

# *Comparative Analysis Between different English Exams: CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, TOEFL*

Tatiana Luchian

**Abstract:** *CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, or TOEFL Exams, are the most popular among the English-language certifications. Their equivalence is internationally recognised and they are also known as “linguistic passports”. Through this thesis, I would like to expand the researches in order to understand the practice and the classification of these three examinations as well as their relevance and their usefulness in our daily life. I will briefly present their history, a comparative analysis of them, and I will draw the conclusions on this subject debate.*

**Keywords:** *CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, TOEFL, international exam, linguistic passport.*

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the importance of English language exams worldwide: CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, TOEFL. At the same time, I would like to present the advantages, disadvantages, and the

relevant statistics on the number of people who choose to participate in one of these exams.

In this article, I have chosen to examine the essential and most necessary facts about these important exams, namely English examinations: TOEFL, IELTS, CAMBRIDGE.)

For this project, I have searched for specific information on reliable sources in order to document precisely the meaning of these exams and their specific characteristics. I will summarize a short description of each exam and the requirements that they assume for general purpose. The main chapters of my thesis are: Abstract, Introduction, Bibliographical research, Exams characteristics, Conclusions and References of the project.

## **2. Bibliographical Research**

All the information used in this paperwork has been extracted from multiple sources, either from online sources such as official websites reviews, blogs or from magazine articles and books. This article describes each part of the exam from the initiation, through development and general aspects, to the final results. In order to carry out this research, I have decided upon more research, analyses, studies, from a specialist point of view, with a wide experience on the research and the development of these types of examinations.

### **2.1. The CAMBRIDGE Examination**

The Cambridge examination was initiated in 1913 by a nonprofit organisation. Their official headquarters was in Cambridge, United Kingdom.

The method of assessing the English language is taken from the University of Cambridge, a method that includes both English courses as well as language qualifications for over 100 years. The first

Cambridge English examination took place in 1913 and it took 12 hours.

During its 100 years of activity, the Cambridge Centre for English Examination, has progressed significantly, having currently more than 20 exams to students and teachers, with a passing rate of more than 5 million people each year.



Today, they operate in more than 130 countries, having

5 million candidates each year.

The Cambridge exams are, without doubt, the most valuable international certifications of linguistic competence in English language certifications.

(<https://www.britishcouncil.ro/examene/cambridge>, accessed at 10.01.2017).

## 2.2. The IELTS Examination

The IELTS exam was introduced on the English examination market, in 1989. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is the most popular English language exam in the world. More than 2.7 million tests are passed annually. This exam is promoted as the "English test" necessary in an international career or when choosing to study abroad.

IELTS is available in two formats: Academic and General Training. The Academic format evaluates the candidate's ability to study or to follow a training program in English language at a



University and at the postgraduate level. (<https://www.ielts.org/what-is-ielts/ielts-for-study/>, accessed at 11.01.2017).

The enrollment to undergraduate and postgraduate courses is based on the results from these examinations. The General format of the module focuses on general skills of communication in a wider context, both social and educational. Therefore, it is suitable for candidates who live in countries where English is spoken to finalise their education, to work or to participate in training programs, but also for candidates who want to emigrate to Australia, Canada, or New Zealand. (<http://www.britanica.ro/cursuri-examene/examene-de-limba-ingleza.html>, accessed at 10.01.2017)

IELTS is the only English language exam which is accepted for the purpose of immigration from all countries that request an English language test.

### 2.3. The TOEFL Examination

The TOEFL examination was firstly initiated in 1964.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) provide



international recognition for studies and job opportunities. (<https://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions>, accessed at 12.10.2017). This exam is addressed to students or graduates in search of scholarships and post-graduate studies, mainly in North America. (<http://www.britanica.ro/cursuri-examene/examene-de-limba-ingleza.html> accessed at 11.01.2017). TOEFL exams are part of the requirements in particular for the enrollment into the American universities, and the Fulbright Commission is one of the organisations which issues these diplomas. The TOEFL exam has four parts: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. It takes about four hours to

complete all four parts. (<http://www.toeflgoanywhere.org/>, accessed at 13.10.2017).

### 3. Comparative analysis

In the above paragraphs, I have briefly presented some general characteristics of each type of these exams. This article is based on a scientific comparative analysis between these three major types of accredited certifications in English. In order to be able to view the accessible and correct information for each exam, I will present the comparison in a table below.

In this presentation, the differences between these 3 exams (CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, or TOEFL) are shown based on the requirements and preferences of each individual, on the field of activity, or on the scope of studies.

CAMBRIDGE	IELTS	TOEFL
❖ Available for life	❖ Available 2 years	❖ Available 2 years
❖ European Certificate	❖ European Certificate	❖ American Certificate
❖ Degree of difficulty: advanced	❖ Degree of difficulty: medium	❖ Degree of difficulty: medium-advanced
❖ 3 Versions: legally; financial;	❖ 2 Versions: general; accademic.	❖ 3 Versions: general;academic;business.
❖ On paper exam	❖ On paper exam	❖ Computer based exam

❖ Examinations: Reading and Use of English Writing Speaking Listening	❖ Examinations: Reading Writing Speaking Listening	❖ Examinations: Reading Writing Speaking Listening
❖ Exam results available in about 2 months	❖ Exam results available in about 15 days	❖ Exam results available in about 10 days.
❖ Recognized in more than 130 countries.	❖ Recognized in more than 140 countries	❖ Recognized in more than 130 countries
❖ 5 million candidates per year	❖ 2,7 million candidates per year	❖ 3 million candidates per year
❖ Recognized in more than 18,000 institutions and universities	❖ Recognized in more than 6,000 institutions and universities	❖ Recognized in more than 9,000 institutions and universities.

### 3.1. The CECR Analysis

The Common European reference framework for languages (CECR) is the international standard that can determine the language proficiency level of a speaker, irrespective of the language (<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/>, at 10.01.2017).

Experts have created a chart so that everyone interested can easily understand the grades, the characteristics and the classifications of these exams. It is important to know the real level of the English language for each person who has obtained a certificate issued by one of these three exams.

The Common European Reference Framework for Languages (CECR) is the international standard that determines the level of linguistic proficiency of a speaker, irrespective of the language.

Classification of the 6 levels:

- 📖 A1 - Elementary (Breakthrough)
- 📖 A2 - Pre-intermediate (Way stage)
- ❖ B1 - Intermediate (Threshold)
- ❖ B2 - Upper-intermediate (Vantage)
- C1 - Advanced (Effective Operational Proficiency)
- C2 - Proficiency (Mastery)

Nivel CEFR	CAMBRIDGE	IELTS	TOEFL
<b>C2</b>	CPE	7.5+	276+
<b>C1</b>	CAE	6.5 - 7	236 - 275
<b>B2</b>	FCE	5 - 6	176 - 235
<b>B1</b>	PET	3.5 - 4.5	126 - 175
<b>A2</b>	KET, YLE Flyers	3	96 - 125
<b>A1</b>	YLE Movers		
<b>Sub A1</b>	YLE Starters		

All three English-language examinations described above are based on the levels of the European common framework of reference) → CECR: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2.

They allow validation of a level of English in the context of studies, in order to follow higher education abroad at a University from an English-speaking country or not - many universities or schools request an examination of CAMBRIDGE, IELTS, TOEF for registration, or professionals.

These diplomas actually help with the professional mobility and educational studies, enriching your CV at any age, occupation you have, from every corner of the world.

The exams listed above are available in the normal version, on paper (PB: paper-based) and in the electronic version (CB: computer-based)

(<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/ro/exams/>, accessed at 13.01.2017).

All these exams (Cambridge, IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC) are recognised by over 20,000 employers, universities, and government offices, which accept and recognise those qualifications in the world.

#### **4. Conclusions**

It is necessary that children and young people around the world study the English language. Responding to the requirements of the present context, the level of knowledge may not be asserted in any area where there are no communication skills in English.

The need to make progress in many areas motivates students. People look for ways to increase their value through trainings in order to obtain a diploma that is accredited and internationally recognised. Such a possibility is available by obtaining a certificate in the most important English-language exams: CAMBRIDGE, IELTS or TOEFL.

I have analysed and discovered the importance of having an accredited diploma in English for everyone, from youngsters and students to graduates working in vast areas of the country and across the globe. Analysing the situation, I have observed that it is very important to recognise the linguistic competencies of accredited certificates and diplomas that are supported by the most important English exams: CAMBRIDGE, IELTS or TOEFL.

#### **Webography**

1. <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/>, accessed at 10.01.2017.

2. <https://www.britishcouncil.ro/examene/cambridge>, accessed at 10.01.2017
3. <http://www.britanica.ro/cursuri-examene/examene-de-limba-ingleza.html>, accessed at 11.01.2017
4. <https://www.ielts.org/what-is-ielts/ielts-for-study/>, accessed at 11.01.2017
5. <https://www.britishcouncil.ro/examene/cambridge>, accessed at 10.01.2017
6. <https://www.ets.org/toefl/institutions>, accessed at 12.10.2017
7. <http://www.britanica.ro/cursuri-examene/examene-de-limba-ingleza.html>, accessed at 10.01.2017
8. <http://www.toeflgoanywhere.org/>, accessed at 13.10.2017
9. <http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/ro/exams/>, accessed at 13.01.2017
10. <http://www.ecentre.ro/cpe/>, accessed at 13.01.2017
11. <http://gostudy.lsr.ro/statele-unite/cambridge-sau-toefl-pentru-admiterea-in-sua-sau-uk/>, accessed at 14.01.2017