be used: i.e. as a document to inform, guide or help people to develop their own implementations without foisting ready-made solutions on people.

The Koike Kaken[12] (research) group spent six or seven years, I think, working through a very rigorous attempt to understand CEFR principles for use in Japan. The group concluded that much of the approach is applicable. But they also realised that the CEFR is not a 'cookie cutter' model. Although the principles provide an impetus for bringing about change, many details needed to be adapted for implementation in Japanese education. For me, it provides perhaps the best example of the CEFR being adapted in an international context.

Maria Gabriela Schmidt: Do you think the CEFR-J is a model case for other countries?

Dr Nick Saville: I think it's an interesting case study, but I don't think a 'model case' is actually needed. That would imply that *this* is the way to do it.

I recently worked with a team in Thailand which decided that they were not going to have a CEFR-Thai, and also with the Chinese Standards of English project. In both cases, the researchers decided that they wanted to use some underlying principles of the CEFR—like the action-oriented, Can Do approach—but that they didn't want to adapt the CEFR in its entirety. That's understandable because the CEFR is actually a vast reference framework and what they wanted was something specifically to guide their national, English language reform programme.

I would say that rather than being a model, CEFR-J is exemplary in the way the team went about their work—providing a rigorous and transparent way of reaching conclusions that have been documented and widely published. Although the CEFR may not be well-known in Japan yet, the publications are there for people to look at it if they need to.

Of course, the latest book in the English Profile Studies (EPS) Series—*Critical, Constructive Assessment of CEFR-informed Language Teaching in Japan and Beyond* (O'Dwyer et al, 2017)— compiles some excellent case studies which document how the CEFR-J has begun to have an impact.

11. CEFR-J: http://www.cefr-j.org/ – Japanese language only.
12. Please see: https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/

EPS volume 6 is a unique collection of papers. It is not uncritical but many positive things are now documented and available for people to reflect on. I think that's the exemplary part.

Morten Hunke: This interview is going to be published in the maiden issue of our new online journal: *CEFR Journal*. This is, at least partially, in reference to Cambridge's own *English Profile Journal.* What do you think are the key aspects required of a journal with a regional focus such as ours is going to have—but dealing with the CEFR—in order to establish itself?

Dr Nick Saville: *English Profile Journal*[13] was really an opportunity when that project was at its height for people who were both working within the project, but also working within a wider network of collaborators, to share information rapidly. Although it was refereed to a high standard, it wasn't designed to set itself up as a rival to some of the applied linguistics or language testing journals, which are highly rated. In that respect, it existed and exists to share information.

Since the English Profile Programme is now in a 'business as usual' phase—it's not pushing hard on any specific topics right now—the input to that journal has rather died down, so it's residing there in the background as a sort of store of information. I think *your* impetus and using the CEFR to have a journal and to raise awareness of the CEFR and the issues in your local or regional context is an excellent idea.

In terms of online journals, I'm working on another project in Cambridge called 'Multilingualism Empowering Individuals and Transforming Society', or MEITS, which is a new interdisciplinary and internationally collaborative project on multilingualism. That project has launched an online journal in different strands.

As a way of getting peer-reviewed articles into the public domain in a timely way in support of the project, i.e. high-quality research or high-quality position papers, it's fantastic. If you wait to get into one of the established journals, then the project funding may be over.

Morten Hunke: Well that's the main idea behind it, not putting just yet another journal out there and having it highly rated. The main aim for the project is to create a forum for people. To allow researchers and practitioners to showcase the things they are doing in a more timely manner, rather than publishing it in a book like EPS volume 6 (O'Dwyer et al 2017). Of course, the volume has interesting case studies and displays a large degree of alignment of all the authors' contributions, but the new journal is really more for the community to actually do what a community is supposed to do: to communicate.

Dr Nick Saville: Yes, but I think it has to be rigorous as well; you've got to set standards, and the community has to accept that if you're not up to the required standard, then you won't get published in the journal. You have to encourage people to 'jump through the hoops', otherwise it might end up being another newsletter or a blog—blogs aren't necessarily low-grade per se, but if you want it as a journal, then you will need to set a higher academic standard. I think that's the main thing.

The fact that things take a long time is a problem with some of the established journals. They only take about 20% of contributions and tend to build up a backlog of papers under review. That's part of setting a very high standard. Getting through the peer review process in a timely way, and then getting revisions done, can mean waiting several years to get into print.

For you, I think the timeliness is really important because it's about sharing ideas. If you can't share a paper in a way that people can react to, it won't function as a sharing tool or as a community-based approach. I am fully in support of you doing it—and in making sure you do it rigorously.

Morten Hunke: That's a very good and interesting point, and in fact the last question I would like to ask is immediately related to this. We intend to be as timely as possible and as absolutely rigorous as we can be, but we are a small group, as you may be aware. What's your impression so far of the work that has been done from within this group, the CEFR & LP SIG[14] (former FLP-SIG)?

Dr Nick Saville: You've got a great bunch of people here who are doing high-quality work, so I think

13. English Profile Journal: https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/english-profile-journal

14. JALT CEFR & LP SIG: https://cefrjapan.net/

you have plenty to build on. But if you don't want it to be self-referential, then you might want to find external reviewers, such as an editorial board for the journal, who will be critical and provide a wider perspective.

Maria Gabriela Schmidt/Morten Hunke: Thank you very much!

Dr Nick Saville: Thank you indeed, it has been a very interesting conversation.

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Biography

Dr Nick Saville is Director of the Research and Thought Leadership Division for Cambridge Assessment English. He is Secretary-General of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), on the Board of Trustees for The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF), a Board member of Cambridge University's Institute for Automated Language Teaching and Assessment (ALTA), and a visiting professor for the ICT-Assisted Interpreter Training Project at Xiamen University, China.

He was a founding associate editor of the journal Language Assessment Quarterly and is currently joint editor of the Studies in Language Testing (SiLT, CUP), previously with the late Prof Cyril Weir, and editor of the English Profile Studies series (EPS, CUP). He co-authored a volume on Learning Oriented Assessment (LOA) with Dr Neil Jones (SiLT 45).

CEFR JOURNAL—RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

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Submission (Call for Papers)

This journal attempts to fall somewhere in between an inaccessible academic journal (long waiting times, fairly strict guidelines/criteria) and a newsletter (practical in nature but lacking in theoretical support/ foundation), linking research of a practical nature with relevant research related to foreign language education, the CEFR, other language frameworks, and the European Language Portfolio. While the CEFR was introduced by the Council of Europe and intended for use, first and foremost, within Europe, the influence of the CEFR now has to be attested in many places beyond European borders. It has become a global framework, impacting a variety of aspects of language learning, teaching, and assessment across countries and continents beyond the context for which it was originally created. As such, there is a pressing need to create a quality forum for sharing research, experiences, and lessons learned from applying the CEFR in different contexts. This journal provides such a forum where people involved or interested in processes of applying the CEFR can share and learn from one another.

We are continuously seeking contributions related to foreign language education, the CEFR, other language frameworks, and the European Language Portfolio. We are particularly interested in specific contextual adaptations.

Please contact the editors and submit to:

journal@cefrjapan.net

Guidelines

Submission: Annually by March 31st

Contributions: Articles (research), reports (best practice, work in progress, conference presentations), research notes, book reviews, information exchange

Language(s): English (British, American, international) preferred, but not mandatory. Other languages by request, with an extended abstract in English.

Review type: Peer review, double blind

Peer review guidelines:

We ask all peer reviewers to make every reasonable effort to adhere to the following ethical guidelines for the **CEFR Journal – Research and Practice** submissions that they have agreed to review:

- Reviewers must give unbiased consideration to each manuscript submitted for consideration for publication, and should judge each on its merits, without regard to race, religion, nationality, sex, gender, seniority, or institutional affiliation of the author(s).
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