# INTO EUROPE- EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

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Budapest, Hungary

# Common Abbreviations

Council of Europe ≠ EU:

Council is for giving advice but Union is for uniting

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning Teaching and Assessment

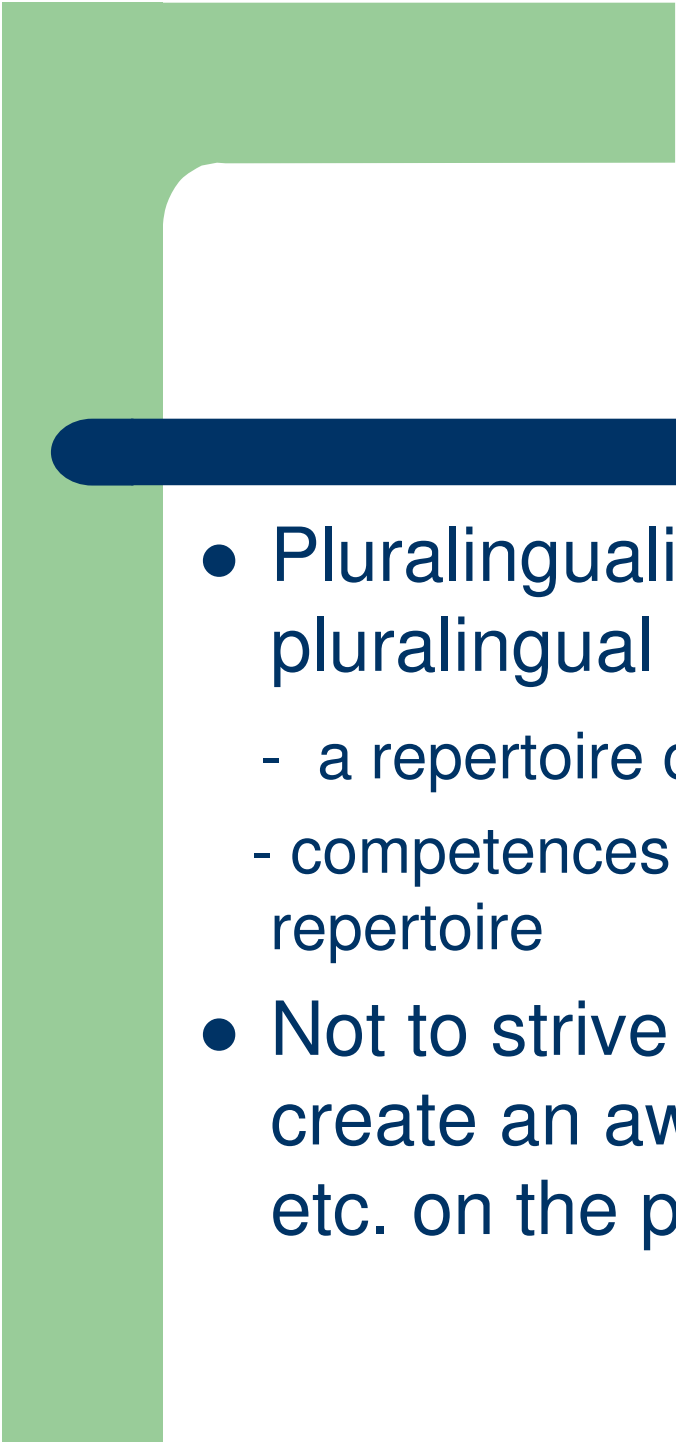EALTA: European Association for Language Testing and Assessment

DIALANG: a project for creating self assessment and diagnostic testing on-line

ELP: European Language Portfolio

# Council of Europe
# Language Education Policies

Aim:  to promote

- Plurilingualism
- Linguistic diversity
- Mutual understanding
- Democratic citizenship
- Social cohesion

- Pluralingualism is for individuals; a pluralingual person has:

  - a repertoire of languages & language varieties

  - competences of different kinds & levels within the repertoire

- Not to strive for native-like competence but to create an awareness, respect for cultures, etc. on the part of the individual

# Impact of CEFR on language education

- At learner level- the ELP
- At institutional level
- At national level
- At European Level
- At international level
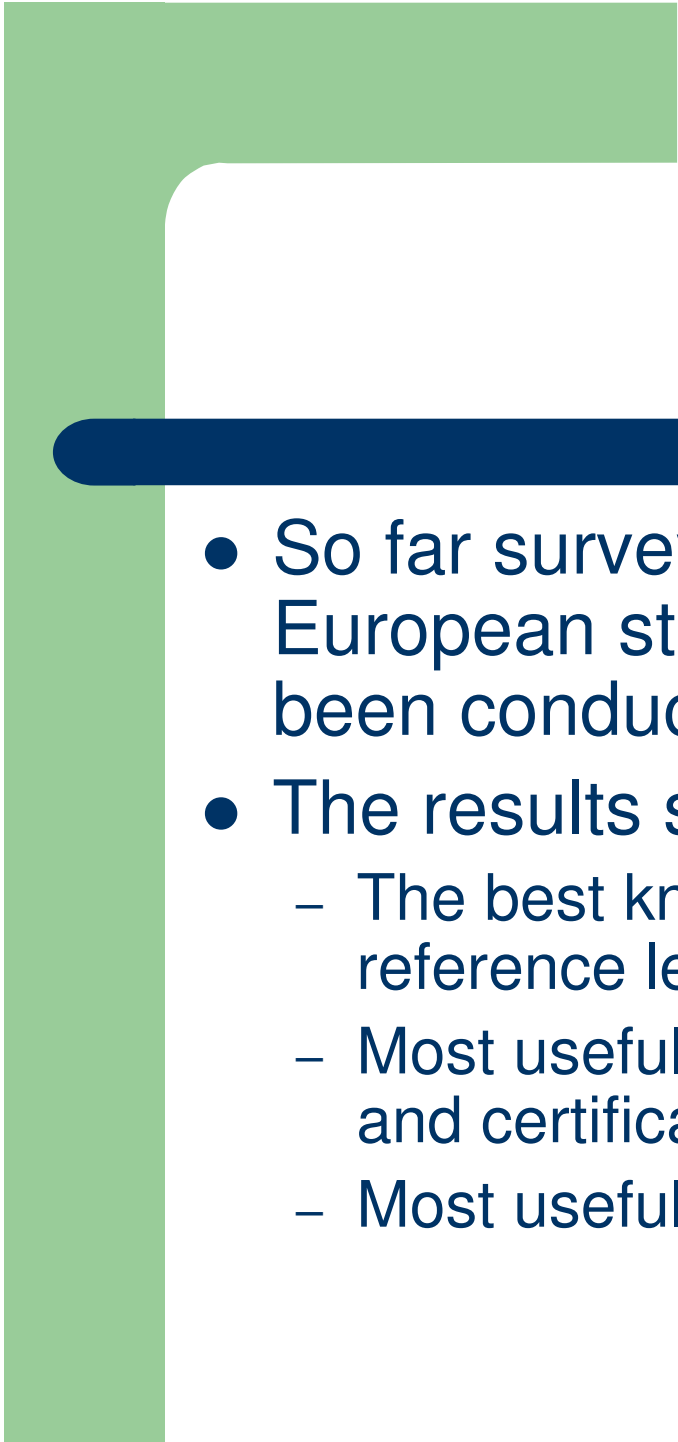
# Guiding Principles for LL

LL is for:

- *all*
- *the learner*
- *international communication*
- *Life*

Language ability development is a human right.

Language learning & teaching are life-long processes.

# Who uses CEFR?

- Teachers
- Teacher trainers
- Test developers
- Pedagogic material writers

- So far survey with 111 repondents from 37 European states, Egypt and Mexico has been conducted on the use of the CEFR.
- The results showed that
  - The best known and used parts are the common reference levels of language proficiency
  - Most useful in the domains of testing, assessment and certification
  - Most useful for examination providers

# Recommendations

- Encourage all Europeans to achieve a degree of communicative competence in FLs
- Encourage the use of FL in the teaching of non-linguistic subjects
- Support the application of communication and information technologies.....!
- Support the development of links and exchanges with institutions at all levels of education

# Standards and diversity don't like each other.

## STANDARDS

- How good things should be

## DIVERSITY

- Thinks standards impose things

There should be certain standards for unity, a common framework

How to combine standards but not invade diversity

The *Manual* is an effort to keep standards and diversity.

# The Manual

- is being piloted.
- Will be published in 2008
- is the continuation of the work of the Council of Europe's language policy division in developing planning tools.

# The Manual

- aims to:

    * contribute to competence building in the area of linking assessments to the CEF

    * encourage increased transparency on the part of exam providers

    * encourage the development of both formal and informal national and international networks of institutions and experts

    * provide a guide specifically focussed on procedures involved in the validation of a claim that certain examination or test is linked to the CEF

# But, the manual is useless if...

- If the existing exam is not **valid** and **reliable**, it is meaningless to link it to the CEFR.

# The manual..

presents four inter-related sets of procedures:

- Familiarisation:essential even for experts. Knowledge is usually superficial, even scales are not well known

- Specification

- Standard Setting

- Empirical validation

# The Hungarian Context of FL Exams and CEFR

# School-leaving Examination in English-1

- introduced in 2005

- part of the overall School-leaving Examination Reform of all school-subjects

- developed in accordance with international standards

- is a proficiency test, not a measure of achievement, and not based on any particular syllabus

- main purpose is to provide ss. with a valid, reliable and meaningful certificate of lang. proficiency on two levels: Intermediate & Advanced

# School-leaving Examination in English-2

- is intended to measure student's communicative language ability at both Intermediate & Advanced levels through separate tests of the four basic lang.skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing in contexts as close as possible to those in everyday life

- has an additional component at the Advanced level; the Use of English Paper which assesses canditates' linguistic competence; their ability to apply knowledge of grammatical structures and vocabulary

- each test contains as many different texts and tasks to provide ss. with more opportunities to demonstrate their language knowledge

# Components of the Examination

| Examination | | Timing (minutes) | | Weighing (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Part | Component | Intermediate | Advanced | Intermediate | Advanced |
| Written | **Listening** | 30 | 30 | 25 | 20 |
| | **Reading** | 60 | 60 | 25 | 20 |
| | **Writing** | 90 | 90 | 25 | 20 |
| | **Use of English** | _ | 60 | _ | 20 |
| Total: | | 180 | 240 | | |
| Oral | **Speaking** | 20 | 20 | 25 | 20 |
| Total: | | | | 100 | 100 |

# Test Level

- both levels of the examination are set to cover two 'Council of Europe' levels

- these are A2 and B1 for the Intermediate level examination, and B2 and C1 for the Advanced level

# Test taker

- all students graduating from secondary education

- Ss. need to state prior to taking the exam whether they intend to take the Intermediate or the Advanced level

# Hungarian Exams Reform Teacher Support Project

- to encourage, to foster and to bring about change in the way language is taught and learned in Hungary.
- ACHIEVEMENTS: trained item writers, including class teachers
- Trained TTs and disseminators
- Developed, refined and published item writer guidelines & test specifications
- Developed a sophisticated item production system
- Developed sets of rating scales and trained markers
- Developed interlocutor frame for speaking tests and trained interlocutors
- Items/tasks piloted
- Into-Europe series
- In-service courses for teachers in modern test philosophy and exam preparation

(Modern Public FLEs Period started in 1989 where 4 skills began to be tested, and from 1999 onwards ORIGO FLE System has been used. Unprofessional practices exist at present despite these long-term efforts)

# INTO EUROPE- EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

*Prepare for Modern English Exams*
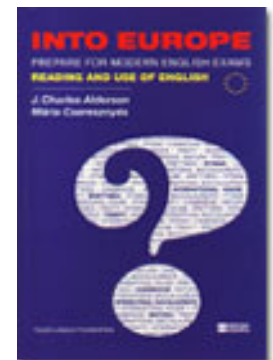
## INTO EUROPE

# Prepare for Modern English Exams
## INTO EUROPE- 1

- is for teachers and students to understand the levels and demands of modern European examinations

- is a series of four books devoted to different skills

- the four volumes:

  - Reading and Use of English
  - The Speaking Handbook
  - The Writing Handbook
  - Listening

# Prepare for Modern English Exams
# INTO EUROPE-2

- the Listening Handbook is accompanied by 2 CDs.

- the Speaking Handbook is accompanied by a five-hour DVD,showing students' performances on good and bad Speaking tasks

- The Writing Handbook presents scripts produced by real learners,which are annotated with raters comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the scripts

# Prepare for Modern English Exams
## INTO EUROPE- 3

- In the volumes you can find:

    - hundreds of tasks with keys

    - review of the process of understanding and producing language

    - Useful advice for assessment and evaluation

    - Summary of different testing methods and approaches

    - Guidelines to test design

# INTO EUROPE- EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

## European Language Portfolio

# European Language Portfolio (ELP)

- is designed to support four of the Council of Europe's key political

  aims:

    * the preservation of linguistic & cultural diversity

    * the promotion of linguistic & cultural tolerance

    * the promotion of plurilingualism

    * education for democratic citizenship

# ELP has TWO functions

- *REPORTING*

  * displays owner's capabilities in relation to foreign languages

  * supplements formal exams by presenting additional information about the owner's experience & foreign language achivement

- *PEDAGOGİCAL*

  * is used as a means of making the language learning process more transparent to learners

  * helps learners to develop their capacity for reflection & self assessment

  * fosters the development of learner autonomy & promotes life-long learning

# Parts of European Language Portfolio-2

## Language Passport

- provides an overview of the individual's proficiency in different languages

- records formal qualifications and describes language competencies and significant language and intercultural learning experiences

- includes information on partial and specific competence

- allows for self-assessment, teacher assessment and assessment by educational institutions and examinations boards

- requires that information entered in the Passport states on what basis, when and by whom the assessment was carried out

- is for adult users(16+)

# Parts of European Language Portfolio-1

**European Language Portfolio**

**Language Passport**

**Language Biography**

**Dossier**

# Parts of European Language Portfolio-3

## *Language Biography*

- facilitates the learner's involvement in planning, reflecting upon and assessing his or her learning process and progress

- encourages the learner to state what he/she can do in each language and to include information on linguistic and cultural experiences gained in and outside formal educational contexts

- is organized to promote plurilingualism i.e. the development of competencies in a number of languages.

# Parts of European Language Portfolio-4
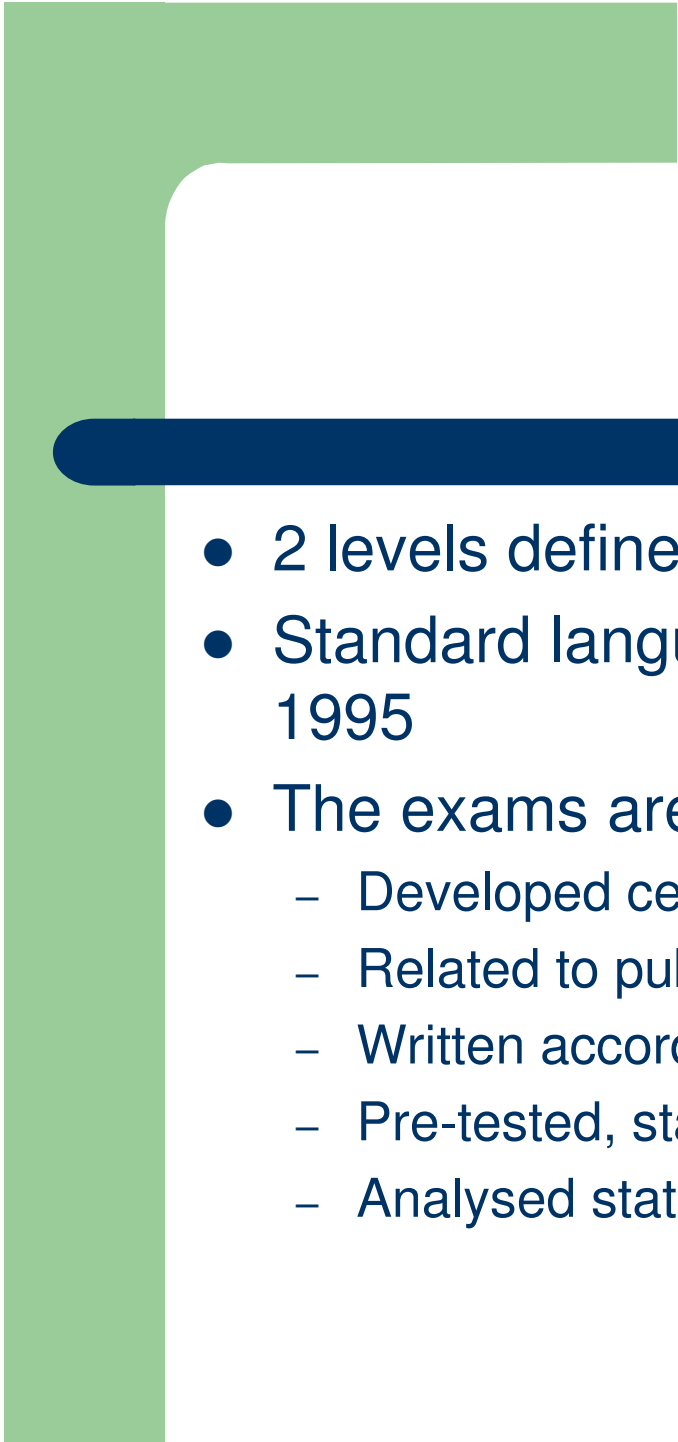
## *Dossier*

- offers the learner the opportunity to select materials to document and illustrate achievements or experiences recorded in the Language Biography or Passport.
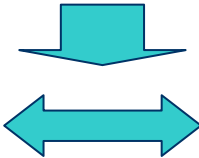
# The Catalonian Context of FL Exams and CEFR

- 2 levels defined B1?   &   B2 ?
- Standard language proficiency certificates since 1995
- The exams are:
  - Developed centrally
  - Related to published curricula
  - Written according to set specifications
  - Pre-tested, standardised marking & administration,
  - Analysed statistically

# Issues to be solved include....

- Develop an item-bank system
- Link levels to CEFR
  - Difficulty level of exams across time
  - Difficulty index of exams between 2 proficiency levels

  - Exam revision          Linking CEFR levels

- Adoption or **adaptation**?: scale development is long and indispensible process along the course

# INTO EUROPE- EUROPEAN STANDARDS IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

## Certificate of Proficiency in English(CPE)

# CPE

- is the highest level Cambridge ESOL exam
- at level C2 of the Council of Europe's CEFR for Languages
-  CPE has five papers:

  *Reading (1 hour 30 minutes)

  *Writing (2 hours)

  *Use of English (1 hour 30 minutes)

  *Listening (40 minutes (approx.))

  *Speaking (19 minutes (approx.))

# Viewpoint of a specialist in psychometrics...

# Standard Setting and Test Equating

- Standard setting is a judgemental process
- SS is an integral part of any test development & test score interpretations

- Test equating is a statistical process
- TE is limited only to linking parallel forms of the same test

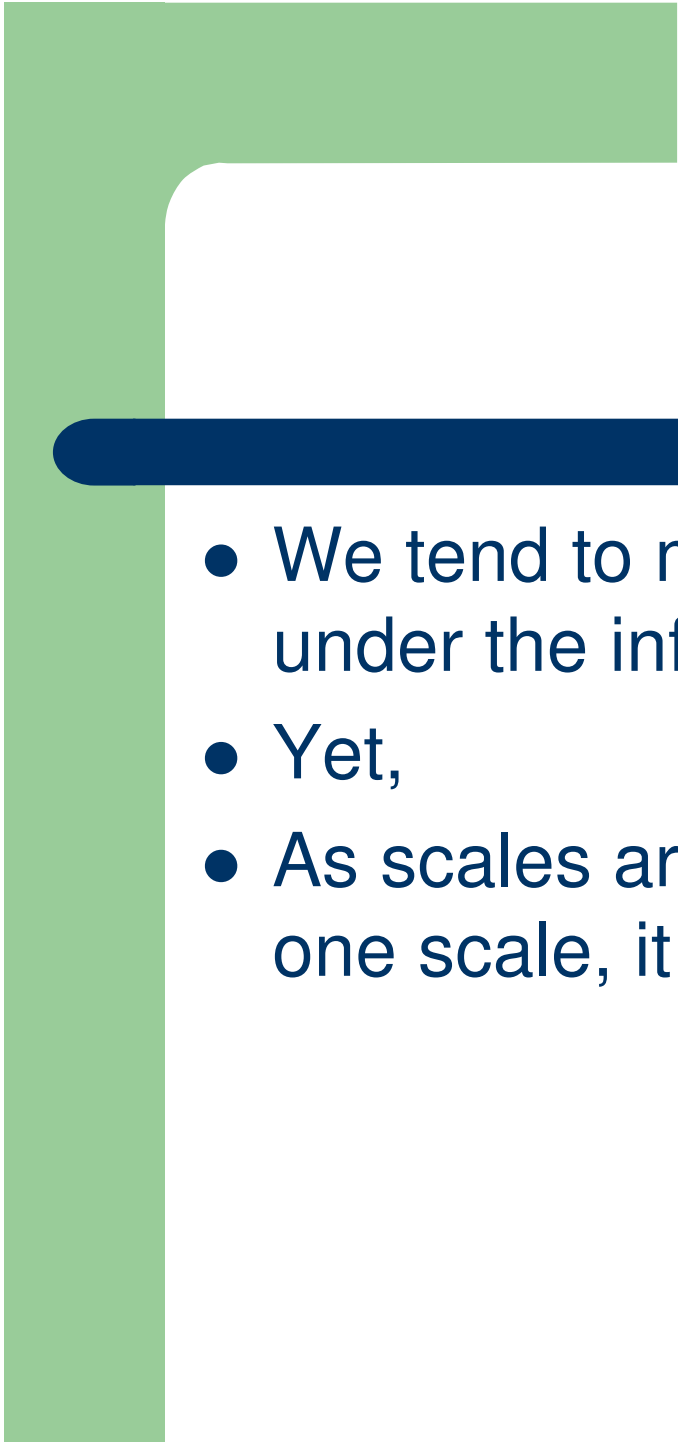# Misconceptions and definition of some testing-related terms

- Equating ≠ linking

- Alignment ≠ linking

related to examinations

related to content validity specification: both using qualitative and quantitative method- Manual Ch4 specification does not require quantitative methods for content validation

- We tend to make sample-free estimation under the influence of IRT

- Yet,

- As scales are different, if our item does not fit one scale, it does not mean that it is wrong
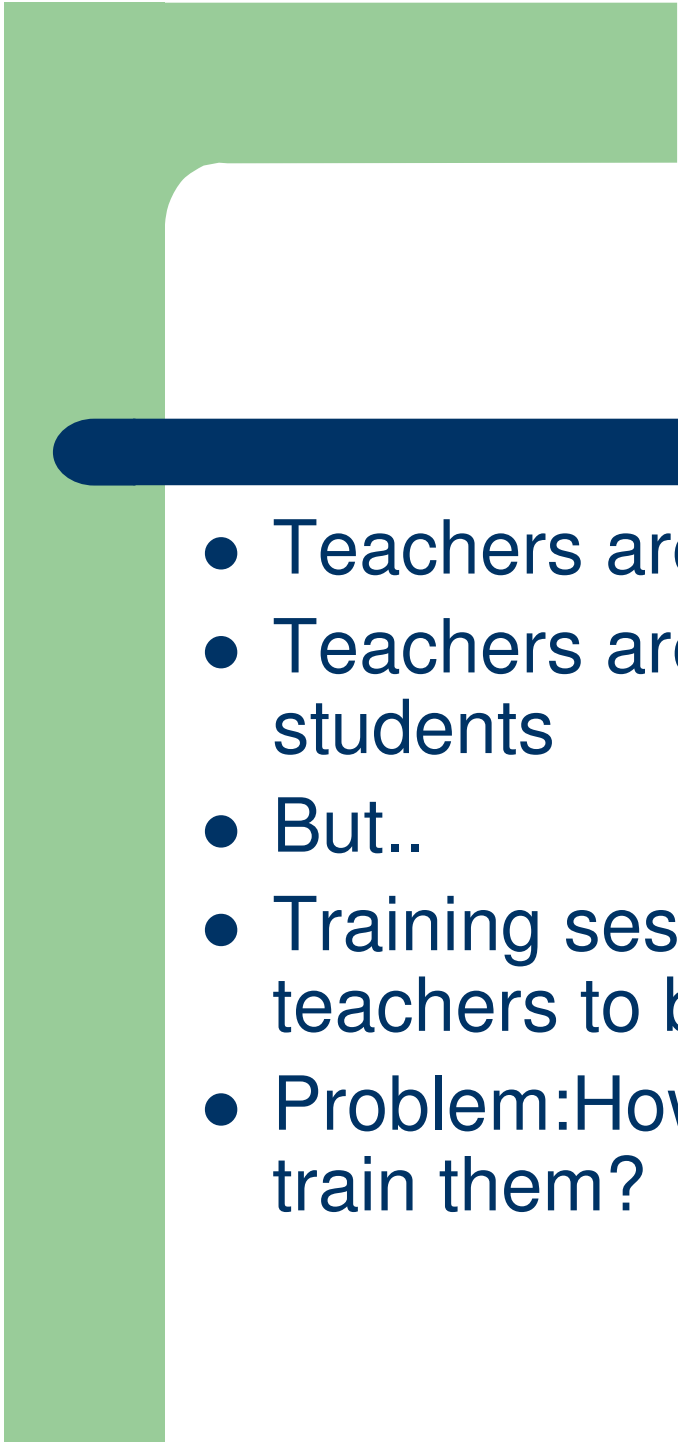
# Standard Setting

- Human judgement is the epicenter of every standard setting (Berk, 1995), therefore the cut-off scores can be contentious but the procedures of our test can be and should be justified.

# Claims vs. evidence

- A2 level says the learner can understand simple instructions on equipment encountered in everyday life or
- A1 level says the learner can understand simple instructions such as a public telephone

- 1. All  these can be relative
- 2. CEF does not provide evidence, just the claims of experts. No mention of how items were decided.
- 3. Besides, all stakeholders should have a say on the beginning and end of cut-off scores, who are going to be the judges, whose values would the levels reflect?...

- Teachers are not qualified to judge items
- Teachers are qualified to judge the level of students
- But..
- Training sessions are needed for the teachers to become judges
- Problem:How long and how much should we train them?

- UNTIL IT HURTS!!!

# To conclude...

- Relating your exam to CEFR is a long and painful process.
- Adoption is not always possible but adaptation is.
- Levels are qualitatively defined and more quantitative work is needed, so the manual is helpful but not perfect.
- Reliability and validity are prerequisites for linking your exam to CEFR.