# Empowering Students' English Proficiency through CEFR-Aligned Mock Testing

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**Abstract:** This study investigates students' responses to integrating CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) aligned mock testing at the International English Course at English Education Department, Universitas Islam Balitar, focusing on four variables: Materials Understanding, Motivation, Preference, and Readiness. A descriptive quantitative survey was conducted with 23 students. Results indicate that Materials Understanding was high (average 4.47; 89%), demonstrating that students effectively comprehended test types, purposes, and CEFR levels. Motivation to engage in mock testing was very strong (96%), influenced by achievement tracking, clear explanations, and practical exercises. Regarding Preferences, students favored the British Council as the most effective test source (89%). Among skills, reading was the most enjoyed (90%), followed by writing (85%), listening (75%), and speaking (72%). Students' overall readiness for official English tests reached 87%, reflecting confidence and preparedness gained through CEFR-aligned mock practices. These findings suggest that integrating preferred test sources, maintaining high motivation, and focusing on less enjoyed skills can enhance balanced language development and improve readiness for international English assessments.

## INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has become a central requirement for learners in higher education, particularly in programs emphasizing international communication and publication (Andayani, 2022; Rais & Awwalia, 2025; Fitriani & Fadhilawati, 2022). One of the most recognized measures of English proficiency is performance in international English tests, which are increasingly aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to standardize language assessment across contexts  (Green, 2018; Hidri, 2021). CEFR provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating learners' reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills, and has been widely adopted in non-native English-speaking

countries for placement tests, exit exams, and university admissions  (Waluyo et al., 2024). Studies also show that applying language proficiency scales (LPS) like CEFR benefits multiple stakeholders: teachers use them for diagnostic assessment and curriculum planning, policymakers adopt them for educational guidance, and students utilize them for self-assessment and progress tracking (Zhu et al., 2023).

Despite these advantages, prior research has predominantly focused on test validation, alignment, and reliability, often from the perspectives of test developers or score users (Green, 2018; Hidri, 2021;Waluyo et al., 2024). Similarly, Deygers et al. (2018) explored CEFR use in European university entrance policies, highlighting test standardization and level requirements for international L2 students. However, they did not examine students' experiences or readiness with CEFR-aligned tests. This study fills the gap by investigating Indonesian students' responses to CEFR-aligned mock testing, focusing on materials understanding, motivation, preferences, and readiness for official international English tests.

Understanding test Materials is a prerequisite for effective learning and performance. Students who comprehend international English test formats, types, purposes, and CEFR-aligned levels can navigate practice activities more effectively and develop appropriate learning strategies  (Koláčková & Šikolová, 2017). Motivation is another key determinant of successful language learning. Learners with high motivation demonstrate greater persistence, engagement, and likelihood of improving proficiency (Dörnyei, 2020; Ocak & Yamaç, 2013). Integrating mock testing into the curriculum can enhance motivation through immediate feedback, structured practice, and achievement tracking (Waluyo & Panmei, 2024). Yet, prior research has often examined motivation in general language learning contexts, leaving a gap regarding its influence in CEFR-aligned mock testing for international exams(Sahib & Stapa, 2021)

Learners' preferences regarding test sources and language skills also significantly shape their engagement and learning outcomes. In a related study, Sihombing & Ismahani (2025) revealed that students' vocabulary improvement was strongly influenced by the types of English learning resources they preferred and frequently used. This finding indicates that learners select test or learning materials

they perceive as practical, authentic, and aligned with their linguistic needs. Extending this notion to CEFR-aligned mock testing, students' preferences for specific test providers—such as the British Council or Cambridge Assessment—may similarly reflect their trust in resource quality and familiarity with test structures. Understanding such preferences enables instructors to design more engaging and effective mock testing practices that meet students' expectations and learning goals.

Finally, students' readiness for official international English tests is a critical outcome of adequate preparation. Mock testing can enhance readiness by familiarizing learners with test formats, developing strategies, and reducing anxiety (Ismail et al., 2022);. Nonetheless, previous studies rarely quantify readiness across multiple dimensions, such as confidence, strategic preparation, and expectations for future exams. Therefore, this study investigates students' readiness after engaging in CEFR-aligned mock testing and examines how it relates to materials understanding, motivation, and preferences.

By addressing these gaps, the present study provides empirical insights into how structured CEFR-aligned mock testing can enhance English proficiency, guide instructional design, and support learners' confidence and preparedness for international English assessments.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a descriptive quantitative survey design to explore students' responses toward CEFR-aligned mock testing in the International English Course at Universitas Islam Balitar. Survey methodology was chosen as it is well-suited for capturing participants' perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Nayak & Narayan, 2019). The study focused on four variables: Materials Understanding, Motivation, Preference, and Readiness. All 23 students enrolled in the course participated, ensuring full representation of learners' experiences and providing comprehensive insight into the influence of CEFR-aligned mock testing. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire using a

five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree, following standard survey practices in educational research (Fink, 2010).

Data were analyzed quantitatively through descriptive statistics, calculating total scores, mean scores, and percentages for each item. Overall averages were computed for each variable to evaluate general patterns of Materials Understanding, Motivation, Preference, and Readiness of students toward the  (Fatimah et al., 2021). This method allows researchers to identify trends and areas for targeted instructional improvement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including voluntary participation, anonymized responses, and informed consent from all students (Kang & Hwang, 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study investigated students' responses toward CEFR-aligned mock testing, focusing on four key dimensions: Materials Understanding, Motivation, Preferences, and Readiness. The analysis of survey data revealed that students generally demonstrated high levels of comprehension, engagement, and preparedness across all four areas. Each variable provides insight into different aspects of students' learning experiences: Materials Understanding reflects how well students grasp test formats and CEFR levels; Motivation indicates the degree of their interest and commitment; Preferences reveal favored test sources and skills; and Readiness assesses students' confidence and strategic preparation for official English tests. The following sections describe the findings in detail, integrating both descriptive results and interpretative.

### Materials Understanding

Students' comprehension of international English tests was measured through 15 items covering knowledge of test types, purposes, authorized institutions, and CEFR levels from A1 to C2. The results show that students generally have a high level of understanding, indicating that CEFR-aligned mock testing effectively supports learners' familiarity with test formats and competency requirements.

Table 1: The Students' Responses toward Material Understanding

| No | Item / Indicator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total Students | Total Score | Average | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I understand what an International English Test is | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 23 | 104 | 4.52 | 90% |
| 2 | I know the types of International English Tests | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 17 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| 3 | I know the purpose of taking an International English Test | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 4 | I know who is officially authorized to conduct International English Tests | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 18 | 23 | 106 | 4.61 | 92% |
| 5 | I know where to take IELTS and TOEFL near my area | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 16 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| 6 | I know which skills are tested in these tests | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 7 | I know who usually takes these tests | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 18 | 23 | 104 | 4.52 | 90% |
| 8 | I understand what CEFR is | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 9 | I understand what CEFR measures | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 10 | I know what A1 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 17 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| 11 | I know what A2 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 12 | I know what B1 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 13 | I know what B2 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 14 | I know what C1 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| 15 | I know what C2 level means in CEFR | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 17 | 23 | 103 | 4.48 | 90% |
| Overall Average Mean and % | | | | | | | | | 4.47 | 89% |

The survey results indicate that students demonstrated a high level of understanding of materials regarding international English tests, with an overall mean score of 4.47 (89%). Students could identify different types of international English tests, understand their purposes, recognize authorized institutions, and explain CEFR levels from A1 to C2. For example, 92% of students correctly identified the institutions officially authorized to conduct these tests, reflecting a firm grasp of the institutional framework of international assessments.

These findings suggest that CEFR-aligned mock testing effectively enhances learners' familiarity with test formats, assessed skills, and competency levels. This aligns with prior research indicating that structured exposure to test formats and CEFR descriptors significantly improves learners' (Sahib & Stapa, 2021). Furthermore, a solid understanding of CEFR levels enables students to assess their proficiency realistically, select appropriate practice materials, and plan targeted learning strategies, thereby reducing test anxiety and enhancing the effectiveness of their preparation for official exams.

**Motivation**

In addition to material understanding, this study also examined students' motivation to learn international English testing through CEFR-aligned mock practice. Motivation is essential in sustaining learners' engagement because it determines their willingness to participate and the depth of their learning outcomes. (Lunenburg, 2011). In this context, motivation was shaped by intrinsic factors (personal goals and perceived future usefulness of the tests) and extrinsic factors (such as lecturer support, explicit instruction, and structured feedback mechanisms (Ryan & Deci, 2020). A unique feature of this program was using an achievement card, which allowed students to monitor their progress throughout the course. This tool served as a visible motivator, reinforcing students' sense of accomplishment and encouraging them to stay engaged. Table 2 presents the detailed results of students' motivation.

Table 2: Motivation to Learn International English Test Via Mock Testing Alifn with CEFR

| Item | Indicator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total Students | Total Score | Average | % |
|------|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|-------------|---------|---|
| 1 | I feel motivated to learn International English through mock testing because my lecturer provides an achievement card to monitor my progress | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 20 | 23 | 112 | 4.87 | 97% |
| 2 | I am motivated to learn International English Testing through this course because my lecturer explains the | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 20 | 23 | 112 | 4.87 | 97% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | materials clearly and provides balanced practice | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | I am motivated to learn International English Testing by applying mock testing because it is useful for my future when taking an official International Test | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 23 | 108 | 4.70 | 94% |
| 4 | I am motivated to learn International English Testing by applying mock tests because it gives me experience that I have never had before | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 19 | 23 | 108 | 4.70 | 94% |
| **Overall Average Mean and %** | | | | | | | | | 4.79 | 96% |

The results show that students were highly motivated to engage in mock testing, with an overall mean score of 4.79 (96%). Key factors contributing to this high motivation included receiving achievement cards to monitor progress, clear explanations from instructors, and the perceived practical usefulness of mock tests for future official exams. For instance, 97% of students indicated that feedback on their achievements motivated them to continue learning.

These findings highlight that CEFR-aligned mock testing improves cognitive understanding and fosters affective engagement. This is consistent with ((2020). Research on language learning motivation emphasizes that structured, goal-oriented practice with immediate feedback increases learners' persistence and willingness to participate in learning activities (Mahvelati, 2021).

Moreover, high motivation suggests that students perceive real value in mock testing, viewing it not merely as a formal requirement but as a tool to develop practical, exam-relevant skills. In other words, motivation was driven by personal goals, instructor support, and the practical relevance of the learning activities (Dörnyei, 2020),

**Preferences**

Besides understanding and motivation, the study also explored students' preferences for learning sources and skills concerning international English mock testing. Preferences are important to analyze because they indicate which resources learners trust most and which language skills they feel more comfortable practicing.

These insights help lecturers design targeted materials and balance skill training to align with learners' expectations. The student responses are summarized in Table 3

Table 3 The Students' Preference of Sources and Skills for Learning

| No | Item / Indicator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total Students | Total Score | Average | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I prefer British Council as the most effective source for International English Mock Testing | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 15 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| 2 | I prefer Cambridge as the most effective source for International English Mock Testing | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 23 | 99 | 4.30 | 86% |
| 3 | I prefer EF SET as the most effective source for International English Mock Testing | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 23 | 99 | 4.30 | 86% |
| 4 | I enjoy Reading in International English Mock Testing aligned with CEFR more than other skills | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 23 | 104 | 4.52 | 90% |
| 5 | I enjoy Writing in International English Mock Testing aligned with CEFR more than other skills | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 23 | 98 | 4.26 | 85% |
| 6 | I enjoy Listening in International English Mock Testing aligned with CEFR more than other skills | 1 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 23 | 86 | 3.74 | 75% |
| 7 | I enjoy Speaking in International English Mock Testing aligned with CEFR more than other skills | 2 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 23 | 83 | 3.61 | 72% |
| Overall Average mean and % | | | | | | | | | 4.07 | 81% |

The analysis of students' preferences toward CEFR-aligned mock testing showed an overall average mean of 4.07 (81%), indicating a generally positive preference for specific test sources and skills. Among the sources, students favored the British Council (89%) slightly more than Cambridge and EF SET (both 86%), suggesting that perceived credibility, accessibility, and familiarity influence learners' source preferences. Regarding skill preference, Reading received the highest enjoyment score (90%), followed by Writing (85%), while Listening (75%) and Speaking (72%) were slightly less preferred. These findings suggest that students favor receptive skills and familiar test sources, which may reflect their perceived difficulty or confidence levels in productive skills like speaking. This

pattern aligns with research on learner autonomy and test familiarity, which indicates that students gravitate toward familiar and structured materials when preparing for international assessments  (Sun & Fang, 2021: Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009.).

Similarly, Sihombing & Ismahani (2025) found that students' vocabulary acquisition was strongly shaped by their preferred English learning resources, implying that learners' choices are guided by accessibility, practicality, and perceived usefulness of materials. Extending this to CEFR-aligned mock testing, students' inclination toward certain test providers or specific skills may likewise be rooted in their previous learning experiences and resource familiarity.

Understanding these preferences is crucial for instructors in designing mock test practices that balance students' interests with comprehensive skill development, particularly by providing additional scaffolding for less preferred skills such as Speaking and Listening. Understanding these preferences is crucial for instructors in designing mock test practices that balance student interest with skill development, mainly by providing additional support for less preferred skills such as Speaking and Listening.

**Readiness**

Table 4. Readiness to take a Real International English Test

| No | Item / Indicator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Total Students | Total Score | Mean | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I feel confident to take an International English Test right now after practicing CEFR-aligned mock tests. | 0 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 13 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| 2 | I understand the structure and requirements of International English Tests clearly after mock test practice. | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 23 | 99 | 4.30 | 86% |
| 3 | I have developed effective strategies (e.g., time management, | 0 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 23 | 97 | 4.22 | 84% |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | answering techniques) to succeed in International English Tests in the future | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | I feel fully prepared to take an official International English Test in the future because of the mock test practice. | 0 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 23 | 102 | 4.43 | 89% |
| | Overall Average mean and % | | | | | | | | 4.35 | 87% |

Students' readiness to take an official international English test after engaging in CEFR-aligned mock testing showed a strong overall average of 4.35 (87%), indicating high perceived preparedness. Students reported confidence in taking a test (89%), understanding test structure and requirements (86%), and developing effective strategies such as time management and answering techniques (84%). Importantly, students also felt fully prepared for future official tests (89%), reflecting that repeated exposure to CEFR-aligned mock testing strengthened cognitive and strategic readiness.

These results are consistent with test-taking self-efficacy and strategic competence studies, which emphasize that familiarity with test formats and repeated practice significantly enhance learners' confidence and preparedness (Bandura, 2023) The findings suggest that integrating structured mock testing into English courses can effectively bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge of CEFR descriptors and practical readiness for the official international exam.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found that students responded positively to the implementation of CEFR-aligned mock testing in international English courses at the English Education Department of Universitas Islam Balitar. Students showed a high understanding of test materials (89%), strong motivation to participate in mock testing (96%), and clear preferences for certain test sources and skills, especially

the British Council and Reading/Writing activities. Overall readiness for official international English tests was also high (87%), indicating increased confidence, strategic preparation, and familiarity with test formats. These findings suggest that structured, CEFR-aligned mock testing helps build both competence and self-efficacy in preparing students for international English assessments.

CEFR-aligned mock testing can be effectively applied in other higher education or language learning contexts to enhance students' understanding, motivation, and readiness for international English assessments. Educators should diversify test sources and provide balanced practice across all skills, focusing on less-preferred areas such as Listening and Speaking. Additionally, encouraging learners to engage with multiple test formats and develop strategies for less-practiced skills can promote well-rounded language proficiency. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of such mock testing on official test performance and learner confidence.

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