GSE
Global Scale of English

On raising
**English Standards
With a Single
Global Framework**

Pearson

Contents

Introduction

One in four people around the world are actively learning to communicate in English[1]. For work, for pleasure, for study. This demand is growing annually at a staggering rate and is being driven by globally connected businesses, governments and institutions. Finally, of course, by people wanting to improve their life chances.

A quick Google search for the phrase "learn English" returns over 17,000,000 results, compared to the phrases "learn French" or "learn Mandarin" which each return 400,000 results. With so many methods and resources for learning English; so many reasons to learn it; and so many people seeking to learn - across all ages and stages of life - we could easily assume that educators had the business of English teaching well in hand.

English has become the language of academia, tourism and business. But with the rise in demand, there has become an increasing need to raise the quality of teaching and learning. To evolve methods, embrace technology, adopt new pedagogy and ultimately to set higher standards that better equip English learners with the practical language skills that they can confidently apply whether at international universities or in work-based roles.

In the last few years, governments around the world have been forced to re-examine the quality of their English language provision for all ages and at every stage of learning. As a result, many ministries of education, along with state institutions, have been racing to align and improve their English teaching standards. In some cases, that has also meant re-designing curriculums or extending the length of English provision to even younger learners. Private language schools are also aiming to seize new opportunities by offering courses that better meet market demands by raising their own standards and, in a consumer-led market, by demonstrating more tangible improvements for learner outcomes. For many, it is not just a race to stay competitive, it is a race to remain relevant.

At the same time, many global employers are now taking responsibility for improving the English skills of their workforce. Unfortunately, many employees enter the workforce lacking the English skills needed to do their job - in a recent Pearson survey only 7% of employees at global companies thought their English skills were good enough for work[2].

One in four
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Work

Pleasure

Study

1 *The English Effect*, British Council, 2013
2 Measuring the Continuing Impact – Business English as a Prerequisite for Global Business, 2015

The responsibility to improve English cannot sit on the shoulders of employers alone. We know better English does not start with employment, but in the many years - and institutions - that precede work.

As most educators will testify, test scores alone do not indicate actual ability in real-life environments. It is the fundamental framework that underpins English teaching that urgently requires our attention. Without improving standards within English teaching itself, teachers, learners and employers are all caught in a vicious cycle with no ability to improve the situation.

Teachers Demand a New Approach to Standards in English

Ninety per cent of ELT teachers around the world[3] believe that standards of English need to be improved and the same number of teachers believe a single global standard would have a tangible effect on outcomes. Current standards in English are open to varying degrees of subjectivity on the educators part and would also benefit from up-to-date research.

Of course, a number of established local standards, along with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), have done much to help set a common framework. Still, there remain inherent drawbacks with the current frameworks – most obviously that none have been specifically designed as a single global standard for English. Also, none adequately cover the different needs of English language learners which vary according to age, context and life goals.

The Future of Standards

In order to raise standards of English teaching and learning, a more sophisticated model than what the current frameworks can offer is needed. That's because learners, teachers and employers today require a deeply accurate picture of English proficiency and a much clearer map of where to go next. A more specific model that shows granular progress in English can better aid with planning, delivery and learner motivation.

A detailed framework which reaches across the four skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) is far more pertinent today than ever; speaking English is very important but not enough to succeed in a digitally connected world.

90% of ELT teachers around the world believe that standards of English need to be improved.

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3 GSE Teacher Toolkit usage survey, with 165 teachers worldwide, 2016

What is needed above all is an accepted global standard, which helps to fulfil the demand for raising English quality, but which can at the same time flex and adapt to ensure learning is relevant to the context and different ages and stages of learners. When it comes to developing fluency in specific environments including workforce readiness through English, we should start at primary school and continue through university and beyond; that is the only way to maintain competitiveness, maximise employability and help businesses grow.

Giles Grant, SVP English Language Teaching, Pearson English

The Demand for English Language Learning

People around the world are connected with one another like never before, and this 21st Century paradigm has only solidified the need and desire for a common way to communicate. As a result, the volume of those learning English is staggering: According to the British Council, English is spoken by 1.75 billion people (approximately one in four people worldwide) and it is forecasted that by 2020, two billion people will be either using English or learning to use it[4]. It is not surprising then that the business of teaching and learning English across the globe has become critical. It is projected that the global market for English language learning will reach US $193 billion by 2017[5].

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English today is not an academic course, as it was years ago where students would prepare mainly to read and write it, with grammar the most important focus. Today, English is a life skill for people all over the world, who use it as a lingua franca to function in business, study, and travel."

Top Notch **authors Joan Saslow & Allen Ascher[6]**

By 2020, two billion people will be either using English or learning to use it.

How Governments and Institutions Are Meeting Demand

Ministries of Education and related government institutions are reacting to the growing demands for quality by launching programmes to boost English proficiency. For example, in Mexico, the government launched *Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica* (PNIEB), which aims to increase the English proficiency of public school students by offering classes spanning pre-primary to the end of secondary school. The program has been introduced in 18% of Mexican public schools and reaches 6.7 million students. However, the government needs to recruit and train over 80,000 additional English teachers for the programme to reach its goals[7].

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4 *The English Effect*, British Council, 2013
5 *Education Sector Factbook 2012*, GSV Edu
6 https://www.english.com/blog/top-notch-winner-of-textbook-excellence-award
7 *The growing demand for English language learning in Mexico*, ICEF Monitor, 18 March 2016

Elsewhere, both Japan and China are modifying their university entrance requirements to increase the emphasis on English. Thailand and Vietnam are reviewing their secondary curriculum with more overt vocational goals in mind, and Italy is reviewing its teacher-training programme to increase English proficiency. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan (MEXT) recently announced it is seeking to double English lesson times for 5th and 6th graders (10-12 years old) and introduce 26.25 hours per year of "foreign language activities" for 3rd and 4th graders (8-10 years old). The report also suggests that English teaching will be conducted solely in English rather than Japanese at junior high school level (at senior high schools, English classes already need to be conducted in English)[8].

The Employer Perspective

There is incredible competition for jobs in which employers increasingly expect high levels of English proficiency. Pearson research found that English was deemed relevant for 80% of roles for which global employers recruit[9]. However, research suggests that many HR professionals are having difficulty in finding applicants with the right skills and qualifications for a substantial number of these jobs[10]. Employers report that after basic computer skills, the next biggest skill/knowledge gaps they see in job applicants are writing and speaking in English[11]. Therefore, more and more multinational companies are implementing English education as integral to their overall training program and human resources strategy. Employability is no longer a buzzword, but a central strategy of educators around the world.

Learn more about English and employability:
english.com/englishforwork

> Pearson research found that English was deemed relevant for 80% of roles for which global employers recruit.

8 Education Sector Factbook 2012, GSV Edu

9 https://english.com/englishforwork

10 *SHRM Research: Workforce Readiness and Skills Shortages*, Society for Human Resource Management, 2015

11 *SHRM Survey Findings: 2014 Economic Conditions—Recruiting and Skills Gaps*, Society for Human Resource Management, 2014

The Promise and Challenges

of Standards for English Language Teaching and Learning

90% of teachers recognise the potential of a single global standard for teaching English.

In 2015, the British Council published a series of research reports regarding English teaching in Latin American countries. It found that despite the fact that many of these countries have had a long history of English language teacher training and understood the criticality of existing standards, there was a great deal of variance among countries in delivery of English language learning and even among provinces and cities within a single country[12].

Not surprisingly, teachers around the world recognise the potential of a single global standard for teaching English. **Ninety per cent of teachers from a recent Pearson English survey believe that such a standard is needed and a similar number stated that a global standard for English teaching would improve learner outcomes in terms of employability**. This latest survey[13] reveals a 10 per cent increase in the number of teachers who are in favour of a global standard compared with a similar survey conducted in 2014[14]. Schools, colleges, businesses, and governments have already invested large sums of money into English language learning and they will continue to do so into the foreseeable future. But there is a surprising lack of consistency in success measures, curriculum and pedagogy among countries and even among institutions within the same country, which somewhat hampers the ability to not only measure a return on investment consistently but also to make accurate comparisons and benchmarks with neighbouring countries or the rest of the world.

This is compounded as traditional curricula, assessments, and benchmarks are often focused on General English learning and not catered to the specific needs of the learners. For example, if someone is learning English in a professional context, it is impossible to measure English progress or set learning goals without specific learning objectives applicable for business.

12 *English in Argentina, English in Brazil*, et al, British Council, May 2015
13 *GSE Teacher Toolkit usage survey, 2016*
14 GSE ELT research (with over 1,100 teachers around the world), 2014

Of course, Business or Academic English learners require General English proficiency, but equally they need focused skills to support success in their specific environments. Current teaching frameworks are not set up to address these needs and, as a result, we find the gap widening between reported ability and actual ability when it comes to specific, high stakes environments such as university or the workplace.

Indeed, many employers report discrepancies between new employees' English test results and their real-world ability to use English in practice in their work. A Pearson Linkedin survey[15] supports this notion, as it found that 92% of employees surveyed said that English was important for their career progression, yet only 7% of global workers felt their English was good enough to do their jobs. The critical importance of English language learning around the globe has only exacerbated the historical challenges educators, students, and school administrators have faced with building effective curricula and monitoring real and relevant progress in learning. While the CEFR is no doubt recognised as an international standard for describing language ability in general terms, the scale is open to significantly varied interpretation by the user, is not specific for different types of learners, and is not granular enough to be actionable for many educators and learners. That opens up the opportunity for greatly differing regional and institutional interpretations of what students actually need to learn and when. Even ELT publishers can have different interpretations of the use of relevant content at particular CEFR levels.

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Students often complain about their lack of perceived progress and will welcome the opportunity to work towards certain, defined objectives."

Barbara Gardner, Learning Technologies Training Coordinator, Study Group

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15 Pearson/LinkedIn 2014 survey https://english.com/gse/businesses

Overcoming the Intermediate Plateau

For many learners who have been studying English for several years, the "intermediate plateau" can feel like an insurmountable obstacle, apparently spending years at the same level (eg. B1 on the CEFR) with no sense of progress. The reality is that they are in fact making progress, just not enough progress to be considered to be at the next level (eg. B2). In such common instances, the impact on their motivation could be significant as they look to meet the level of proficiency needed by employers. Research by Morar Consulting in 2015 demonstrated that the CEFR is criticised for simultaneously being too broad and too complicated, with a view by both teachers and students that current frameworks are not modern enough for today's needs[16].

Another feature of the CEFR is its disproportional focus on speaking skills. Sixty five per cent of CEFR descriptors are related to speaking. This uneven coverage combined with a lack of clear learning context, e.g. Academic vs Professional English, and granularity can make it more challenging for teachers to help students gain the right level of English proficiency across the four skills and then accurately measure their ability. A lack of relevant learning objectives or 'can-do' statements for different learning contexts such as for professional learners (e.g. writing emails, preparing or giving presentations, negotiating), creates further challenges in focusing on the skills needed for specific purposes.

16 *GSE Qualitative Research*, Prepared for Pearson, March 2015

The Growing Role of Technology

It is worth touching briefly on the impact of learning technology, since it is increasingly seen as a solution in itself to improving standards. The global market for digital English language learning products reached $2.8 billion in 2015 and is estimated to surge to $3.8 billion by 2020[17]. With the proliferation of online tools, resources and information, schools and teachers are still learning how to best leverage technology to enhance the learning experience for students and in doing so improve standards. The rising popularity of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), for example, has the potential to accelerate the use of these online tools, but the dots have yet to be fully joined.

One of the biggest opportunities with learning technology is through adaptive and personalised teaching and learning. Yet, collectively, we have not quite realised the opportunity of personalised English learning, where content, remediation and practice can focus on what matters most for the specific learner's needs and abilities. The reasons are many, but certainly personalisation in English teaching will only succeed with a detailed understanding of each learner's learning goals and current ability and so requires a granular framework and a standard that will facilitate this.

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17 *The 2015-2020 Worldwide Digital English Language Learning Market, Ambient Insight*, June 2016

Another Framework or a More Actionable CEFR?

Despite the limitations of the CEFR framework and other measurement systems in general, it is clear that there has always been a need – and always will be – to use a consistent framework to maintain quality, as a basis for accountability, and to demonstrate a clear path for progress.

Therefore, what has been missing is not another independent framework but rather a companion to the CEFR – a granular scale with related objectives, materials, and assessments that both align to the CEFR but provide that level of specificity and relevance for supporting the teaching and learning of English. Additionally, the ecosystem around this scale should support – both online and in the classroom – the entire process of curriculum development, teaching, learning and assessment.

This is why Pearson developed the Global Scale of English (GSE) as the world's first truly global English language standard, allowing educators, employers and learners to measure progress accurately, easily, and in context.

In order to learn English as effectively and efficiently as possible, a learner needs to know three things:

(a) what is their level of English,
(b) whether or not they are making progress, and
(c) what they should aim to learn next to meet their long-term goals.

To answer these questions, we must provide:

(a) A clear and precise definition of what it means to be at a particular "level" of proficiency.
(b) English teaching and learning materials which are aligned to the "level" definitions.
(c) An assessment tool designed to profile a learner's proficiency across all four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

The **Global** Scale of English

Global Scale of English	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90
CEFR		<A1	A1	A2 $^+$	B1 $^+$	B2 $^+$	C1	C2	
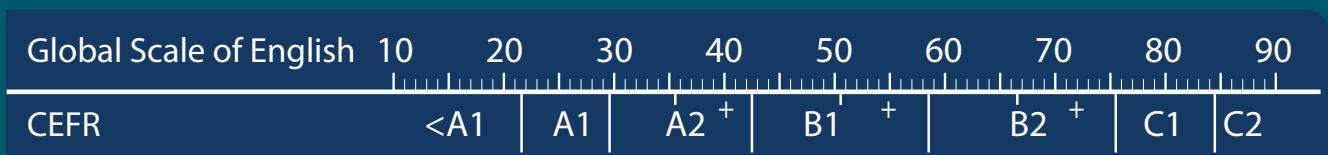
The GSE scale: It is impossible to measure communicative ability with any accuracy below 10, and as language is infinite, the GSE does not report beyond 90.

The GSE is the culmination of the most comprehensive, on-going academic research ever conducted in the field, involving over 6,000 teachers from 50 countries. Measuring proficiency on a scale from 10 to 90, the GSE was developed in response to on-going issues with existing scales and new opportunities for a granular approach to progress. This research has been empirically validated and greatly extends the CEFR to show a learner's level with unprecedented precision.

The Ecosystem

The GSE comprises four distinct parts to create an overall English learning ecosystem:

(a) The scale itself – a granular, precise scale of proficiency aligned to the CEFR.

(b) GSE Learning Objectives – over 1,800 "can-do" statements that provide context for teachers and learners across reading, writing, speaking and listening. GSE is also tailored to four types of learning – adults learning General English, Academic English, and Professional English, and young learners.

(c) Course Materials – both digital and printed materials, aligned to the selection of learning objectives relevant for a course/level.

(d) Assessments – Placement, Progress and Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic) tests, which are placement, formative/summative assessments and high stakes tests aligned to the GSE.
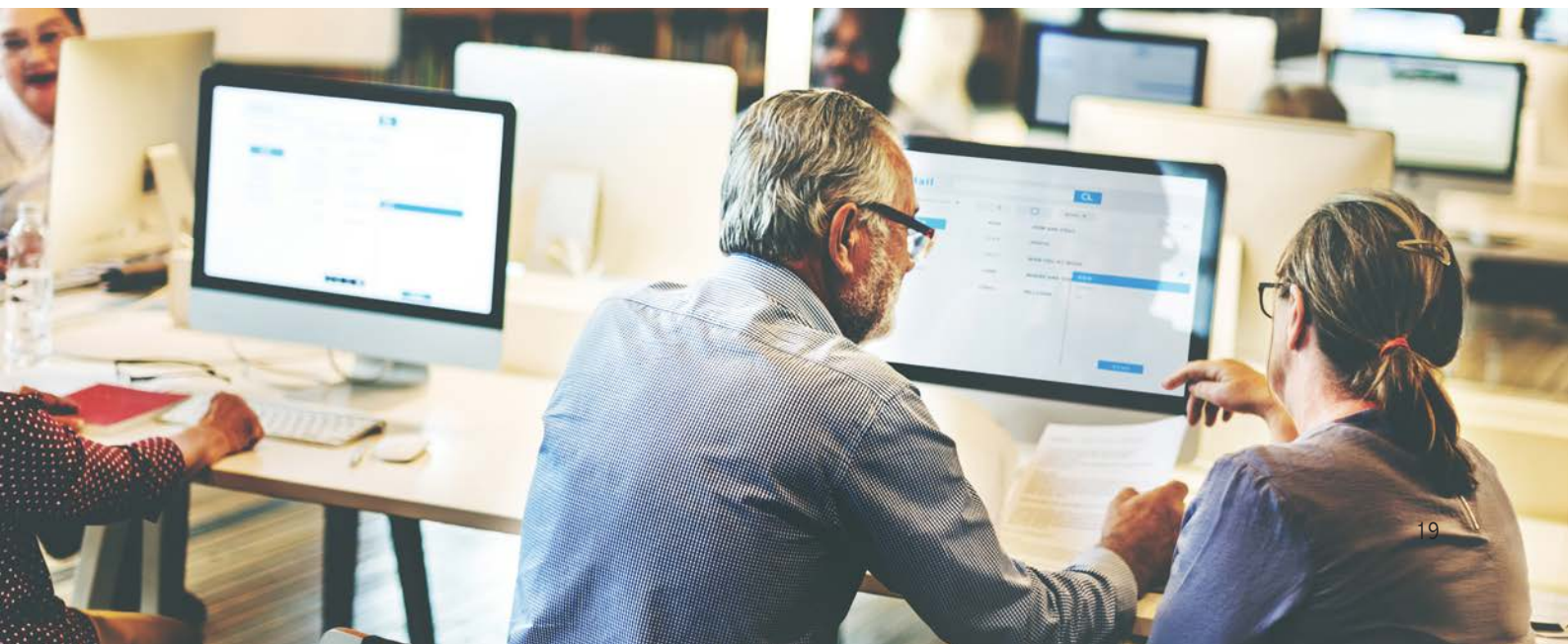
GSE Teacher Toolkit: A Fully Searchable Database to Help Raise Standards

The GSE includes a free teacher toolkit, launched in May 2016 (version 2 launched October 2016) which contains all of the sets of GSE Learning Objectives (aligned to both the GSE and the CEFR), GSE Grammar and GSE Vocabulary in a single, searchable online database.
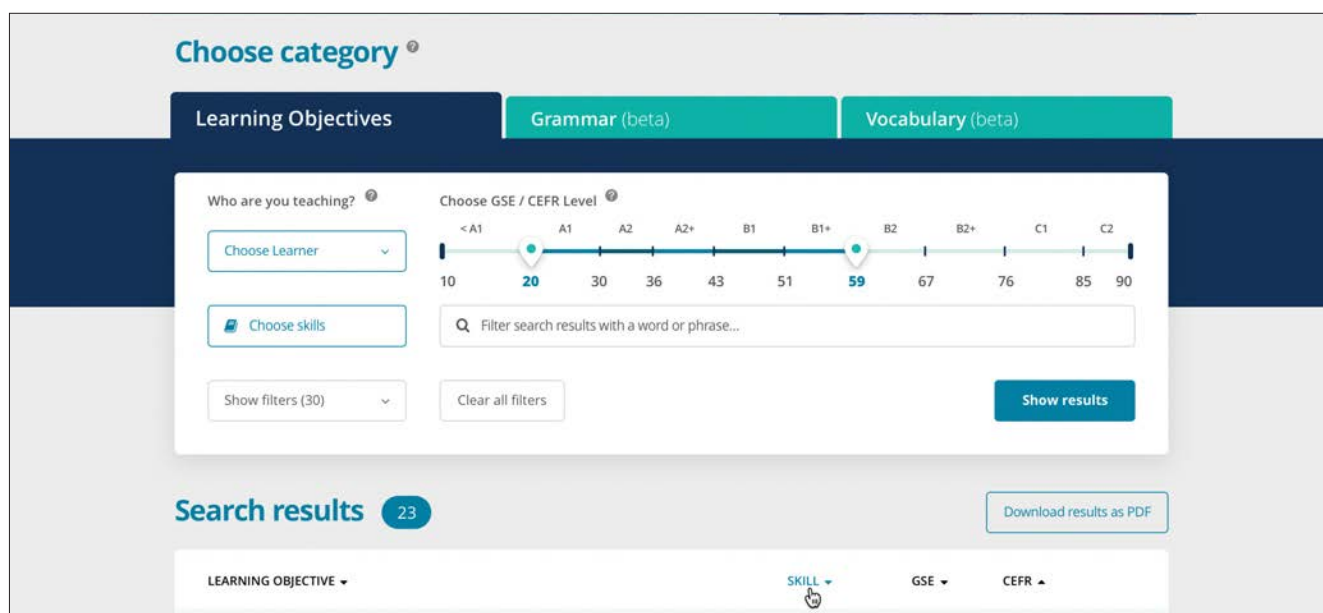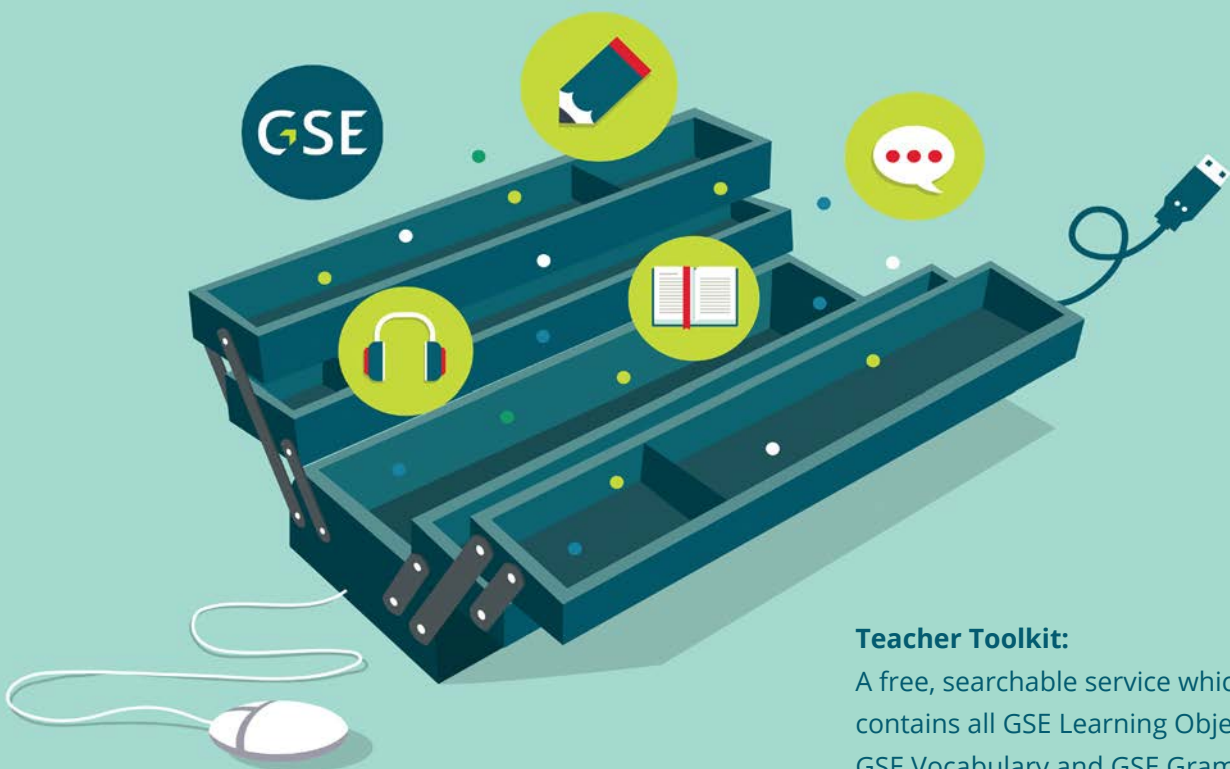

The GSE Teacher Toolkit includes:

- *Over 1,800 GSE Learning Objectives, searchable by learner type, skill and CEFR/GSE level.*
- *Over 390 GSE Grammar Objectives, searchable by grammatical category, structure and CEFR/GSE level.*
- *36,000 Vocabulary word meanings, searchable by topic, grammatical category and CEFR/GSE level plus over 80,000 collocations.*

The GSE Teacher Toolkit can also be used to map existing learning materials to the GSE/CEFR or create new materials that are at the right level.

"

This will end every argument I have with my director about what is appropriate for each level. This is the kind of thing they won't argue with because it's so easy, even they can bring up the descriptors and see what students can do and should be learning."

Senior High School Teacher feedback, October 2015, KOTESOL conference
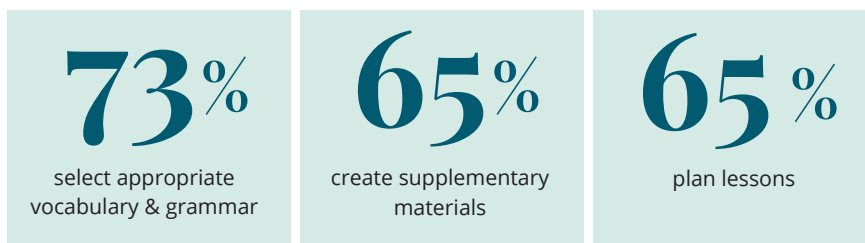
Teacher Toolkit:
A free, searchable service which contains all GSE Learning Objectives, GSE Vocabulary and GSE Grammar.

Uses of the GSE Teacher Toolkit

There are many practical applications of the GSE Teacher Toolkit. The most common uses from our recent GSE Teacher Toolkit survey[18], include:

73% select appropriate vocabulary & grammar

65% create supplementary materials

65% plan lessons

The GSE Teacher Toolkit allows teachers to create assessments (56%), use as a reference point for learners in class (50%) and create admin reports (39%).

In using the GSE Teacher Toolkit, teachers can better understand what their students should be learning at each CEFR/GSE level, align their own materials to the GSE Learning Objectives, and give meaningful feedback to students and parents.

"

I teach adult Syrian refugees who are at Entry Zero ESOL – ABSOLUTE Beginners. The CAN DO statements mapped to GSE levels in the Teacher Toolkit are useful in prioritising the lesson format and content."

Arthur McKeown, Author, teacher, teacher trainer and manager in EFL Ireland

18 GSE Teacher Toolkit usage survey, 2016

Saving Time with GSE

Seventy-nine per cent of teachers using the GSE Teacher Toolkit report that it saves them time planning lessons; 85-86% of teachers find it saves some/a lot of time in both creating supplementary materials and selecting appropriate vocabulary or grammar for lessons.

"

I use the GSE Teacher Toolkit to create and check supplementary materials, and to help me decide what to use for the class tests. I use it for planning, for adding supplementary materials and for assessment. For example, I used the toolkit for a pre intermediate class with modals of obligation on the syllabus. Looking up GSE levels between 30 and 36 in the tookit I could see there were two modals of obligation – lets and shouldn't. For me this is extremely helpful because I know I should focus on these two modals."

Ofelia Mancas, English learning instructor at MEF University, Turkey

How Can GSE Be Best Leveraged in English Education?

The GSE is becoming an indispensable tool for schools and educators as a global framework for auditing, building and modifying curriculums. Schools can use the GSE to determine the learning outcomes for a course as a baseline for the acquisition of books and other curriculum resources. The GSE also provides external validation of a course offering, based on its mapping to the GSE Learning Objectives and the discovery of any gaps in materials or other misalignment.

For example, many schools need to audit their curriculum to ensure that the course content and the defined course objectives are aligned. Schools can now use the GSE and Teacher Toolkit to go beyond intuition and feelings about level and appropriateness to examine the course and alignment to expectations with objectivity. This external validation helps teachers and as a result learners improve their performance and achieve their learning objectives.

By integrating GSE at the core of their pedagogy, teachers can make more informed choices about course content and the resources they develop. Learners know more explicitly what they need to do to improve and to better work in partnership with the educator to see that progress. Administrators and managers can better fulfil their institution's mission by delivering greater value to their learners by ensuring courses and lessons are at the right level and that students see regular development. Lastly, GSE helps build motivation of both teachers and students by demonstrating regular, small steps of improvement.

Adopting GSE does not require the elimination of existing standards or measurement systems. GSE completely aligns with CEFR and other international standards such as IELTS, TOEIC and TOEFL.

The Current GSE Ecosystem

As we have outlined, the use of the Global Scale of English and GSE Learning Objectives is free along with the full database of GSE Grammar and Vocabulary. A range of Pearson English coursebooks, digital tools and assessments that are mapped to the GSE are now available.

Here are some examples of GSE products (please note, this is not an exhaustive list):

(a) General adult coursebooks – Speakout, TopNotch, Northstar, Cutting Edge, Side by Side Extra, Summit, New Language Leader, Pearson English Interactive, English in Common.

(b) Business English – Market Leader Extra, Project Success.

(c) Secondary English – Focus, Wider World (new for 2017).

(d) Young learners – Poptropica (blended learning product).

(e) Assessment – *Placement* (a new four skills test).

> *Progress* (a series of three formative/summative low stakes tests).
>
> *PTE Academic* (a PTE Professional high stakes university entrance / VISA English test recognised by governments around the world).

For more information on GSE: **english.com/gse/products**

New GSE Placement – Completing the GSE Ecosystem

Assessment is a vital component of the GSE ecosystem. Institutions can choose to develop their own appraisal methods using the GSE Teacher Toolkit or to adopt Pearson's own GSE assessment solutions. The GSE assessment suite is now more robust with the introduction of Placement, a fully automated test that provides a personal, adaptive testing solution for placing new learners.

Accurately judging the starting proficiency of new English learners is not a new problem. There are numerous existing placement solutions – often pen & paper tests created by institutions themselves. Placing learners can often be the start of an impossible challenge for teachers and a root cause for lack of motivation, engagement and achievement with adult learners. Learners can frequently be placed at the wrong level which then impacts both their motivation and ability to progress.

Created with the same exact standards as the PTE Academic, which is trusted by governments and institutions around the world, the GSE Placement Test is not just another test. As with the rest of the GSE ecosystem, it is designed to help institutions and practitioners to set and raise standards. It achieves this by offering unparalleled accuracy in assessing and reporting a learner's current ability. The GSE Placement test has itself been rigorously tested and calibrated – over 13,000 learners around the world piloted the test before it was launched.

For more information on Placement, visit **english.com/placement**.

Case Studies

Institutions around the world are raising English teaching standards with the GSE

Two of the following case studies provide a brief snapshot into how the GSE, as an extension of the CEFR framework, is being adopted in various ways to help institutions audit, validate and so raise the standards of English teaching and learning. Our third snapshot provides a flavour of how one of our unique parts of the GSE ecosystem - Progress - is being used to improve learner motivation, which itself can be linked to raising standards in practice.

We feature examples from universities and private language schools in Turkey, the US and Japan. Whether learning specifically for Academic or Professional English purposes, the end goal of each of these institutions is to improve the confidence, motivation and proficiency of their learners which, for most, means they have better opportunities and the ability to communicate effectively with global colleagues in the workplace.

Case Study:

Anadolu University

"The quizzes, the exams, tasks, everything we do are aligned with each other."

Student at Anadolu University
(after the GSE was implemented)

ANADOLU ÜNİVERSİTESİ

Anadolu University is the second largest in the world, with over 2 million students. Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages provides intensive foreign language instruction to approximately 2,700 students who need to continue their university education in an English medium instruction environment.

Challenges

Due to the reported low proficiency levels of Anadolu students, most lacked sufficient time to reach the required level of language proficiency, and Anadolu recognised that there were changes needed in its curriculum. Anadolu was also challenged by low levels of motivation of students and teachers and there was no adequate alignment of teaching to assessment. In consultation with similar educational organisations, they discovered that despite the fact that they were all using CEFR, each interpreted CEFR levels differently which itself presented problems in terms of teaching and learning standards.

Adoption of GSE

The Global Scale of English was selected as a basis to develop a new English curriculum after an extensive review, as it was identified as the only framework that defined language proficiency in a more granular way than was possible with the CEFR, thus helping both learners and teachers to see a more detailed picture of where they were and what needed to be learned next.

Using a bottom-up approach in collaboration with teachers and students, Anadolu used the GSE and the GSE Learning Objectives as the basis of selecting and organising content, learning experiences, and evaluation procedures. They provided a basis to answer the relevant questions around what materials were needed, how they could test various outcomes, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes. Although there were some challenges in getting the organisation committed to this new paradigm, transparent and continuous communication with teachers and students helped them to deal with these challenges.

Using this process, the new curriculum was rolled out during the 2014-2015 academic year. Throughout the year, feedback was gathered both from learners and teachers for almost every single component, and revisions were made for the following academic year based on this feedback.

"What we have experienced with the help of the GSE in our institution can be considered as a standardisation process. I believe GSE helped us to ensure that all of the stakeholders share a common perspective in reaching a similar goal. It facilitated a healthier and a more effective communication among all the parties; test developers, the material writers, learners and teachers."

Belgin Aydın, Director of School of Foreign Languages, Anadolu University

Benefits

In the pilot year alone, student progress increased by 33%. Student progress subsequently increased by 50%. In fact, two thirds of learners start at a beginner or a very low level, so this can be considered as significant improvement for them to be able to reach GSE level 66 (which is Anadolu's exit level in GSE).

The new context-specific curriculum developed with the participation of all stakeholders resulted in a noticeable increase in both student and teacher motivation and confidence. GSE helped Anadolu ensure that everyone who took part in the process, including the material developers, the testing unit members, the coordinators, the teachers, and the learners shared a common perspective in reaching a similar goal with the same language.

Supporting learners realise how they have progressed, how much they have improved, and how much more they needed to progress in their learning journey substantially increased their success and made the language learning process more concrete.

GSE also helped the teachers to become more aware of what they were doing, where their students were in this process, and how they could guide them to make further improvement. Anadolu continues to make further revisions based on student and teacher feedback, and it has adopted Pearson's *Speakout* and *Progress* solutions to better deliver the GSE promise and measure results.

"We have a very challenging task of dealing with a group of young adult learners who start their education with a low level of motivation. All these learners start learning English at the second grade and after having 11 years of instruction in their previous education most of them start from the beginning when they come to university. They have a feeling that English is a difficult language to learn and they have already tried, but could not achieve. This is the main reason we love the Global Scale of English. It shows how much students have already achieved and how much more they need to learn."

Belgin Aydın, Director of School of Foreign Languages, Anadolu University

Case Study:

Rennert International

"The GSE has revolutionised our curriculum: It is now tightly mapped to the right levels, externally validated, independent of specific course books and enables us to focus on relevant supplementary materials."

James Stakenburg, Center Director, Rennert New York & Trainer of Trainers, SIT Graduate Institute

RENNERT
BREAK THE LANGUAGE BARRIER ®

Rennert International is a high-quality language school that offers small classes with a focus on conversational teaching methods. Rennert also runs several teacher development and professional development programs. Language courses for students include General English, Business English, Exam Preparation, Arts Plus English, and Professional English. In 2015, the centre launched a programme to better align the learning objectives of the General English programme with the CEFR.

Challenges

As the CEFR did not provide enough insight into the learning outcomes for the distinct levels of their program, the school – utilising a coursebook as a starting point – crafted its own "can do" statements to provide more detail about learning at different levels. This was an arduous process that required multiple points of reference and much customisation. By drafting descriptors aligned to a specific coursebook, the school became tied to that book and could not change materials without completely revising and changing descriptors, essentially repeating the complex process. Additionally, their descriptors did not provide insight into gaps in the course content that could be addressed with their own custom materials. Rennert needed a set of tools to improve alignment, select externally validated descriptors to better align the programs and provide a gap analysis for courses, and increase their flexibility to select course materials and make program adjustments in the future.

Adoption of GSE

Working with Pearson, and using the GSE Teacher Toolkit, Rennert mapped their existing descriptors to the relevant learning objectives in the GSE database. Having identified the target range for their courses, they selected descriptors in the target range aligned to course needs, and identified gaps in the courses for in-house materials development. This enabled them to republish new GSE-based Rennert descriptors.

They then developed a training program for teachers on the mapping process and related policies for using the descriptors. Teachers and curriculum directors selected new descriptors as appropriate.

Benefits

Rennert believes their curriculum has been revolutionised – for example, they are now able to better understand why students may be struggling with certain levels, allowing them to improve their pedagogy. Using the GSE also allowed them to identify supplementary materials to better support language learning at each level. Finally, it allowed Rennert to set realistic expectations for language acquisition in the time allotted to each level.

The audit of the Rennert curriculum improved alignment of course materials to published learning outcomes and freed the organisation from a tie to any specific coursebook, including Pearson (note: they were not previously using Pearson materials).

The next step for Rennert is to compare student data for the time periods before and after the adoption of the GSE descriptors, to more specifically measure the positive impact on student outcomes. They are also starting to use the GSE for Business English and Academic English, since there are GSE descriptors specific to these areas, which CEFR does not have.

Case Study:

Setsunan, Kobe Gakuin and Kobe International

"It felt more like I was tackling a game than taking a test. It was really fun."

University student, Japan on taking the new GSE Progress test

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Background

Several universities in Japan have adopted the GSE to keep their students motivated in improving their English throughout the year.

Challenges

A number of universities in Japan - Setsunan, Kobe Gakuin and Kobe International - have been facing related issues with respect to teaching English and measuring the progress of their students. For example, the assessments used by Kobe International University didn't measure all of the four skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking) or the enabling skills of vocabulary and grammar. Setsunan University reported difficulty identifying student weaknesses and measuring English progress in general, all of which led to motivation issues with students. Kobe Gakuin University found that students had difficulty integrating all of these four skills in English to make communication successful. In general, these universities found that students weren't necessarily motivated or trained in basic study skills to successfully learn English, and existing assessments often didn't cover all skills sets, such as speaking and writing.

Adoption of GSE

The universities all adopted the automated, online GSE *Progress* test three times per year for students. The *Progress* tests covered all of the four major skills as well as vocabulary and grammar. The fact that it can be taken in or out of the classroom offered significant flexibility for students and teachers. The instant score report gave detailed feedback in seven categories, enabling teachers to quickly build a study plan and students to promptly focus on what to improve. The GSE test gave the schools, teachers, and students a very granular scale so as to learn exactly where students needed to improve and how learning can be customised.

Benefits

A recent survey of learners was conducted after receiving Progress tests:
95.5% of the students agreed that they would be motivated to continue learning English after receiving the detailed information about their English ability in 7 skills areas.

86.6% of the students agreed that taking multiple tests and receiving detailed scores about the improvements in the different skill areas motivated them to study English.

85.4% of the students agreed that they used the *Progress* test scores to determine how they studied English.

80.9% of the students agreed that the *Progress* test helped them achieve their English learning goals in class.

Students immediately realised where they were making progress and where they were falling short, therefore knowing where to concentrate their efforts. At Kobe Gakuin University, the use of *Progress* tests not only became checkpoints of students' learning, the *Progress* benchmarks – and the clarity of students' learning status that it brought – became a successful motivator for students to improve their learning of the English language. The universities reported that GSE and *Progress* really transformed their previously passive learning approach into an active and engaged one.

Conclusion

The need to learn English and to raise the quality of teaching and learning - at all levels - has never been more paramount. Even five years ago, Barbara Seidlhofer, Professor of English and Applied Linguistics at the University of Vienna, stated that for many people, English has become "the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option."[19] A 2014 report by the British Council found that proficiency in English goes even beyond the utilitarian benefits of speaking, reading, and writing in this language, but also contributes to individual's self-esteem, widening the individual's networks of relationships, access to leisure and cultural opportunities, and a sense of global citizenship[20]. Only by sharing a common language can cultures come together and learn from one another. In a world where the barriers of time and distance are constantly shrinking, overcoming the language barrier creates endless possibilities.

The Global Scale of English has provided a universal and standardised solution to address the historical issues with English language teaching and learning, including all-too-general measures of progress and the lack of context-specific learning objectives.

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The Global Scale of English represents the most significant advance in performance–based approaches to language learning, teaching and assessment since the development of the Common European Framework of Reference."

David Nunan Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Applied Linguistics, University of Hong Kong.

GSE can revolutionise the way English language teaching and learning is conducted across the globe, and successful educational institutions have started to adopt GSE as a core element of their curriculum development processes, the roadmap for assessment and feedback, and the basis for teacher training and development.

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19 *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca, Barbara Seidlhofer 2011*
20 *The impact of English on learners' wider lives*, Hann, et al, British Council 2014

Organisations such as Anadalou University have not only embraced the GSE but have seen tangible results in a short period of time, including increased motivation of students and teachers, greater insight into students' progress and learning needs, and increased flexibility while maintaining alignment with a standardised measure of English proficiency.

In addition, GSE is providing educators, administrators, and learners with the tools to support whatever reason students are learning. All of this can lead to improved student outcomes in shorter periods of time and the enhanced ability for educators to better fulfil their mission and serve students.

Because of these clear benefits, Pearson English is committed to the Global Scale of English and is ensuring all of its products are linked to it and all of its customers are measured against it. The research we have conducted so far, with over 6000 teachers also demonstrates our commitment to an on-going partnership and research initiative with teachers around the world.

An Invitation to Partner With GSE

Pearson English invites educators to contact us to discuss how an audit of your existing standards can transform the way in which English language teaching and learning takes place in your institution.

For additional information on the Global Scale of English and building a successful English learning programme, please visit: **english.com/gse/contact**.

Personalised Teaching

We have developed learning objectives tailored to meet the needs of four specific audiences: adult learners of General English, learners of Academic English, learners of Professional English and young learners (aged 6–14). These sets of learning objectives take account of the different goals across all four skills for each group of learners.

Visit **english.com/gse** for more information about the Global Scale of English and to download the four sets of GSE Learning Objectives.
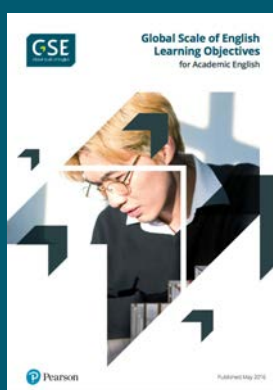
The GSE Teacher Toolkit

Find it on **english.com/gse/teacher-toolkit**

With *GSE Learning Objectives*, *GSE Vocabulary* and *GSE Grammar*, the GSE Teacher Toolkit is a comprehensive, free and fully searchable online tool.

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> As most educators will testify, test scores alone do not indicate actual ability in real-life environments. It is the fundamental framework that underpins English teaching that urgently requires our attention. Without improving standards within English teaching itself, teachers, learners and employers are all caught in a vicious cycle with no ability to improve the situation.
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We would like to thank the many thousands of teachers around the world for giving their time, enthusiasm and expertise to make the GSE a reality. The GSE is an on-going research initiative and we look forward to your continued support.

english.com/gse