Progress

Test Information Booklet

March 2014

V. 0.2

Global Scale of English 10-58

Contents

Introduction

Progress: An overview

Progress is a part adaptive computer-based test of English language proficiency designed to be used on a number of occasions through a course of study to accurately show learners' progress.

The Purpose of Test

The test is normally used in a learning context in conjunction with relevant materials and formative assessment tasks, but it can be used independently. It provides detailed information to a teacher about a group or class of learners who are studying any course, and information about each learner in the group. The information allows the teacher to make decisions about adapting learning material to suit the level of both group and individual learners and providing extension activities where the group or particular individuals are weak. It also allows the teacher to tailor the learning program to particular learners, giving extra support and input where required.

Who is it for?

The test is designed for Adult learners who are 16 or older. Progress can be used alongside adult or upper secondary courses. It is intended to be used with comprehensive integrated skills courses not short or partial courses.

Why take an integrated skills test?

Some of the questions Progress uses test a single skill such as speaking or writing. When assessing these skills we test skills such as pronunciation and fluency, the ability to argue as well as written conventions along with grammar and vocabulary. A number of the questions on the test are integrated skills questions. These questions test more than one skill at the same time.

Using integrated skills questions means that Progress is a better test of a learner's English. In real life and in the classroom learners use more than one skill to complete communicative tasks. To order something in a restaurant we need to listen and speak, to take notes in a classroom we need to listen and write. Integrated skills questions test how well learners can use the skills they have learnt and practised in the classroom and used in real life.

Test Validation

Test design

Progress is designed specifically to measure progress in language proficiency. It employs a part adaptive method. Part of the test uses an adaptive algorithm which takes a learner's answers to a previous question to select the most suitable question to present next. Progress selects these items from a large item bank making each learner's experience different.

The adaptive nature of the test allows Progress to quickly and accurately estimate a learner's English proficiency. This estimate is then used to choose further questions which are fine-tuned to the learner's level allowing a very accurate measure of their proficiency. By taking two or three tests over a period of study the learner, and the teacher, can see how much progress is being made.

Test development

The questions in Progress have been developed by international teams of writers who are very experienced in writing assessment questions. Teams are based in the UK, Australia, the USA and Hong Kong. All questions have been tagged with a Global Scale of English (GSE) level and linked to a 'can do' statement.

Once written, all questions are reviewed by the teams in the different countries. Comments and suggestions for improvement are stored with the test questions on a secure database. The questions then go through a further review by an expert panel and decisions are made on the quality of the questions; which to keep and which to reject. All questions are then thoroughly checked by Pearson staff and images and high quality recordings are added to complete the questions before they go forward to be calibrated in a large scale field test.

After the field testing further checks are made on item quality based on the measurement characteristics of the questions. Questions are eliminated from the item pool if they are too easy or too difficult, if weaker learners get them right but stronger learners get them wrong, or if they show any bias. These checks then result in a bank of the best quality questions. Questions are selected from this bank to go into the final tests.

Field testing

To ensure the questions used in Progress measure accurately they have been field tested. The Field Test took place in Asia, Europe, South America and the Middle East. It involved almost 4500 learners in 18 different countries who spoke 13 different languages. The Field Test used 64 tests with over-lapping questions. This meant a model could be built linking all questions and all learners. The Field Test contained questions from other tests which had already been calibrated to give further evidence of the difficulty of the test questions.

The answers that the learners gave were analysed and used to establish the difficulty of each question. This process was applied, as described above, to keep or reject questions, to help the adaptive algorithm select questions and in the scoring of the test.

Alignment to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF)

Progress is aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEF) levels in a number of ways:

- Question writers are very experienced teachers and authors who were also trained on the CEF levels.

- Questions were written to specific CEF levels using 'can do' statements taken from the CEF documents.

- Questions from other Pearson Tests (PTE Academic, PTE General and Versant) which were already aligned to the CEF were used in the Field Test as anchor items. PTE Academic uses the same reporting scale as Progress so is absolutely aligned. PTE General and Versant use similar scales which are closely related.

- Many learners who took the Field Test were studying at levels which had been previously linked to CEF levels in a comprehensive academic study.

- Learners' responses in the Field Test were independently rated by examiners trained on the CEF levels to check they were at the right level of proficiency.

From the Field Test analysis the averaged candidate ability estimates were compared with human ratings-based estimates of their CEFR levels to produce the conversion equation for theta[1] to the GSE. The regression line shows a very good fit to the data at A1, A2 and B1, where the test is designed to measure, as shown in the plot below. The B2 and C1 points are extrapolated and not an outcome from the dataset.
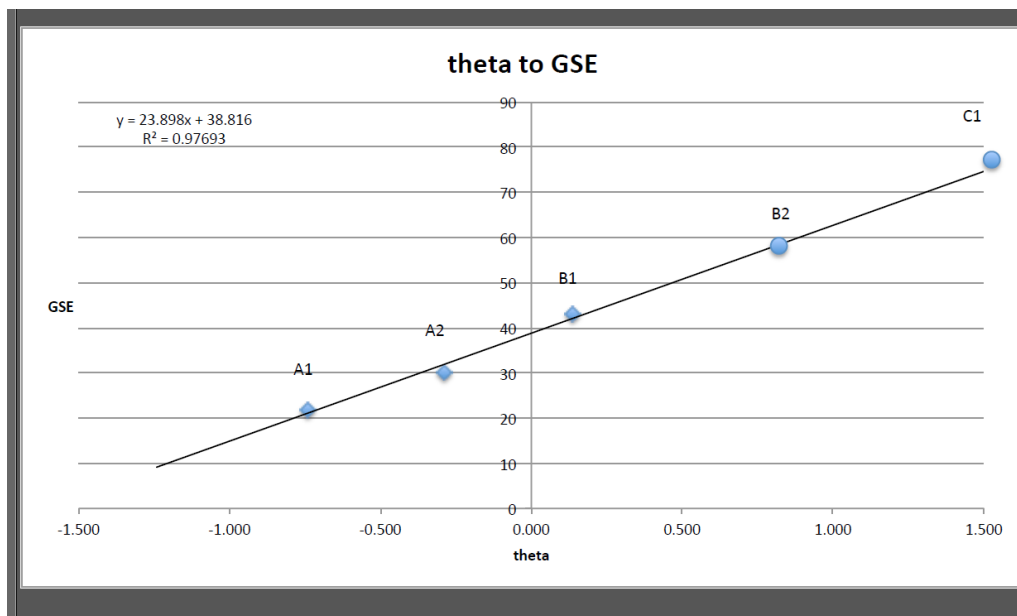
Theta estimates from Conquest analysis plotted to GSE scale

---

[1] Theta is a psychometric value expressing the estimate of ability

Scoring

Progress uses the most up-to-date scoring technology. Progress uses an adaptive algorithm to ensure that the questions selected for a learner are suitable for their level. Progress also uses automated scoring, including the automated scoring of speaking and writing items. This means scoring is objective and consistent wherever or whenever Progress is taken. The automated scoring engines are trained using large samples of learners' answers which were collected in the Field Test and marked by experienced and well-trained examiners. These scores are then further validated by using separate sets of learners' responses.

Because Progress is part adaptive and closely follows the learner's language level, it is a very accurate test. Alongside this it uses questions which have a number of score points which means we have a large amount of information about the learner's English proficiency.

Test Coverage

The test covers all four language skills; reading, listening, speaking and writing as well as knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Skills or Knowledge	Test Focus
Reading	To demonstrate **reading** skills, learners will be asked to: • read and understand the main points from signs, newspapers and magazines • understand the detail of short texts • understand the detail in longer texts
Listening	To demonstrate **listening** skills, learners will be asked to: • listen for specific information in listening texts • show understanding of meaning in context and the detail of short dialogues • follow and understand short texts and show understanding by writing down or repeating accurately what was said
Speaking	To demonstrate **speaking** skills, learners will be asked to: • speak clearly using appropriate stress and intonation • pronounce words so that they can be understood • describe pictures or other visual material connecting ideas together accurately and with a range of language
Writing	To demonstrate **writing** skills, learners will be asked to: • describe a scene or picture accurately using appropriate vocabulary • write a story accurately linking ideas and using appropriate vocabulary • write a short essay giving different points of view, linking ideas and using accurate and appropriate language
Grammar	To demonstrate knowledge of **grammar**, learners will be asked to: • choose the right word or phrase to make an accurate sentence • understand the difference between different grammatical tenses and other structures • put words in the right order to make grammatical sense
Vocabulary	To demonstrate knowledge of **vocabulary**, learners will be asked to: • produce words which relate to common themes and topics such as family, work and social situations • use appropriate words in different contexts • show an understanding of the different meaning of words and how they relate to other words

Test Questions

What kinds of questions are in the test and what do they measure?

The test has a number of different question types. This gives learners a chance to demonstrate their English skills in different ways. There are questions where learners choose the correct option or where they write the answer into an open question. There are questions where the learner repeats or copies what has been said as well as questions where learners describe something or write a short essay. The questions are similar to the questions and tasks learners will have done in the classroom as part of their learning and so should be familiar.

Because Progress is part adaptive, different learners will see different questions and may not be presented with all the questions described below.

Vocabulary Questions

There are three vocabulary question types. Vocabulary is also tested as part of *Describe Image*, S*hort Essay* and *Read and then Write* which are Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Fill in the Table	This question asks the learner to complete a set of vocabulary items with appropriate words. The words are presented as a table of related words.	This question tests the vocabulary knowledge of the learner. It tests the words the learner knows and the accuracy of the form of the word. It tests the learners knowledge of word families and related sets of words that they may have met in the classroom or when learning English.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks the learner to choose the correct word to complete a number of sentences. The sentences are related by a similar theme.	This question tests the vocabulary knowledge of the learner in a written context. It tests the vocabulary the learner knows and whether they can understand the use of the vocabulary in the context of a sentence. It tests the range of vocabulary the learner knows.

Complete the Dialogue	This question asks the learner to select words from a word bank to complete a dialogue.	This question tests the vocabulary of the learner in a spoken context. It tests the vocabulary the learner knows and whether they can understand the use of the vocabulary in the context of a conversation. It tests the range of vocabulary the learner knows.

Grammar Questions

There are three grammar question types. Grammar is also tested as part of *Short Essay*, and *Read and then Write* which are Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks the learner to choose the correct word to complete a number of sentences. The sentences are related by a similar theme.	This question tests the knowledge of grammar of the learner. It tests the range of grammatical knowledge as well as the accuracy of grammar in a written context.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase. You may choose more than one.	This question asks the learner to choose from a number of options. They may choose one or more than one answer. The sentences are related by the grammatical structure which is being tested.	This question tests the grammatical knowledge of the learner. It tests words which are related to each other in that they have similar meanings or grammatical uses. It tests grammatical knowledge in a written context.
Drag and Drop	This question asks the learner to re-order a sentence correctly.	This question tests the grammatical knowledge of the learner at sentence level. It tests word order, connectors and discourse markers. It tests grammatical knowledge in a written context.

Reading Questions

There are three reading question types. Reading is also tested as part of *Read and then Speak*, *Read and then Write,* and *Listen and Read* which are all Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Choose the Right Picture	This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best picture to match with the text.	This question tests the global understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.
Choose the Right Word or Phrase	This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best word or phrase to complete the text.	This question tests the global understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.
Short Answer	This question asks the learner to read a longer text and answer questions on the text.	This question tests the reading comprehension of the learner. It tests specific information included in the text.

Listening Questions

There is one listening question type which tests only listening. Listening is also tested as part of *Listen and then Write*, *Listen and then Speak,* and *Listen and Read* which are all Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Listen to the Conversation and Answer	This question asks the learner to listen to a short conversation and then answer a question about the conversation.	This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the accuracy of the listening comprehension of the learner.

Speaking Questions

There is one speaking question type which tests speaking and grammar. Speaking is also tested as part of *Read and then Speak* and *Listen and then Speak* which are Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Describe Image	This question asks the learner to look at a photograph or picture and describe what they see.	This question tests the learner's ability to speak in an extended way linking concepts and ideas. It tests the accuracy of speech including accurate grammar, pronunciation and stress as well as the fluency of the speech. It tests the use of appropriate words to describe the photograph or picture.

Writing Questions

There is one writing question type which tests only writing. Writing is also tested as part of *Listen and then Write* and *Read and then Write* which are Integrated Skills questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Short Essay	This question asks the learner to write a short essay in response to a prompt.	This question tests global writing skills. It tests paragraph and sentence structure, the range and accuracy of the language used, the ability to structure an argument or discussion in a written context. It tests grammar and vocabulary as an essential part of writing.

Integrated Skills Questions

There are five questions types which measure more than one skill at the same time. These are called Integrated Skills Questions.

Question	What do the learners have to do?	What is being tested?
Read and then Speak	This question asks the learner to read aloud a sentence or short text.	This question tests accurate pronunciation and how fluent the learner is at speaking. It tests if the words in the text are understood and repeated accurately.
Listen and then Write	This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and write what they have heard.	This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.
Listen and then Speak	This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and then repeat it.	This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests pronunciation and fluency. It tests if the words heard are understood and repeated accurately.
Read and then Write	This question asks the learners to read a short story or short piece of factual text. The text then disappears and the learner has to reconstruct the text.	This question tests reading comprehension. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.
Listen and Read	This question asks the learner to read a text and at the same time listen to the text. The learner has to find the differences between the written text and the spoken text.	This question tests reading and listening comprehension. It tests the ability to recognise individual words in a text.

Test Familiarity

Learners can take the sample test at any time to familiarise themselves with the question types in the test. Teachers can also assign this test if they want to ensure learners do this as a homework activity.

Scores and Results

Global Scale of English

The test result provides scores on the Global Scale of English which ranges from 10 to 90. The scores consist of an overall score, and sub scores for listening, reading, speaking, writing, vocabulary and grammar. The test also reports Common European Framework levels.

The Global Scale of English is a numeric, granular scale from 10 to 90 which measures English language proficiency. It enhances the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) by showing finer gradations of a learner's level within a CEFR band, and can therefore demonstrate smaller and more precise improvements in a learner's English level.

The Global Scale of English is currently used to report scores on the internationally recognised English language test, PTE Academic™. It is empirically aligned to the CEFR, as described in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment* (Council of Europe, 2001),and correlated to other test score scales such as TOEFL® iBT, TOEIC® and IELTS.
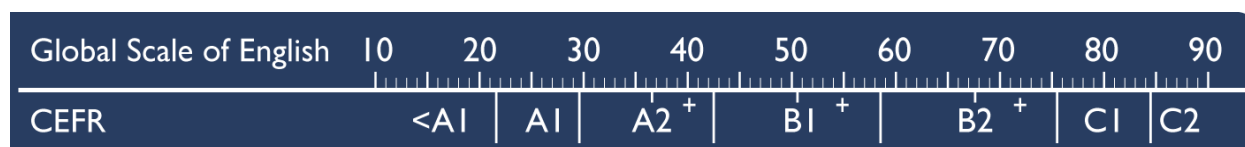
What do the scores mean?

The table below shows the description of the different levels on the Global Scale of English as it is aligned to the Common European Framework levels.

Global Scale of English (GSE)	Common European Framework Levels	Main features of a learner's language ability at this level taken from the (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment,* Council of Europe, 2001).
10 - 21	<A1	This level of proficiency is likened to a tourist who may know some individual words but does not have enough control of language to produce full sentences and mostly communicates with words or very basic phrases. The words they do know may carry a lot of communicative meaning or be effective when used with hand gestures or when the context is very clear (e.g. pointing to an object in a shop).
22 - 29	A1	Learners at this level can:

		• understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type • introduce themselves and others • ask and answer questions about personal details (e.g. where they live, people they know and things they have) • interact in a simple way, provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help • initiate and respond to simple statements in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics, rather than relying purely on a very finite, rehearsed, lexically-organised repertoire of situation-specific phrases
30 - 36	A2 Lower End	It is at this level that learners demonstrate proficiency mainly as social functions: • use simple, everyday polite forms of greeting and address • greet people, ask how they are and react to news • handle very short social exchanges • ask and answer questions about what they do at work and in free time • make and respond to invitations, make and accept offers • discuss what to do, where to go and make arrangements to meet Also at this level are descriptors referring to getting out and about, e.g.: • make simple transactions in shops, post offices or banks • get simple information about travel, use public transport: buses, trains and taxis • ask for basic information, ask for and provide everyday goods and services • ask for and give directions and buy tickets
37 - 42	A2 Upper End	At this level there is more active participation in conversation given some assistance and certain limitations, e.g.: • initiate, maintain and close simple, restricted face-to-face conversation • understand enough to manage simple, routine exchanges without undue effort • make themselves understood and exchange ideas and information on familiar topics in predictable everyday situations, provided the other person helps if necessary • though they will generally have to compromise the message and search for words but participation in open discussion is fairly restricted Plus significantly more ability to sustain monologues, e.g.:

		• express how they feel in simple terms • give an extended description of everyday aspects of their environment (e.g. people, places, a job or study experience) • describe past activities and personal experiences • describe habits, routines, plans and arrangements • explain what they like or dislike about something • give short, basic descriptions of events and activities • use simple language to describe and compare objects and possessions
43 - 50	B1 Lower End	This is a summary of what distinguishes B1 and the change that learners make from the upper end of A2 to becoming B1. There are two main features: The first feature here is the ability of the learner to maintain interaction and get across what they want to in a range of contexts, e.g.: • generally follow the main points of extended discussion around them, provided speech is clearly articulated in standard dialect • give or seek personal views and opinions in an informal discussion with friends • express the main point they want to make comprehensibly • exploit a wide range of simple language flexibly to express much of what they want to • maintain a conversation or discussion but may sometimes be difficult to follow when trying to say exactly what they would like to • keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production The second feature is the ability to cope flexibly with problems in everyday life, e.g.: • cope with less routine situations on public transport • enter unprepared into conversations on familiar topics • make a complaint • take some initiatives in an interview/consultation but is very dependent on interviewer in the interaction • ask someone to clarify or elaborate what they have just said
51 – 58	B1 Upper End	At the upper end of B1 the learner is extending their competence including a focus on the exchange of *quantities* of information: • take messages communicating enquiries, explaining problems • provide concrete information required in an interview/consultation (e.g. describe symptoms to a doctor) but does so with limited

		precision • explain why something is a problem • summarise and give their opinion about a short story, article, talk, discussion, interview or documentary and answer further questions of details • carry out a prepared interview, checking and confirming information, though they may occasionally have to ask for repetition if the other person's response is rapid or extended • describe how to do something, giving detailed instructions • exchange accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non-routine matters within their field with some confidence