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Progressive Adaptive Learning Assistant— PALA, and what she can do for teachers, learners, curriculum planners and administrators in language programs using the Common European Framework

Antonio F. Smith

1. Background

The Progressive Adaptive Learning Assistant, or PALA, was developed by the author in partnership with a computer software company, Lingonetwork, in 2011. Its self-assessment component is accessible to all 1st and 2nd year English major students in the School of Foreign Studies at Osaka University via the Internet, and several teachers in English Area Studies there are examining the data it provides to plan suitable curriculum together. Any full-time teacher in the English major-program is invited to become a user for free and gain access to all student data and statistics. PALA can also be made available to other language programs at Osaka University or other universities.

2. Applications

A student can see only his or her own information and class averages; a teacher can see only his or her classes' self-assessment and their various statistics; the teacher can also add lesson plans targeting specific Can-do's. The administrator(s) of a language program can see the data of all the students in the program, add or subtract users (including students and teachers), modify Can-do checklists and many

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other things. The administrator can add administrator-like capabilities to those of any teacher on a case-by-case basis as needed, with the click of a mouse.

PALA is well suited to the learning of CEF abilities/Can-do's, but it could be used to monitor and facilitate progress in the learning of anything that can be broken down into sets of abilities that build on each other, such as how to cook French food, fly a jet, or use English for Specific Purposes in Science and Engineering. Essentially, the set of self-assessment Can-do checklists currently employed by PALA was introduced to the author by Fergus O'Dwyer of the JALT Framework and Language Portfolio (FLP) Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Japanese Association of Language Teachers (JALT). The checklists are based on the set of English Can-do checklists developed by David Little from the Common European Framework (CEF) item bank, which is open to anyone, for the *Confédération Européenne des Centres de Langues de l'Enseignement Supérieur* (CercleS), "European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education". The CercleS checklists are the standard set used by universities and other centers of higher education in countries throughout the European Union (EU).²

In the future, the checklists on PALA can be adapted to include "plus levels" (A1, A1+, A2, A2+, B1, B1+, B2, B2+, C1, C1+, C2), such as those offered by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE).³

The plus levels should help to encourage Japanese learners to remain motivated by giving them meaningful achievement benchmarks at closer intervals. If it takes a few years for a student to traverse B2, for example, s/he may fail to see the relevance of the CEF levels/scales and become discouraged. Some textbooks are already beginning to use the plus levels. Other adaptations to the checklists can be made to suite the Japanese educational context. However, the "Japanese context" should

2 <http://www.cercles.org/en/main.html>

3 <http://www.coe.int/t/DG4/Portfolio/documents/EAQUALS%20Bank%20as%20checklists%20-%20Dec%202008.pdf>

never be used to justify changing or diluting the checklists to such an extent that their validity and connection with the European version(s) and the CEF are jeopardized, such as by eliminating Can-do's involving authentic radio, movie, television and Internet content, all essential links to connect Japanese learners to the world and to support the development of practical language ability in the international context, which is what the CEF is mainly about.

For use in Japan, especially by lower level students, we have added to each Can-do up through B1 a Japanese translation and we will soon add Japanese translation up through B2. Thanks to this, any of the many language programs at Osaka University, or elsewhere, can adapt PALA to their target language by keeping the Japanese part and adding Can-do's in the target language by translating the Japanese. The English may be kept or deleted at will. Also, in the case of most European Languages, it should be possible to find a relevant list in the language by searching the Internet. If so, a language program could replace the current Can-do's used by PALA with whichever list they want. A language program can also add original Can-do's to any CEF list they wish to use or subtract Can-do's from any such list. ESP programs may, for example wish to integrate ESP can-do's with those already on PALA.

3. Phases of Development

PALA has six parts or phases of development:

- I. Self-assessment: Internet based self-assessment can be taken at the university, at home or on a smart phone; results and statistics can be viewed instantly by authorized teachers, administrators and students. This part is functioning now.
- II. Materials database for English: Simply by clicking on a Can-do that a student cannot yet do, the student is shown a wide variety of existing

materials with which to acquire the ability. Little by little, original teacher lessons and student suggestions will be added. This part is to be operational in April 2012.

- III. Efficiency Calculator (for “E.C. learning”): This phase is not yet complete; when it is, it would work as follows. Periodically, such as once a month, students click on the missing abilities they wish to acquire by a certain date, such as the end of the month; then they cut and paste items from the materials database onto a schedule that includes at least that month; they can also enter original ideas about how to study for a particular can-do, ; at the end of the month, they self-assess again and cut and paste new materials onto a schedule. This is akin to reflection and goal-setting in the ELP. When a “cannot do” changes to an affirmed can-do in self-assessment, PALA will note which materials were used in that time period and build up empirically correlations between real progress and materials used. Such objective correlation ratings will be visible in the materials descriptions students see; subjective ratings volunteered by students and by teachers may also be shown. This will allow students, teachers and administrators to select effective materials and is intended to lead to more efficient learning.
- IV. Facts About Unlisted Textbooks (“FAULTs”): After phase III has been operational for perhaps a year, users should be able to see FAULTs in the textbook part of the materials database; when no textbook listed in the materials database includes lessons proven to be effective in bringing about acquisition of a certain Can-do, teachers and students can search outside the database for new texts/materials or create them to fix the FAULTs by adding these new materials to the database.
- V. Objective Test Correlations: Self-assessment scores and test scores entered by a student or teacher can be correlated to help understand what

self-assessment means in terms of a test and what a test means in terms of self-assessment, which can help testers, teachers and students to become better aligned; administrators and teachers can view student test scores and see correlations any time; tests can be those created by a language program or those created by a testing syndicate, like Cambridge ESOL or step E:ken, and they can test specific skills or multiple skills; valid test results can help teachers, administrators and students keep track of student progress objectively, which can contribute to efficient learning and inform curriculum design. It can also provide feedback for test makers

- VI. Language Portfolio: In the European Language Portfolio there are three parts: the language biography, a dossier and a passport, as well as an Appendix with self-assessment checklists. The preceding parts of PALA have evolved mainly out of the checklists; however, in the future PALA may try to incorporate other traditional elements of the Portfolio. For example, students could write their language-learning background in a language biography to help students plan autonomous learning and allow teachers to better understand every student's language history; students could put evidence of their having achieved specific can-do's (or collections of them) into a dossier (probably an electronic one) as a reference to help them plan autonomous learning and let them prove their abilities to others; maybe PALA could even become capable of printing out for students something like a language passport, showing a snap-shot of their language abilities including test scores and CEF levels in multiple languages to show others as a quick reference.

The remainder of this paper focuses on I. Self-assessment, and II. Materials database, how these were used in 2011 and will be used in 2012 by the author, as well as how the data from I and II can be utilized by teachers.

4. Self-assessment via PALA

Here we examine the case of the first year English majors in the School of Foreign Studies at Osaka University, which refers to the CEF in its achievement goals, as do all language programs in the School of Foreign Studies.

Before starting, however, readers should be aware of the fact that there is a phenomenon typical in English programs in Japan but atypical in other language programs, such as German, Vietnamese or Swahili, except when students return from study abroad: students with diverse levels. At Osaka University for example, because students in most language programs in the School of Foreign Studies start as true beginners, the curriculum planners and teachers in those programs know exactly where to start: at the beginning. From there, they can systematically go about teaching whatever is necessary for students to reach A1, A2, B1, B2 etc. over four years. Students in the English program, on the other hand, start with a wide range of overall CEF levels, and wide variation within each CEF skill area: listening (L), reading (R), spoken interaction (SI), spoken production (SP), and writing (W). In fact, the levels range from A to C!

By identifying students' levels and students' missing abilities within a level, according to self-assessment using PALA (possibly in conjunction with objective assessment like BULATS), teachers can try to select appropriate materials and devise appropriate lessons. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find or make materials that are suited to all the students when their levels are so varied. Please see the first year self-assessment results from 1st and 2nd semester in Table 1 and Table 2.

In first semester, the author asked students to take PALA self-assessment independently in order not to waste class time. But much class time was required to remind students to complete PALA and students took it at different dates, reducing the clarity of the results; therefore, in second semester the author escorted two classes to the Cybermedia Center on the Toyonaka campus at the end of November to complete self assessment. No room could be booked for one class, so those

students were asked to complete it on their own. When a teacher checks students' detailed responses s/he can see the date the student last submitted self-assessment; students who did not complete second semester self-assessment were contacted by e-mail reminding them to do it. Because at least one student did not complete the program at the time this publication was written, the second semester results should in reality be just slightly higher than indicated below (assuming the students who have yet to do PALA a second time have marked some improvement).

Table 1.

English Listening	1 st semester	1 st semester	2 nd semester	2 nd semester	Difference
Weighted Average	2.89 (A2+)		3.43 (B1)		0.54
A1	1 student	Average score 100%	2 students	89%	
A2	18 students	Average score 83%	6 students	91%	
B1	34 students	Average score 79%	29 students	80%	
B2	11 students	Average score 79%	21 students	78%	
C1	1 student	Average score 70%	4 students	65%	
C2	0 students	Average score 0%	3 students	62%	
English Reading	1 st Semest.	1 st Semester	2 nd semester	2 nd semester	Difference
Weighted Average	3.57 (B1)		4.08 (B2)		0.51
A1	0 students	Average score 0%	0 students	0%	
A2	2 students	Average score 92%	0 students	0%	
B1	26 students	Average score 87%	17 students	86%	
B2	32 students	Average score 76%	32 students	77%	
C1	4 students	Average score 68%	10 students	73%	
C2	0 students	Average score 0%	6 students	65%	
Eng. Spoken Inter.	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Difference
Weighted Average	2.37 (A2)		3.06 (B1)		0.69
A1	5 students	Average score 78%	1 students	0.0%	
A2	34 students	Average score 83%	16 students	86%	
B1	23 students	Average score 73%	31 students	72%	
B2	3 students	Average score 67%	13 students	67%	
C1	0 students	Average score 0%	3 students	60%	
C2	0 students	Average score 0%	1 students	55%	
Eng. Spoken Prod.	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Difference
Weighted Average	2.66 (A2)		3.29 (B1)		0.63
A1	4 students	Average score 88%	1 student	0.0%	
A2	23 students	Average score 83%	9 students	92%	
B1	29 students	Average score 75%	31 students	77%	
B2	9 students	Average score 71%	20 students	70%	
C1	0 students	Average score 0%	2 students	64%	
C2	0 students	Average score 0%	2 students	77%	
English Writing	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Difference
Weighted Average	3.15 (B1)		3.69 (B1)		0.54
A1	2 students	Average score 78%	2 students	39%	
A2	13 students	Average score 83%	1 students	80%	
B1	25 students	Average score 73%	20 students	83%	
B2	23 students	Average score 67%	35 students	79%	
C1	2 students	Average score 0%	6 students	70%	
C2	0 students	Average score 0%	1 student	61%	

(1=A1, 2=A2, 3=B1, 4=B2, 5=C1, 6=C2)

5. Analysis of 2011 Self-Assessment Data

5.1 Levels: On average, CEF levels went up by 0.51-0.69. That represents from half of a CEF level to sixty-nine percent of a CEF level (1 being a whole level) from sometime in first semester, usually between May and June, to the end of November. Probably, there would be even more improvement if self-assessment were performed uniformly on the first day of class and the last day of class. Therefore, in April 2012, students will be escorted to the Cybermedia Center as early in the semester as reasonably possible to obtain self-assessment results from a longer learning span.

The greatest numerical gains were in Spoken Interaction, 0.69%, from A2 to B1 (3.06), and Spoken Production 0.63%, also from A2 to B1 (3.29). These are good results, but SI and SP were students' lowest areas when they started, so it may be easiest for them to make advances there. That is, students entered with strong B1 reading ability on average, so they likely had knowledge of B1 grammar and vocabulary, but did not practice using these enough in speech prior to entering the university to be confident about affirming B1 speaking ability in first semester. Then, after practicing the better part of one academic year, their speaking performance began "catching up with" their internal knowledge or competence.

Nevertheless, to help students reach high B2 or C1 by the second semester of their second year—the level needed to study abroad at a good university—they need even more progress in first year. To reach high B2 in S.I., for example 4.7, in second year, they need an increase of 1.64. That is more than one-and-a-half CEF levels and probably impossible to achieve without a radical increase in speaking practice. If the average speaking level of incoming first year students is 2.37 in April 2012, the gain required to reach 4.7 in S.I. (high B2) in two years is 2.33. That is 1.165 CEF levels per year. If progress in speaking ability and speaking practice are closely related, as the results seem to indicate, then a large increase in speaking practice should result in better speaking progress over two years. The scientific way to test this hypothesis that more speaking practice leads to better speaking ability is to try

it, as the Ministry of Education is now doing with Japanese high schools.

5.1.1 Average levels conclusions:

1. Teachers should consider possible measures for increasing students' speaking practice, such as increasing student "talk time" and requiring *everyone* to use the target language in the class as much as possible.
2. Input that supports speaking, such as extensive reading and listening of graded material, should be implemented and is scheduled to be implemented in 2112. Graded readers have been purchased and will be a required part of first and second year general education classes for English Area Studies majors. Graded readers with audio will be a requirement in first and second year English Area Studies major classes taught by the author.

5.1.2 Individual levels conclusions:

5.1.2.1 Score prediction

While considering ways to increase average level is important, thinking in terms of averages may reduce predictive power for individuals. To illustrate, consider a hypothetical example in which the first semester S.I. score of student X is 2.5 (A2) and student Y is 3.5 (B1); averaging their scores only obscures clear speculation about what X and Y's individual scores are likely to be after one year (not to mention what materials are suitable for each). The averages seen in the above table probably *do* indicate that a gain of 0.5+ can be expected from every first-year English major in every skill area. However, if we take the average of A and B in first semester (2.5 + 3.5 and divide by 2), the result is 3. Thinking only in terms of the average we would expect both A and B to become 3.5+ by the end of second semester, but it would be wrong. In fact, X is likely to become 3+ (2.5 starting score plus 0.5+) and Y is likely to become 4+ (3.5 starting score plus 0.5+).

At the current average rate of learning in S.I., roughly a 0.7 rise per year, or extrapolating, a 1.4 rise in two years, only students starting with 3.3 will reach or exceed 4.7 in second year, on average. As we can see from the table above, twenty-three students had an S.I. level of B1 in first semester. Most of them will have a chance of reaching high B2 by end of second semester in second year. Three students started in B2 and should be able to reach S.I. C1 in second year, if they study and practice C1 S.I. materials. Probably, the 34 students in S.I. A2 and 5 students in S.I. A1 first semester are unlikely to qualify for a good university in 2nd year in terms of S.I. unless they receive substantially more spoken interaction practice in classes where they received little before or they do substantially more practice outside of class. However, perhaps they could qualify in third or fourth year or before graduate school if they continue to make progress after second year.

Let us examine all the skill areas along these lines

Table 2.

L	1 st sem.	1 st sem.	2 nd sem.	2 nd sem.	Diff. or Av. gain/yr.	Predict 2 nd yr. 2 nd sem.	2011 2 nd yr. mid. 1st sem.	2012 2 nd yr. end 2 nd sem. Not in
Wgt.Av.	2.89 (A2+)		3.43 (B1)		0.54	3.97+	3.24	
A1	1 student	Av.100%	2 students	89%			1	
A2	18 students	Av. 83%	6 students	91%			5	
B1	34 students	Av. 79%	29 students	80%			21	
B2	11 students	Av. 79%	21 students	78%			18	
C1	1 student	Av. 70%	4 students	65%			0	
C2	0 students	Av. 0%	3 students	62%			0	
Read.	1 st sem.	1 st sem.	2 nd sem.	2 nd sem.	Av. gain			
Wgt.Av.	3.57 (B1)		4.08 (B2)		0.51	4.59	3.64	
A1	0 students	Av. 0%	0 students	0%			0	
A2	2 students	Av. 92%	0 students	0%			2	
B1	26 students	Av. 87%	17 students	86%			17	
B2	32 students	Av. 76%	32 students	77%			22	
C1	4 students	Av. 68%	10 students	73%			1	
C2	0 students	Av. 0%	6 students	65%			2	
S.I	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Av. gain			
Wgt.Av.	2.37 (A2)		3.06 (B1)		0.69	3.75	2.82	
A1	5 students	Av. 78%	1 students	0.0%			1	
A2	34 students	Av. 83%	16 students	86%			14	
B1	23 students	Av. 73%	31 students	72%			23	
B2	3 students	Av. 67%	13 students	67%			4	
C1	0 students	Av. 0%	3 students	60%			2	
C2	0 students	Av. 0%	1 students	55%			0	
S.P.	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Av. gain.			
Wgt.Av.	2.66 (A2)		3.29 (B1)		0.63	3.92	3.23	
A1	4 students	Av.88%	1 student	0.0%			0	
A2	23 students	Av.83%	9 students	92%			5	
B1	29 students	Av.75%	31 students	77%			26	
B2	9 students	Av.71%	20 students	70%			11	
C1	0 students	Av.0%	2 students	64%			2	
C2	0 students	Av.0%	2 students	77%			0	
W.	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	Av. gain.			
Wgt. Av	3.15 (B1)		3.69 (B1)		0.54	4.23	3.73	
A1	2 students	Av.78%	2 students	39%			1	
A2	13 students	Av.83%	1 students	80%			3	
B1	25 students	Av.73%	20 students	83%			8	
B2	23 students	Av.67%	35 students	79%			28	
C1	2 students	Av.0%	6 students	70%			3	
C2	0 students	Av.0%	1 student	61%			1	

(1=A1, 2=A2, 3=B1, 4=B2, 5=C1, 6=C2)

5.1.3 2nd year 1st semester 2011 deficit

It is interesting to note that the 2011 2nd year 1st semester results are substantially lower than the 1st year 2nd semester results taken on or around November 20, even though the 2nd year 1st semester students were enrolled at Osaka University five or six months longer when they took PALA than were the 1st year 2nd semester students. They are 0.19 lower in Listening, 0.44 lower in Reading, and 0.24 lower in Spoken Interaction. What happened to these students?

Maybe for some inexplicable reason the average incoming level in these areas was substantially lower during the year the author was absent, but we cannot know because student data could not be collected while the author was absent. Had PALA been used with them in first year, this mystery could likely be solved. Consequently, longitudinal studies with PALA should be carried out to see how students actually progress.

6. Materials tailored to individual students' needs

As mentioned earlier, unlike students in language programs other than English in Japan where virtually all incoming students are true beginners, students in the English program arrive with various backgrounds and widely varying levels of English proficiency according to the CEF. The question is, "What materials are best for students of different levels?" Should students of different levels study the same materials and receive the same assignments? If so, should they be graded according to the same or different criteria? Should they use different materials and complete different assignments? So far, the tradition has been to *not* do the latter. Probably, this was at least partly due to the fact that it was impossible to know students' individual levels in each skill area (L, R, S.I., S.P. and W) and what specific abilities they lacked in each skill area when students arrived. Moreover, even if this information were known, it would be very hard to know which materials were suitable for each student and to manage classes with different students studying different things. The situation changes, however, with PALA.

6.1.1 Why pay attention to self-assessment?

With PALA, we can be pretty sure of students' levels, especially when they are corroborated by an objective test like BULATS and by teacher observation. However, even without objective tests, it makes sense to let students study and practice to acquire the abilities they feel they lack. For example, if a driving student does not feel confident about his/her ability to parallel-park, then that student should study and practice until s/he does feel confident. It does not really matter if s/he happens to park reasonably well on a test once; if s/he lacks confidence, s/he still needs more study and practice. Conversely, if s/he practices many times, always does well and is highly confident but fails on a test by chance once, it may be appropriate to take the test again right away with little or no additional practice.

Moreover, the ability to use language to do things is largely mental. If a student has no confidence about being able to express an opinion or invite someone to a party, s/he will likely be unable to do these things in real life. By studying and practicing these things in class, a student can gain the confidence to do them outside of class.

6.1.2 Action Research: Materials and lessons that match student level

6.1.2.1 Class texts selected according to self-assessment and lessons that match student LAC's (Least Affirmed Can-do's)

In April 2012, the authors' first year students will take self-assessment at the beginning of the term and then order a speaking-and-listening text within a series that is designed to match their CEF speaking and listening level. When a student self-assesses with PALA, s/he can click on any ability s/he lacks within his or her level and see appropriate exercises in the text as well as many other materials designed for their CEF level such as graded readers and CD's. Students with the same level will form groups and take turns leading activities from the text (or

elsewhere) that treat their “least affirmed can-do’s” (LAC’s). These are the Can-do’s that the greatest number of students within a level have yet to affirm. The teacher will assist as needed. This activity is intended to take up about 30 minutes of a 90-minute class. Students will be asked to videotape themselves to document their abilities to do specific S.I. tasks. These can in theory be uploaded into a database as evidence. Where these should be uploaded to has yet to be decided. One option is an electronic dossier that can be made part of PALA. But extremely data-heavy files may weigh down the system; another possibility is to use free cloud storage, such as that offered by Amazon. Student grades can be influenced by the quality of their recorded performances. Another possibility is that the teacher can go to each group and record its members when they are ready to prove a can-do. In any case, the class could be divided into four groups of students, those with an A2 text, those with a B1 text, those with a B2 text and those with a C1 text. During group work, if a student does not share a lack s/he can work independently. Then the teacher could up-load the recording after each class.

6.1.2.2 Autonomous learning based on missing Can-do’s

If a student is missing can-do’s that are not LAC’s (that is, not missed by many in his/her group), s/he will be assigned to study and practice his or her personalized missing can-do’s for homework and/or with the teacher during office hours.

6.1.2.3 Other materials matching students’ levels

If the exercises in the text are insufficient, then the student(s) can consider other materials displayed in PALA’s materials database that target the student’s CEF level in general, including web pages, graded readers, graded audio recordings and screenplays, or s/he can look at other textbooks micro-linked in PALA to CEF self-assessment Can-do’s. If this is not enough, then they can meet with the teacher to devise a plan or find new materials independently.

6.1.2.4 Least Affirmed Can-do's can inform curriculum

The first year English majors are divided into three classes: A, B and C, and each class has approximately 22 students. These classes continue into second year, but are dissolved in third and fourth year. Because language programs in the School of Foreign Studies refer to the Common European Framework of Reference in their official achievement goals, it is important to identify what CEF abilities students already possess when they enter the English program, as well as the abilities they have in the middle and the end of the program. However, it is just as important to check which abilities they lack. The following Appendix copied and pasted from PALA shows the abilities most often lacking among the first year students near the end of second semester, November 2011. Hopefully, every 2nd year teacher in the English program will examine this data and use it when planning his or her classes, because when students arrive in their second year classes, they will likely still have the same missing abilities (LAC's): Note the number of lacking students in the right-most column. Below are possible ways a teacher might react to LAC's:

1. S/he could give different assignments to different students at least for part of the class, as the present author intends to try; this is complicated, but could work. For example, students could order whatever reading text, or writing text matches their CEF level, and work in groups organized by level.
2. S/he could give assignments that are suitable for the average level, but sometimes few students may actually be at the average, and students far above and below the average may be ill-served — bored if the text and pace are too easy and frustrated if they are too hard.
3. They can give assignments that are suitable for the largest number of students; for example when looking at the CEF Reading level of students entering second year, we see that the largest number are at B2, so the class could start with texts suitable for B2 and try to move students toward C1.

Higher-level students can be encouraged to challenge themselves however the teacher sees fit. Lower-level students can be assigned independent study using PALA self-assessment and materials database.

4. The teacher can ignore the students' self-assessment data and teach whatever s/he wants. If the teacher really likes the material, that is nice for the teacher and the students can perhaps feel the teacher's infectious enthusiasm, but if the material does not suite the CEF level of the majority of students in the class, then it is probably not the most efficient way to help students raise their CEF level.
5. The teacher can give assignments that can be done in different ways, according to students' level. For example, an A2 student could have one set of goals/grading criteria for writing, reading, listening or speaking assignments and a C1 student another. This is tricky but possible, and the author does this with first year students, as they select the appropriate level of extensive listening and reading material.

The Appendix includes a sample of 1st year English major LAC's in or around November 20. In the right-hand column the number of lacking people can be seen. That is the number of students who are in this overall CEF level, or who exceeded it, but said they could not do this item or they could do it only a little. No student name, student number, or class is indicated in the Appendix. These are only available to the student, teacher and program administrator(s).

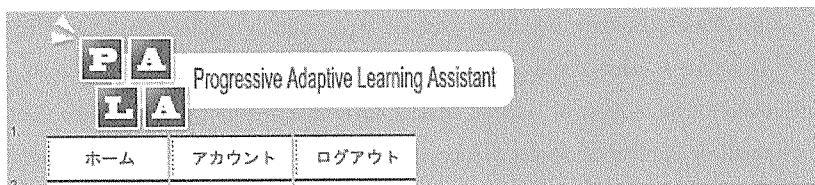
Although not included in the Appendix below, in PALA itself the self-assessment data of every first and second year student is included and can be seen with the click of a mouse including: average level by year, LAC's by year, LAC's by class, and detail of exactly which items were affirmed by which students on which date. Hopefully, many teachers will become PALA users, perhaps at first just out of curiosity, and eventually find PALA's information useful when trying to understand

new students and planning classes and/or overall curriculum.

As is, PALA could be used by any school or program to structure classes by CEF level. Incoming students could self-assess with PALA and the results would be visible immediately. The number of students in each level in a previous year could be used to estimate the number of classes needed at each level in the current year. The current year's results could be used for initial placement of students. If a teacher judges that a student is misplaced, the teacher could verify the student's level with an oral interview checking CEF level (and a mini objective test available from various sources). To perform such oral interviews, teachers would need some training. Various materials are available for this purpose including those from the Council of Europe.

When stage V is complete and PALA is properly correlated with objective tests, she should be a more reliable tool for placing students, but there will always be a minority of students who overestimate and who underestimate, and these will need to be picked out as indicated above, or with the help of an objective test for all students. However, normally, the shorter and cheaper the test, the less reliable it is, so very short and cheap tests are likely less reliable than self-assessment, and cheap tests do not include Spoken Interaction, Spoken Production and Writing, so they cannot be used reliably to place students in classes that focus on these areas. Conversely, the longer and more expensive a test is, the less practical it is as a placement tool due to the expense, time and trouble to administer, and lag time before results are received; tests that include Speaking and writing are very expensive. Therefore, until AI testing technology is ready, probably any sorting of students into CEF level will need to include self-assessment plus perhaps a mini-test applied uniformly or by teachers on a case by case basis, when a student seems misplaced.

If sorting by level is eventually used to sort English sub-majors at Osaka University, or elsewhere, students could use PALA to self-assess and their teachers could see student data from their own classes only, while administrators could use PALA to see all student data and use it for curriculum/program design.

Appendix: 1st year English Major Least Affirmed Can-do's (LAC's) by skill area and level

Question	Average	Num responses	Num LACing students
English: Listening Click here to view only this category			
English: Listening - A1 Click here to view only this level			
1 ゆっくり、明確に話してもらえば、自分自身や家族に関する基本的な単語やフレーズを理解することができる。I can understand basic words and phrases about myself and my family when people speak slowly and clearly.	0.35	6	4
5 ゆっくり、明確に話してもらえば、自分自身についての質問を理解することができる。I can understand simple questions about myself when people speak slowly and clearly.	0.35	6	4
2 簡単な説明、指示、コメントを理解することができる。I can understand simple instructions, directions and comments	0.50	6	3
English: Listening - A2 Click here to view only this level			
8 ニュース報道の話題が変わると、理解して、要点を把握することができる。I can follow changes of topic in factual TV news items and form an idea of the main content	0.59	22	10
9 補助的な視覚資料があれば、テレビのニュースが伝える出来事や事件などの要点を理解することができる。I can identify the main point of TV news items reporting events, accidents etc., if there is visual support	0.80	22	5
6 簡単なものなら、場所の行き方の説明がわかる（例：X地点からY地点に徒歩や公共交通機関でどう行くか）I can follow simple directions (e.g., how to get from X to Y) by foot or public transport	0.88	22	3
English: Listening - B1 Click here to view only this level			
6 標準語で放送されていれば、私的、文化的な話題に関する多くのテレビ番組を理解することができる。I can follow many TV programmes on topics of personal or cultural interest broadcast in standard dialect	0.58	55	25
7 言葉が明確、簡潔であり、映像やアクションがストーリーの大局を説明しているのであれば、たくさんの映画を理解することができる。I can follow many films in which visuals and action carry much of the storyline, when the language is clear and straightforward	0.73	55	16
9 日常的に使用する機器の操作説明など、簡単な技術情報を理解することができる。I can understand simple technical information, such as operating instructions for everyday equipment.	0.76	55	14
English: Listening - B2 Click here to view only this level			
7 I can follow most TV news programmes, documentaries, interviews, talk shows and the majority of films in standard dialect	0.70	27	9
8 I can follow most radio programmes and audio material delivered in standard dialect and identify the speaker's mood, tone, etc.	0.73	27	8
9 I am sensitive to expressions of feeling and attitudes (e.g., critical, ironic, supportive, flippant, disapproving)	0.73	27	8
English: Listening - C1 Click here to view only this level			
9 I can follow films employing a considerable degree of slang and idiomatic usage	0.43	8	5
2 I can recognize a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts	0.53	8	4
4 I can easily follow complex interactions between third parties in group discussion and debate, even on abstract and unfamiliar topics	0.53	8	4

Antonio F. Smith

English: Listening - C2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 I can follow specialized lectures and presentations employing a high degree of colloquialism, regional usage or unfamiliar terminology.	0.40	3	2
3 I can understand all complex technical instructions regarding a product or equipment.	0.40	3	2
4 I can understand any native speaker, given an opportunity to adjust to non-standard accent or dialect.	0.70	3	1

English: Reading [Click here to view only this category](#)

English: Reading - A1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

No LACS in this level	N/A	N/A	N/A
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English: Reading - A2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

7 ニュースや出来事を伝える新聞や雑誌で、短い記事の要点をみつけることができる。I can identify key information in short newspaper/magazine reports recounting stories or events	0.64	5	2
5 簡単な言葉で書いてあれば、規則を理解することができる。(例: 安全確保、講義への出席) I can understand regulations when expressed in simple language (e.g., safety, attendance at lectures)	0.82	5	1
6 日常生活情報をやりとりしたり、人を招いたりする時の短く簡単に私的な手紙を理解することができる。I can understand short simple personal letters giving or requesting information about everyday life or offering an invitation	0.82	5	1

English: Reading - B1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

7 特定の目的を達成するために、長い文章にさっと目を通して必要な情報を見つけたり、同じ文章中の様々な部分や複数の文章から必要な情報を集めたりすることができる。I can scan longer texts in order to locate desired information, and gather information from different parts of a text, or from different texts in order to fulfill a specific task	0.75	46	13
8 明確な構成の物語や現代文芸作品のあらすじを理解することができる。I can follow the plot of clearly structured narratives and modern literary texts	0.77	46	12
4 出来事、感情、希望に関する表現を理解して、ペンフレンドと個人的な手紙や電子メールを上手にやり取りすることができる。I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters and e-mails well enough to correspond with a pen friend	0.86	46	7

English: Reading - B2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

8 I can readily appreciate most narrative and modern literary texts (e.g., novels, short stories, poems, plays)	0.64	53	21
5 I can quickly identify the content and relevance of news items, articles and reports on a wide range of professional topics, deciding whether closer study is worthwhile	0.66	53	20
7 I can understand lengthy complex instructions in my field, including details on conditions or warnings, provided I can reread difficult sections	0.76	53	14

English: Reading - C1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

3 I can read contemporary literary texts with no difficulty and with appreciation of implicit meanings and ideas	0.55	18	9
5 I can understand detailed and complex instructions for a new machine or procedure, whether or not the instructions relate to my own area of specialty, provided I can reread difficult sections	0.75	18	5
4 I can appreciate the relevant socio-historical or political context of most literary works	0.75	18	5

English: Reading - C2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 I can understand and interpret critically virtually all forms of the written language including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings	0.49	7	4
3 I can make effective use of complex, technical or highly specialized text to meet my academic or professional purposes	0.49	7	4
5 I can appreciate the finer subtleties of meaning, rhetorical effect and stylistic language use in critical or satirical forms of discourse	0.61	7	3

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English: Spoken Interaction [Click here to view only this category](#)

English: Spoken Interaction - A1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

7 数字、量、値段、時間に関するやりとりができる。I can handle numbers, quantities, cost and time	0.73	7	2
9 標準語でとてもゆっくり、明確に話してくれる面談であれば、個人情報に関する簡単に単刀直入な質問に答えることができる。I can reply to simple direct questions about personal details if these are spoken very slowly and clearly in standard dialect	0.73	7	2
2 自己紹介ができ、知らない人に名前を尋ねたり、人を紹介することができる。I can say who I am, ask someone's name and introduce someone	0.73	7	2

English: Spoken Interaction - A2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

11 簡単に実用的な情報を入手することができる。〈例：道をたずねる、宿泊の予約をする、医者に診てもらふ。〉 I can get simple practical information (e.g., asking for directions, booking accommodation, going to the doctor)	0.74	46	13
9 簡単な電話応対ができる〈例：電話で自分の名前を告げる、電話を取り次いでもらう、自分の電話番号を教える、簡単な伝言を受ける。〉 I can handle simple telephone calls (e.g. say who is calling, ask to speak to someone, give my number, take a simple message)	0.76	46	12
10 店、郵便局、鉄道の駅などで簡単なやりとりをしたり、飲食物を注文したりすることができる。I can make simple transactions (e.g., in shops, post offices, railway stations) and order something to eat or drink	0.76	46	12

English: Spoken Interaction - B1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

3 標準語で明確に話してくれる、自分の学業あるいは仕事の専門分野に関する身近な話題について、定期的に聞かれる正式な話し合いに参加することができる。I can take part in routine formal discussion on familiar subjects in my academic or professional field if it is conducted in clearly articulated speech in standard dialect	0.54	48	24
10 日常の用事はほとんどすますことができる。〈例：電話で問い合わせる、返金を求める、価格交渉を行う。〉 I can handle most practical tasks in everyday situations (e.g., making telephone enquiries, asking for a refund, negotiating purchase)	0.55	48	24
8 問題の所在と理由を説明し、次に何をすべきかを検討して、代替案を比較・検討することができる。I can explain why something is a problem, discuss what to do next, compare and contrast alternatives	0.58	48	22

English: Spoken Interaction - B2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

9 I can handle personal interviews with ease, taking initiatives and expanding ideas with little help or prodding from an interviewer	0.55	18	9
8 I can cope adequately with emergencies (e.g., summon medical assistance, telephone the police or automobile breakdown service)	0.59	18	8
10 I can carry out an effective, fluent interview, departing spontaneously from prepared questions, following up and probing interesting replies	0.60	18	8

English: Spoken Interaction - C1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 I can use language flexibly and effectively for social purposes, including emotional, allusive and joking usage	0.46	5	3
5 I can argue a formal position convincingly, responding to questions and comments and answering complex lines of counter argument fluently, spontaneously and appropriately	0.46	5	3
6 I can participate fully in an interview, as either interviewer or interviewee, fluently expanding and developing the point under discussion, and handling interjections well	0.46	5	3

English: Spoken Interaction - C2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

1 I can understand any native speaker interlocutor, given an opportunity to adjust to a non-standard accent or dialect	0.10	1	1
2 I can converse comfortably and appropriately, unhampered by any linguistic limitations in conducting a full social and personal life	0.10	1	1

English: Spoken Production [Click here to view only this category](#)

English: Spoken Production - A1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 簡単な単語やフレーズを使って、自分の住んでいる場所を説明することができる。I can use simple words and phrases to describe where I live	0.62	5	2
3 簡単な単語やフレーズを使って、知人について説明することができる。I can use simple words and phrases to describe people I know	0.62	5	2
1 年齢、住所、家族、専攻科目など、自分自身に関する基本的な情報を提供することができる。I can give basic information about myself (e.g., age, address, family, subjects of study)	0.80	5	1

English: Spoken Production - A2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

11 自分の学業または仕事の専門分野に関する身近な話題について、簡潔なプレゼンテーションを練習すればすることができる。I can give a short rehearsed presentation on a familiar subject in my academic or professional field	0.81	34	7
6 出来事について簡潔に説明したり、簡単な物語を話したりすることができる。I can give short simple descriptions of events or tell a simple story	0.84	34	6
5 計画、準備、他の選択肢について話すことができる。I can describe plans, arrangements and alternatives	0.86	34	5

English: Spoken Production - B1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

7 問題や事件について詳しく説明することができる。(例：盗難や交通事故について報告する。) I can give detailed accounts of problems and incidents (e.g., reporting a theft, traffic accident)	0.48	51	29
5 聞き手がほぼ問題なく理解できる程度の議論を展開することができる。I can develop an argument well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time	0.55	51	25
1 自分の学業または仕事の専門分野内の問題について、比較的上手に説明することができるが、説明の仕方は一本調子である。I can give a reasonably fluent description of a subject within my academic or professional field, presenting it as a linear sequence of points	0.77	51	13

English: Spoken Production - B2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

6 I can deliver announcements on most general topics with a degree of clarity, fluency and spontaneity which causes no strain or inconvenience to the listener	0.51	26	14
8 I can depart spontaneously from a prepared text and follow up points raised by an audience	0.62	26	11
4 I can outline an issue or a problem clearly, speculating about causes, consequences and hypothetical situations	0.65	26	10

English: Spoken Production - C1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

3 I can give a detailed oral summary of long and complex texts relating to my area of study	0.64	5	2
1 I can give clear detailed descriptions of complex subjects in my field	0.82	5	1
2 I can elaborate a detailed argument or narrative, integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion	0.82	5	1

English: Spoken Production - C2 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 I can give clear, fluent, elaborate and often memorable descriptions	0.40	3	2
4 I can present a complex topic in my field confidently and articulately, and can handle difficult and even hostile questioning	0.70	3	1

English: Writing [Click here to view only this category](#)

English: Writing - A1 [Click here to view only this level](#)

2 グリーティングカードや簡単な葉書を書くことができる。I can write a greeting card or simple postcard	0.44	5	3
1 誕生日、住所、国籍など、個人情報を簡単な記入用紙やアンケートに書き込むことができる。I can fill in a simple form or questionnaire with my personal details (e.g., date of birth, address, nationality)	0.82	5	1

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3 自分自身に関する簡単なフレーズや文を書くことができる。(例: どこに住んでいるか、兄弟姉妹は何人いるか。) I can write simple phrases and sentences about myself (e.g., where I live, how many brothers and sisters I have)	0.82	5	1
English: Writing - A2 Click here to view only this level			
9 情報を求めるために、ごく基本的ではあるが正式な手紙を書くことができる。(例: 夏休みのアルバイト、ホテルでの宿泊について) I can write very basic formal letters requesting information (e.g., about summer jobs, hotel accommodation)	0.47	14	8
8 書き出しや結びに適切な定型語句とあいさつの表現を使って、簡単ではあるが正式な手紙を書くことができる。I can open and close a simple formal letter using appropriate phrases and greetings	0.60	14	6
6 書き出しや結びに適切な定型語句とあいさつの表現を使って、簡単な私信(手紙)を書くことができる。I can open and close a simple personal letter using appropriate phrases and greetings	0.66	14	5
English: Writing - B1 Click here to view only this level			
9 詳細な情報を提供したり、求めたりする一般的な手紙を書くことができる。(例: 広告を見て連絡する、仕事に応募する。) I can write standard letters giving or requesting detailed information (e.g., replying to an advertisement, applying for a job)	0.64	46	18
8 自分の専門分野の身近な事柄について、ある程度自信を持って、事実に基づいた情報の要点をまとめ、報告し、自分の意見をまとめることができる。I can summarize, report and give my opinion about factual information on familiar matters in my field with some confidence	0.68	46	16
6 映画や本のあらすじを書くことができる。または、簡単な物語を書くことができる。I can describe the plot of a film or a book, or narrate a simple story	0.74	46	13
English: Writing - B2 Click here to view only this level			
9 I can write standard formal letters requesting or communicating relevant information, with appropriate use of register and conventions	0.53	48	25
8 I can write clear detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences in a detailed and easily readable way, marking the relationship between ideas	0.70	48	16
5 I can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons to support or negate a point of view, weighing pros and cons	0.72	48	15
English: Writing - C1 Click here to view only this level			
3 I can write clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects in my field, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion	0.66	8	3
4 I can write clear, detailed, well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind	0.66	8	3
5 I can elaborate my case effectively and accurately in complex formal letters (e.g., registering a complaint, taking a stand against an issue)	0.66	8	3
English: Writing - C2 Click here to view only this level			
3 I can write a well-structured critical review of a paper, project or proposal relating to my academic or professional field, giving reasons for my opinion	0.55	2	1
4 I can produce clear, smoothly-flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case or elaborate an argument	0.55	2	1
5 I can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points	0.55	2	1