NETPAW and English instruction: Reaching out to Australia

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the National English Test of Proficiency for All on the Web's (NETPAW) place in relation to the growing number of online tests of English proficiency in the context of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL). As the convenience of working online with the use of multimedia becomes more the norm for both English instruction and assessment, learners have the potential to become more self-motivated and independent in their learning. This is increasingly supported through the availability of being able to connect to and interact in a virtual learning community of ESL speakers (e.g. Hastie, Chen & Todd, 2008; Lin, 2010). As the worldwide web facilitates NETPAW's growth to meet assessment needs beyond Taiwan, this paper discusses its applicability to the Australian context. It provides an overview of the purposes for testing English as a second language (ESL) in Australia, the current trends in the use of tests of ESL and the way NETPAW relates. As the modes of scoring of competing tests claim their comparability, NETPAW's test results may also be linked because its levels of proficiency are firmly benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment. In the early stage of a trial of NETPAW with native speakers of Arabic in a university preparation program in Australia, this report discusses the issue of test authenticity and the value of NETPAW's feedback to students and teachers compared with that of similar tests.

Key words: Language testing, washback, test authenticity, online language learning

Background

Testing English language proficiency represents "big business" in today's globalised world where the need to learn English for work and education continues to grow along with the need for valid and reliable tests that can be benchmarked to reputable standards. Related to this is the well established fact that the world's "native speakers" of English are now vastly outnumbered by those who speak English as an added language (Crystal, 2003; Power, 2007), so much so that the use of the term "native speaker" is now called into question

(Acar, 2007). The rethinking of this concept is not surprising given that there are many teachers of English for whom English is an added language just as there are teachers of other languages who are not native speakers of their target language. In addition it is well recognized that the diverse societal contexts and subcultures of English speakers across the world involve a variety of Englishes that present a challenge to the long held assumption that there should be only one form of acceptable English (Seargeant, 2008). Nevertheless, the need to test English proficiency/English literacy of both native and non-native speakers continues to be seen as essential to the effective delivery of education in today's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Tests of EFL and ESL, upon which this paper focuses, particularly apply to international students at the tertiary-level of education in Australia. These students need to demonstrate their ability to engage in courses of learning where English is the language of instruction. While they have the opportunity to complete their degrees in their home country and first language this is not their preferred option because earning a degree in an English-speaking learning environment is seen as more prestigious and of paramount importance to their future employment. Thus, in spite of the argument for the acceptance of different Englishes, the operation of the current approach to high stakes testing of English worldwide relies upon an overarching common standard. This is seated in the Common European Framework (CEF) that provides a descriptive scale to guide language curriculum development, teaching and testing. It is within this framework that NETPAW, along with such internationally renowned tests as IELTS, ISLPR, TOEFL, TOEIC and the Pearson Test of English (PTE), may link their standards as shown in Table 1. Besides such tests being able to claim validity and reliability in their testing of English proficiency, from the point of view of being able to add value to both students' learning and teachers' teaching they need to be able to address issues of authenticity (Bachman & Palmer, 2000, Brown, 2004) and washback (Hughes, 2003).

A test's authenticity is evident in the extent to which its item demands engage the candidate in using the language for real-life meaningful purposes. Similarly, for a test to provide positive washback it needs to provide feedback on students' performance that can be used to improve learning and teaching. To fulfill both of these needs implies a more naturalistic approach (e.g. Knell et al., 2007) as opposed to the limitations that stem from traditional, paper and pencil, multiple-choice approaches (Nguyen, 2007; Sajadi, 2006). Large scale, high stakes testing programs are typically less authentic and limited in their ability to provide positive washback because economics, tight time frames, and issues of validity, reliability and security drive them. With this in mind the present paper considers NETPAW in the light of tests with similar purposes with respect to English instruction in the Australian context.

Testing English as a second language for university program entry
Overseas students wishing to study in Australia need to demonstrate their English proficiency through taking either IELTS or TOEFL and to a lesser extent the ISLPR. The level of English may vary according to the demands of the course or program. In addition, students may apply to study in English Language Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) available through universities, technical colleges, and private providers to learn and improve their English, and also prepare for taking these English language entry tests. Government

regulates the system and providers, and Australia benefits from being seen as a safe destination with high quality education provisions. Award course English language entry requirements are specified in advertising material and are uniform across providers. Usually for IELTS and the ISLPR both the average score across the four macro-skills is stated and also the minimum sub-score value is also specified. For instance a student may need to achieve an IELTS score of 6.5, or better, with no component score lower than 6.0 or depending on the degree program achieve 7.0 with no component score lower than 7.0 (USQ, 2010). Other entry requirements for English are defined and accepted for the PTE Academic and TOEFL paper-based, electronic and internet-based forms as well as Singapore, Hong Kong and British 'O' Level English at 'C' or better. Students also meet entry requirements if they have successfully completed a Foundations Study Program from an Australian University. Test results must also be the most recent and within the previous two years.

Table 1: Overview of ESL tests general equivalence* scores across the four macro skills

	CEF/NETPAW and IELTS equivalence	ISLPR	IELTS	PTE	TOEFL	TOEFL (iBT)	TOEIC
Beginner	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Elementary		1-/1	</= 2.0	NA	0-300	<29	50-300
Pre-intermediate	A2 3.0	1/1+	2.0 – 4.0	NA	300-425	<29	300-500
	B1 3.5/4.0/4.5		3.5-4.5				
Intermediate		2	4.5-5.0	NA	425-475	29-49	500-600
Upper intermediate	B2 5.0/5.5./6.0	2+/3	5.0-6.0	38-46	475-525	49-69	600-700
Advanced	C1 6.5-7.0	3+	6.0-7.0	46-68	525-600	69-100	700-800
	C2	4	7.5	76	625	113	
	C2		8.0	82+	650+	116+	

These are approximate equivalences for the purposes of explanation in this paper and apply to the average score across the four macro-skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Any need for conversion should be referred to the testing authority involved.

CEF – Common European Framework

ISLPR - International Second Language Proficiency Scales

IELTS - International English Language Testing System

PTE – Pearson Test of English

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

TOEFL (iBT) – TOEFL internet-based test

TOEIC – Test of English for International Communication

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For those who do not meet English language requirements universities typically offer a variety of pathways into their degree programs. These include general English classes moving from beginners through to advanced level and preparation for study in English for academic purposes (EAP) or other preparatory course (UniPrep). In a minority of cases alternative assessment procedures have been devised where students are afforded a more "seamless" entry via the ELICOS pathway into university programs (O'Neill, Wylie & Weate, 2000). These pathways typically involve continuous assessment procedures applied to courses that encompass preparatory course curriculum as well as academic study skills. While tests such as IELTS and TOEFL act as gate keepers and argue strong validity and reliability, those who support more student –centred, course-based assessment argue greater positive washback and authenticity, and less stress and anxiety. The advantages to universities of course-based assessment include the ability to offer a more supportive service and the ability to develop a preferred skills base for prospective students. Other forms of seamless entry were found to involve the combination of preparatory skills, including English within a "bridging course" that also incorporated first year undergraduate course material. After successful completion students were able to move into second-year university. O'Neill, Wylie and Weate (2000) also found that university staff respondents to their survey believed the testing of skills for academic learning needed to be through criterion-based assessment or other mode of developmental assessment rather than in a formalised or standardised way. Respondents also supported the assessment of more extended and more critical reading and writing tasks and verbal communication skills applicable to academic study.

Assessing ELICOS students' English language program entry levels

When students enter into ELICOS programs they are also tested to be assigned to an appropriate English language level for teaching. They undertake a Placement Test. This typically involves an informal interview procedure to assess listening and speaking ability. Thus, many ELICOS teachers are also skilled in the application of the placement test and may also be IELTS or ISLPR assessors. Placement tests link to the developmental stages of

English skills acquisition and so assist students in choosing an appropriate pathway to university. The proficiency map or scale that underpins the ISLPR or IELTS or CEF (Appendix A) supports the description of the levels, the test design and ultimately the curriculum materials in use. Five weeks of intensive English teaching is expected to make a measurable difference to a student's English proficiency. Learning outcomes may be specified for each five-week course along with the assessment. As students pass each course to progress to the next level, generally, Level 5 and Level 6 provide direct entry into Award courses such as pre-degree Certificate V and Diploma levels in accord with the Australian Qualifications Framework. Thus, provision of ELICOS and the related curriculum and testing structure is also well established and defined by the multitude of curriculum and test practice materials available in the field (e.g. Cambridge ESOL; Pejovic, Nicklin & Read, 1999). O'Neill, Wylie and Weate (2000, p. 29) noted that "such placement tests should also reflect end of stage formative assessments administered to students as they progress up the ladder towards their goal of readiness for university entry. This is also important because students need to be able to 'see' evidence of their progress over the 5 and 10 week periods to which these stages are typically geared".

Deakin's (1997) research showed that ELICOS teachers were concerned that IELTS produced a negative washback effect on EAP programs. Students reporting anxiety and stress also implied this. Thirty-seven percent of interviewees were obsessed with passing the test. Teachers also raised the issue of IELTS sometimes not being able to reflect students' true ability because of being 'culturally loaded' or containing 'unfamiliar concepts'. The issues considered most important for international students in EAP were their acquisition of strategies for learning, analytical and enquiry skills, critical thinking skills, skills to participate in discussions and tutorials, and adaptation to Australian culture. These issues continue to be pertinent to overseas students today (Nieto & Booth, 2010; Park, 2010; Williams, 2005; UniSA, 2005). It was suggested that the importance of English language skills tended to be overestimated and language related problems tended to be in areas not assessed by IELTS. This raises the issue of test authenticity in English instruction and the need for positive washback. The most effective testing of English for the purposes of ELICOS and other preparatory programs should reflect the full range of skills to be acquired as well as provide feedback to assist learners and teachers alike.

Methodology
In the early stage of a trial of NETPAW with native speakers of Arabic in a university preparation program in Australia this report discusses the issue of test authenticity and the value of NETPAW's feedback to students and teachers compared with other tests that these students may typically take. A qualitative analysis of a sample of feedback is explored for its ability to facilitate future pedagogy and learning and provide positive washback to teachers and students. The results of a student who passed CEF B2 level (see Appendix A) Listening and Reading but fell short of passing the CEF B2 level Speaking and Writing is the focus.

They are explored in relation to the way other major tests deal with results.

Results

Insights into NETPAW's capacity to promote test authenticity and positive washback were investigated through an exploration of test descriptive results for a failing candidate. Information on IELTS, ISLPR, TOEFL (iBT) and the Pearson Test of English was used comparatively within the limitations of the scope of availability since these tests are secure. While the researcher is familiar with NETPAW and is an ISLPR assessor, and has some knowledge of IELTS and PTE, details of TOEFL (iBT) was dependent on that available in the public domain.

NETPAW's feedback on the candidate's performance was conveyed in a summary statement and included and strengths and weaknesses. An overall score of 60 was allocated to the speaking component and 50 to the writing component, together with a simple indication of "Pass" or "Fail". In addition to this summative information in the form of numerical scores, descriptive information was provided under the headings of strengths, weaknesses and specific remarks. Level B2 is described as Vantage, High-intermediate proficiency such that a speaker or writer at this level would be expected to be able to understand the main ideas of a complex text in both concrete and abstract topics, as well as technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation (Appendix A; Chuang, Chiang & Beasley, 2008). S/he would be expected to interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity, making regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. The expectation at this level also includes the ability to produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various points. In the actual test feedback the overarching statement and points reiterate the CEF level content. This was followed by the strengths, weaknesses and specific remarks as shown in Table 2 (Speaking) and Table 3 (Writing), and information to specify whether the test result for the component met the standard.

Table 2: Section III: Speaking Grade: Below the standard (CEF B2)

Strengths	*1. You have a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.* *2. You can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo.* *3. You can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link your utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some 'jumpiness' in a long contribution.*
Weaknesses	*1. You do not show a relatively high degree of grammatical control.* *2. You made errors that caused some misunderstanding.* *3. You can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo, but you can be hesitant as you search for patterns and expressions.* *4. There are noticeably long pauses for some questions.*

Specific remarks	*It is suggested that you pay attention to the following comments for improvement:* *1. It is advisable for you to take a deep breath before you start to answer a question. And it is important to try to speak more fluently.* *2. The pauses should be based on "thought groups".* *3. You have to use complete sentences to answer questions.* *4. It is suggested that you answer each question with a longer passage.*

Speaking

The fact that NETPAW is an online test that uses multimedia and microphone with speech recognition, and allows the learner to take a significant amount of the control of the test situation, places it ahead in current practice. Although IELTS and ISLPR do not discount incorporating online assessment, to date there has not been any significant change. The IELTS speaking test typically covers pronunciation, vocabulary, sentence structure, fluency and coherence depending on level. CEF B2 generally equates to IELTS 5.0 through 5.5 to 6.0 and therefore one would expect the speaker to be able to use a variety of language with longer sentences, fewer hesitations and only minor errors as long as the meaning is not impeded. As the speaker moves into Band 7 s/he should be competent in paraphrasing. It is not until Band 8 that speakers would be expected to be more "native-speaker like". Similarly, the ISLPR test of speaking involves a face-to-face interview where the stimulus for the discussion is more tailored to the candidate's field of knowledge. ISLPR assessors are skilled in this regard. The ISLPR is used as a test of English for specific purposes often being applied in teaching and nursing in Australia where non-English speaking background teachers and nurses need to demonstrate suitable levels of English proficiency prior to being able to gain registration. This is necessary to be considered for employment. More recently various ELICOS providers have taken up the use of the Pearson Test of English (PTE, 2010a). It's format and approach is not dissimilar to NETPAW. A typical speaking task might ask the candidate to "describe an image, such as a graph, picture, map, chart or table". Success on this task requires the candidate to speak for a particular purpose and support their opinion with reference to details and examples. They should be able to provide explanations, organize an oral presentation in a logical way; develop complex ideas within a spoken discourse; use words and phrases appropriate to the context; use correct grammar; and speak at a natural rate to produce fluent speech. PTE Academic, at this level, also professes to test the use of correct intonation, pronunciation and stress within a strictly controlled time frame. ISLPR on the other hand rates this level as 2+ to 3 on its descriptive scale. Level 3 is termed

the Basic "Vocational" level where the speaker "readily enters, participates in, and exits from most conversations related to social and community life and everyday commerce and recreation with native speakers" (Ingram & Wylie, 1979/1999, Section, S: 3 Basic 'Vocational' Proficiency). According to the ISLPR speakers at this level (in formal learning situations like university) should be able to make a prepared presentation on a topic new to the audience and use simple graphic or other support material although they may have problems responding to audience questions when significant depth, abstraction or extended juxtaposition is required.

Of note is the TOEFL (iBT) internet-based test that presents a very user-friendly site where free practice tests are available subject to registering on the site. TOEFL (iBT) also emphasises, as does NETPAW, that candidates for Speaking and Writing will receive their score plus additional advice on the skills and strategies they need to improve. TOEFL (iBT) test aims to promote appropriate methods for teaching and learning English (ETS, 2008). It aims to address the concerns the English-language teaching community has with the potential for such tests to create a negative washback on teaching and learning. "Innovations in the TOEFL (iBT) test, such as the introduction of a speaking section and the inclusion of integrated tasks, were motivated by a belief that these innovations would prompt the creation and uses of test preparation materials and activities that would more closely resemble communicatively-oriented pedagogy in academic English courses" (ETS, 2008, p. 10).

In Xi, Higgins, Zechner and Williamson's (2008, p. ii) research into TOEFL (iBT) three years into its operation they concluded: "while some higher-order aspects of the speaking construct (such as content and organization) are missing, more basic aspects of the construct (such as pronunciation and fluency) are richly represented. In addition, these different parts of the speaking construct tend to be highly correlated, so that the absence of higher order factors is not as detrimental to the model's agreement with human raters as it otherwise might be". They recommended further research on candidates' perceptions of and interactions with the system and the impact of candidates' perceptions of their results. With regards to NETPAW as noted by O'Neill (2009, p. 131) "in the testing of Speaking . . . the candidate reads a short, simple instruction about what to do [which] amounts to starting the media player, listening to the speaker and then recording a response to the speaker's instruction . . . The test questions encourage an extended answer and topics have application to everyday life. They may also involve pictorial information". Candidates are made aware how the different language features of pronunciation, intonation, fluency, grammar and vocabulary are weighted for scoring. This is helpful to the candidate in planning what to emphasise and how to use the time wisely. The feedback shown in Table 2 suggests the student needs to enhance his or her fluency in speaking. While s/he is able to "produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo" there is some hesitancy at times

as s/he searches for patterns and expressions. The need for improved fluency is also implied by the advice that notes, "You have to use complete sentences to answer questions".

Table 3: Section IV: Writing Grade: Below the standard (CEF B2)

Strengths	1. *You can evaluate different ideas and solutions to a problem.* 2. *You can synthesize information and arguments from a number of sources.* 3. *You can speculate about causes, consequences and hypothetical situations.*
Weaknesses	1. *You did not construct a chain of reasoned argument.* 2. *You did not write clear detailed texts on a wide range of subjects related to their interests.* 5. *You did not write an essay or report, passing on information and presenting some arguments for or against a particular point of view.*
Specific remarks	*It is suggested that you pay attention to the following comments for improvement:* 1. *You need to elaborate on your viewpoint.* 2. *You used appropriate words such as 'initiative', 'flexible', 'knowledgeable', 'supportive', and 'capable,' which indicated that you can describe things elaborately. Therefore, if you write in more detail, your writing will be improved.*

Writing

A major advantage of online/internet-based tests is the ability to type the response rather than use paper and pencil. It alleviates the writer's concerns about neatness of handwriting and supports speedy editing. NETPAW's writing tasks typically require candidates to respond to topical stimuli where an indication of the number of words is noted and automatically calculated. Again the criteria for marking are clearly specified and include grammar, spelling, punctuation and other assessments relating to content (as evidenced in the feedback). As shown in Table 3 the three forms of feedback are constructive and helpful for both the learner and the teacher. For instance, the candidate confirms that s/he "can evaluate different ideas and solutions to a problem" but "did not write an essay or report, passing on information and presenting some arguments for or against a particular point of view". In summary, the candidate was assessed as needing to work on strategies to elaborate on their viewpoint. Feedback of this nature is in keeping with that of the ISLPR. It notes at this level of basic "vocational" proficiency candidates should be able to write a simple discussion with a reasonably coherent argument. Academically they should be able

to refer to another person's ideas and differentiate them from their own but they would be expected to have difficulty dealing with complex propositional relationships and significant abstraction (Ingram & Wylie, 1979/1999, Section, S: 3 Basic 'Vocational' Proficiency). Similarly, IELTS at this level considers task response, cohesion and coherence, vocabulary, grammar and overall impression (IELTSAnswers, 2010). Strengths and weaknesses are also reported with implicit advice for improvement.

The PTE Academic typically requires candidates to write an essay (writing) and also a one-sentence summary of a passage (integrating reading and writing). The sub-skills tend to equate to test item demands making the criteria more explicit. While the task may be writing to support an opinion the assessment criteria cover spelling, grammar/mechanics, vocabulary, sentence and paragraph organization and development of ideas. In order to provide a one-sentence summary of a passage candidates' are assessed on their ability to identify the writer's purpose, understand explicit and implicit information as well as the concrete and abstract (PTE, 2010b, p. 7). The TOEFL (iBT) uses similar tasks where each macro-skill receives a score out of five that is then converted to a score out of 30 (hence the overall score is out of 120). Criteria for marking covers grammar, vocabulary, organization and development and assessment related to content when applicable (ETS, 2008a). As explained in ETS (2008b, p. 22) feedback includes a statement about the actual performance and advice for improvement. Performance is described in such terms "You responded with a well-organized and developed essay. Weaknesses, if you have any, might have to do with: . . . elaboration of ideas or connection of ideas that could have been stronger". Advice for improvement may take the form of "Read articles and essays written by professional writers that express opinions about an issue (for example, a social, environmental or educational issue . . . notice how the writer addresses possible objections to the opinions".

This exploration of the different system's approaches to testing the same skills attributed to the CEF level under scrutiny reveals both similarities and differences. The simulation of a face-to-face interview is authenticated by the candidate being required to respond to the utterances of the interlocutor in the system. The process is supportive and efficient and may be less stressful since the candidate is afforded some control of his or her responses. As with the PTE and TOEFL (iBT) the shift to on line delivery affords administrators and candidates some flexibility. While writing tasks are very similar and evidently developed to ensure most candidates are able to respond regardless of linguistic and cultural background it appears that the quality of feedback varies in level of detail and specificity. Since candidates do not receive their marked script they must then in conjunction with their teacher make the best use of the comments. The strengths, weaknesses and advice for improvement from NETPAW have the capacity for both general and specific explicit feedback, as does the PTE Academic. The identification of the subskills being tested facilitates precise feedback on those skills well demonstrated by the candidate and those in need of improvement.

Discussion and conclusions

In today's globalised, technology-supported learning environment it would seem the prudent provider would capitalise on engaging students in multimediated, interactive social-networked virtual learning communities. The availability of this approach, that is able to connect ESL/EFL learners around the world, stands to revolutionise English language learning through its facilitation of meaningful communicative interactions. It allows self-assessment to be built-in and the promotion of positive washback through the construction of learning environments that involve real-life, purposeful tasks. In turn, such an approach facilitates the design of authentic tasks that may be embedded in project- and problem-based learning where students need to communicate to collaborate. NETPAW has clear goals to promote online English language learning and improve English proficiency. It works towards achieving these goals by exemplifying such practices in their ability to reducing paper usage and minimise the use of other non-renewable energies and thus contribute to sustainability.

While this exploration of tests shows a trend towards language testing online, testing systems by nature pay less attention to the need for positive washback and improving language pedagogy and learning. However, both TOEFL (iBT) and PTE display impressive information on their online testing approaches, content and marking criteria. Supporting information is available for test preparation and internet-searches show a wealth of additional resources, including videos on YouTube. Major test developers continue to research their tests to consider issues that may impact on uptake such as scope and validity and reliability (ETS, 2007; 2008a; 2008b), and in a business sense they need to respond to economic issues. De Prada (1997) alerts one to the fact that international students, as the client group for testing, are weak and vulnerable in terms of linguistic capital but from the economical perspective are powerful and influential. This puts the onus on the educational institutions involved to ensure the employment of valid and reliable strategies to ensure academic standards are maintained while at the same time value is placed on the fees paid by international students. Similarly, the 'gate keeper' role of major tests like IELTS and TOEFL, and their associated support structures and procedures, interact within this context. It is important to appreciate this aspect of education in its commercial context where international student expectations relate to a "product" and a "guarantee". The guarantee is of a measured and definite progress toward success in the test (DePrada, 1997). Thus, test developed for such contexts need to take account of both the academic, service and economic issues involved.

Although all tests explored provide feedback that typically includes facts about general performance, strengths and weaknesses, and indications of how to improve, there appears to be some variation in the detail of criteria coverage and depth with respect to feedback.

From the materials available it would seem that the more explicit the test's sub-skill demands the more precise the feedback will be. O'Neill (2009) found NETPAW offered a valuable alternative test because of its availability online and its interactive/communicative assessment experiences. The fact that candidate-feedback was focused at the level of skill and item demand showed it to have diagnostic application comparable with a similar diagnostic test of English as a second language (DELTA) (McQueen & Aldous, 1994). Its ability to provide diagnostic feedback also confirms its ability to provide positive washback.

In conclusion, the results of this small trial suggest that NETPAW stands firm among similar tests both in its capacity to test English proficiency and in its ability to provide feedback to improve pedagogy and learning. It represents the state of the art in the use of technology and in that regard enhances both its capacity for authentic assessment and positive washback. It clearly has application to the Australian ESL context and offers a competitive alternative in every respect.

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Appendix A: NETPAW Proficiency Levels

		The NETPAW-CEF Table	
Users	**CEF**	**The CEF Can-do List**	**NETPAW**
Proficient User	**C2** **Mastery**	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously very fluently and precisely differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.	**N/A**
	C1 **Effective Operational Proficiency**	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts and recognize implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.	**N/A**
Independent User	**B2** **Vantage**	Can understand the main ideas of complex text in both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speaker quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various points.	**High-Intermediate**
	B1 **Threshold**	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arouse whilst traveling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes, and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.	**Intermediate**
Basic User	**A2** **Waystage**	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to area of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in area of immediate need.	**Elementary**
	A1 **Breakthrough**	Can Understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.	**Basic**
			Beginning

From Chuang, Chiang & Beasley (2008, p. 5)