

# **THE VANTAGE PASSPORT LANGUAGE PROGRAM (PLP)**



## **VALIDATION STUDY**

**B1 (GRADES 9-12) ENTRANCE  
B1 (GRADES 9-12) CERTIFICATION**

## **INTERIM REPORT**

**TR2008-8-03**

## THE VANTAGE PASSPORT LANGUAGE PROGRAM (PLP)

The **Passport Language Program (PLP)** offers educators a comprehensive method for assessing the language skills of English Language Learners. Aligned to the proficiency levels detailed in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), PLP is a robust application that provides online testing, scoring, reporting, and remediation.

Powered using the **Measured Success™** platform, PLP provides an online alternative to paper and pencil tests, which can be time consuming and tedious to score. Measured Success provides the power and functionality that enables the Passport application to provide online testing, scoring, reporting and remediation. The platform can also utilize paper and pencil scoring via our VanScan technology.



Using PLP, scores are provided instantly, even on essays, which are scored using the world's best automated essay-scoring engine, **Intellimetric™**. The application achieves levels of scoring accuracy that equal or exceed expert graders.

**iSeek™** is a remediation tool built into the Measured Success application. Upon completing a test, students have the ability to review their answers to see which questions were answered correctly or incorrectly. They may then review the skills covered by that question using **iSEEK™** to obtain meaningful and relevant learning tips.

Each package in the Passport Language Program contains a set of tests; one at entrance level and one at certification level; designed to assess reading, listening, and writing capabilities. The entrance level tests can be used for evaluation purposes before beginning a course, and the certification level test assesses whether a student has achieved the capabilities required to be considered proficient at any particular CEFR level (A1, A2, B1, B2 or C1).

Administrators can review the status of assigned tests and run a variety of reports on test results and users. This allows educators to identify problem areas that may need additional instruction. Teachers have access to 3 distinct reports. The first is the individual report generated for each student, which highlights how the student performed on his/her assessment. Next, the comparative report compares the overall and category scores achieved by any number of students. Finally, the item analysis report identifies areas and questions that students are having difficulty with and that may require more comprehensive instruction.

## COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK (CEFR)

CEFR describes achievements for learners of foreign languages across cultural and socio-political boundaries. Its objective is to provide a method of assessing and teaching which applies to all languages. It was developed through a process of scientific research and wide consultation and provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner.

The six reference levels (defined below) have become widely accepted as the standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. We have also broken these levels out into separate bands relative to grade level.

- **Middle School English:** Developed to assess students aged 12 to 14.
- **High School English:** Developed to assess students aged 14 and older.
- **Elementary School English:** Developed to assess elementary school students under age 12.

### CEFR A1 LEVEL COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:

- **Listening:** Ability to recognize familiar words and very basic phrases concerning themselves, their family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
- **Reading:** Ability to understand familiar names, words and very basic sentences.
- **Writing:** Ability to fill in forms with personal details and write a short, basic postcard

### CEFR A2 LEVEL COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:

- **Listening:** Ability to understand phrases and common vocabulary related to areas of personal relevance. Ability to understand the main point in short, clear, basic messages and announcements.
- **Reading:** Ability to read short, basic texts and find specific, predictable information in basic everyday materials such as advertisements, menus and timetables. Ability to understand short, basic personal letters.
- **Writing:** Ability to write short, basic notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. Ability to write a basic personal letter, such as a thank you note.

### CEFR B1 LEVEL COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:

- **Listening:** Ability to understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in school. Ability to understand the main point of radio and TV programs on current affairs or topics of personal interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.

- **Reading:** Ability to understand texts that consist mainly of common everyday language. Ability to understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
- **Writing:** Ability to write basic connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Ability to write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

#### **CEFR B2 LEVEL COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:**

- **Listening:** Ability to understand extended speeches and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is familiar. Ability to understand most TV news and current affairs programs and understand the majority of films utilizing standard dialect.
- **Reading:** Ability to read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. Ability to understand contemporary literary prose.
- **Writing:** Ability to write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to personal interests. Ability to write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. Ability to write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.

#### **CEFR C1 LEVEL COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS:**

- **Listening:** Ability to understand extended speeches, even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signaled explicitly. Ability to understand television programs and films without much effort.
- **Reading:** Ability to understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. Ability to understand specialized articles and longer technical instructions, even when they are about unfamiliar topics.
- **Writing:** Ability to clearly express ideas in well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. Ability to write about complex subjects in a letter, essay or report, underlining what should be considered salient issues. Ability to select style appropriate to the reader in mind.

The Common European Framework of Reference provides a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. It is increasingly used in the reform of national curricula and by international consortia for the comparison of language certificates.

The CEFR is of particular interest to course designers, textbook writers, testers, teachers and teacher trainers - in fact to all who are directly involved in language teaching and testing. The CEFR has become a key reference document and valuable tool for educational and professional mobility. It is available in over 30 language versions.

## SUMMARY OF PSYCHOMETRIC INFORMATION

### FOR THE VANTAGE PASSPORT LANGUAGE PROGRAM (PLP)

#### B1 (GRADES 9-12) CERTIFICATION PACKAGE & B1 (GRADES 9-12) ENTRANCE PACKAGE

The Vantage Passport Language Program (PLP) consists of two exams (entrance and certification) to measure English proficiency for students in high school and beyond. The psychometric analysis described below was conducted on test data from the Listening and Reading portions of both the PLP B1 Entrance and Certification tests. These data were collected between May and July 2008, from a diverse sample of test-takers who were above the age of fourteen, and for whom English was not their native language.

#### SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS:

Table 1 indicates that the racial/ethnic background of the same was quite diverse: more than two-thirds of the test-takers reported they were Asian, over 8% indicated they were of Hispanic/Latin American descent, approximately 2.5% were indicated they were White, and nearly 20% indicated they were of another racial/ethnic background.

**Table 1: Sample Characteristics: Race/Ethnicity**

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
Asian	201	69.6 %
Hispanic/Latin American	24	8.3 %
Other	57	19.7 %
White	7	2.4 %
<b>Total:</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

In total, as shown in Table 2, the sample comprised speakers of eight different first languages. Nearly fifty percent of the sample reported their first language as Chinese, Turkish (19.7%), Korean (18%), and Spanish (8.3%) were also well-represented.

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics: First Language Spoken**

First Language	Frequency	Percent
Chinese	144	49.8 %
Hebrew	1	0.3 %
Hungarian	2	0.7 %
Korean	52	18.0 %
Polish	4	1.4 %
Spanish	24	8.3 %
Telugu	5	1.7
Turkish	57	19.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

As shown in Table 3, the sample was fairly balanced. Approximately 57% of the sample were female, and 43% male.

**Table 3: Sample Characteristics: Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	165	57.1 %
Male	124	42.9 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>100.0 %</b>

**TEST PERFORMANCE AND ITEM CHARACTERISTICS:**

All 289 test-takers in our sample, took the Entrance Exam, while 195 of the 289 also took the Certification Exam. Table 4 contains information concerning overall test performance on each of the PLP exams. According to Table 4, mean scores on both exams were approximately 73%. Mean total raw scores were 36.67 (SD=11.34) and 36.53 (SD=12.43), for the Entrance and Certification tests, respectively.

**Table 4: Mean performance (percent correct) for Entrance and Certification Level PLP Exams**

Percent Correct	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Entrance Exam	289	.7334	.22678
Certification Exam	195	.7306	.24857

According to Table 5, items on both the Entrance and Certification exams had wide ranges of item difficulty. A favorable mean item difficulty level of  $p=.73$  was found for both tests. Additionally, most items on each test were found to have substantial discriminating power, as shown by a mean item discrimination statistic above .50.

**Table 5: Classical Test Theory Statistics: Item Statistics**

Exam	Item Difficulty Range	Mean Item Difficulty	Item Discrimination (point-biserial) Range	Mean Item Discrimination (point-biserial)
Entrance	.42-.90	.73	.15-.75	.51
Certification	.48-.94	.73	.11-.80	.56

Statistics in Table 6 indicate the Entrance and Certification exams are both highly reliable. KR-20 reliability coefficients are .948 and .960 for the Entrance and Certification exams, respectively. Likewise, the standard error of measurement estimates for each exam are low (2.59 and 2.49 for the Entrance and Certification exams, respectively).

**Table 6: Classical Test Theory Statistics:  
Reliability and Standard Error of Measurement**

Exam	Reliability (KR-20)	Standard Error of Measurement
Entrance	.948	2.59
Certification	.960	2.49

The data for each test were analyzed using a three-parameter logistic item response theory model. A summary of these results is shown in Table 7. Results indicate that most items on both tests have substantial discriminating power, and have wide, acceptable ranges of difficulty levels.

**Table 7: Item Response Theory Statistics**

Exam	Item Discrimination Range ( $\alpha$ parameter)	Item Difficulty Range ( $b$ parameter)
Entrance	+.22 to +1.68	-.63 to +1.91
Certification	+.73 to +2.31	-2.90 to +1.63