



# LEARNING ANOTHER LANGUAGE

THE PISA 2025 FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK



Hi

Hi!

Hello

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# The first PISA assessment to assess students' foreign language skills

How well do students in your country understand and speak foreign languages? The OECD Foreign Language Assessment (FLA), a component of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), will provide the answer. Starting in 2025, 15-year-old students will be tested in English as a foreign language in reading, listening and speaking. The assessment will then be repeated every six years to monitor trends, and progressively cover other languages as well.

This brochure briefly sets out the framework for the assessment; please see the *PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment Framework* for more details.

Visit us at <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/foreign-language/> or contact us at [edu.pisa@oecd.org](mailto:edu.pisa@oecd.org) if you'd like to know more or join us in the assessment.

## Why test foreign language learning?

Governments around the world are investing significant resources in foreign language teaching and learning. Policy makers, school leaders and educators need to know if their efforts are paying off. Moreover, they need evidence on effective policies and instructional methods for providing students with the language skills they will need in their future.

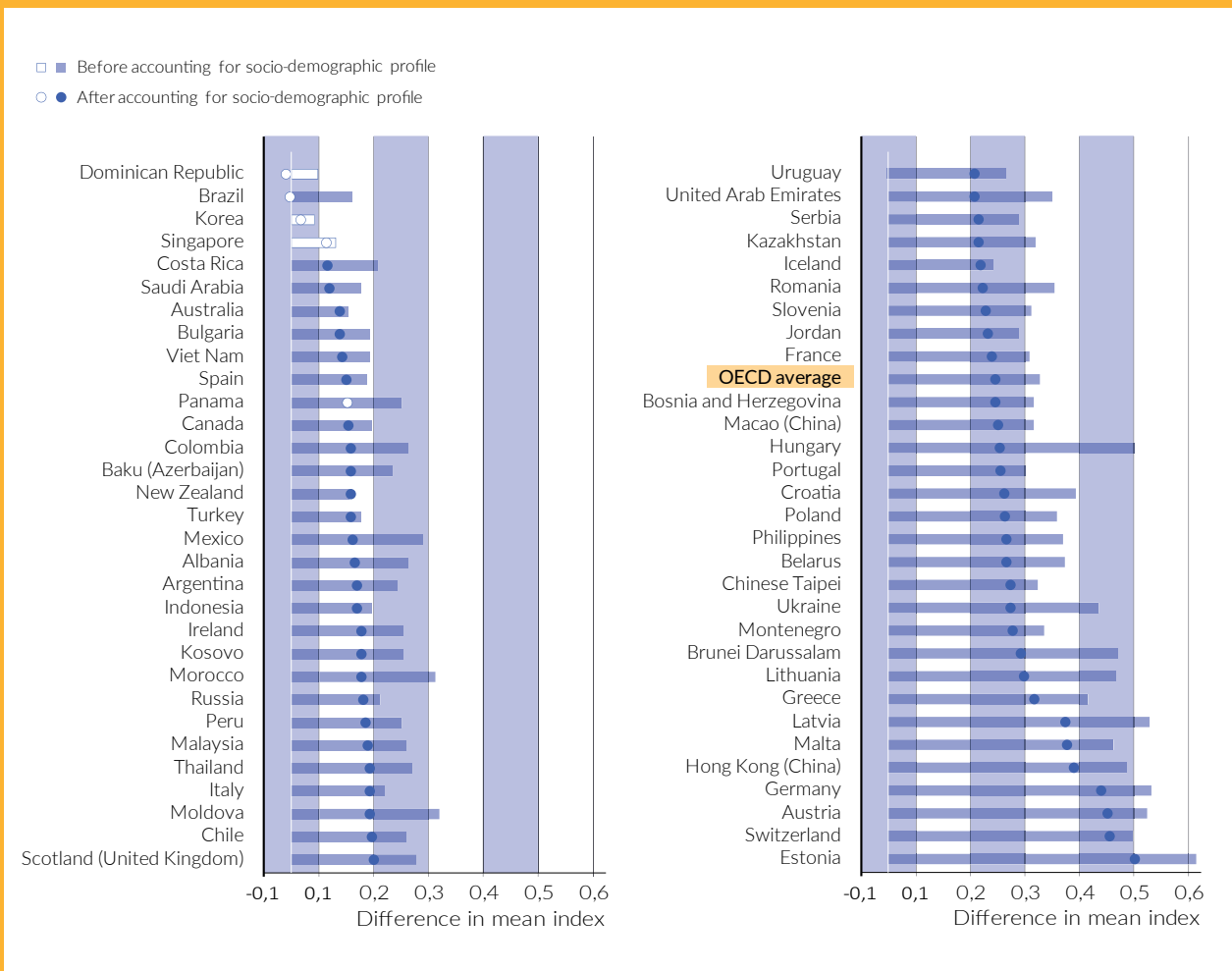
In today's global and connected world, proficiency in more than one language is an essential tool to communicate and interact with others and a key asset for employability. There are multiple benefits of learning foreign languages, including:

INTERCULTURAL UNDERSTANDING	ECONOMIC BENEFITS	COGNITIVE BENEFITS
<p>Foreign languages act as a bridge to other people, countries and cultures. They help to promote respect for diversity and inclusiveness.</p>	<p>Knowing one or more foreign languages is associated with higher chances to access further education and better jobs – at home and abroad.</p>	<p>Learning foreign languages increases cognitive abilities, such as flexibility, problem solving, abstract reasoning and creative thinking.</p>

# Speaking multiple languages is associated with student attitudes

The latest evidence from PISA 2018 shows that speaking more than one language is positively linked with intercultural understanding and global and intercultural attitudes and dispositions. For example, students who reported that they speak two or more languages showed greater respect for people from other cultures than those who reported to only speak one language. This association was positive and significant in all but five countries and economies.

**Figure 1. Speaking two or more languages and respect for people from other cultures**



**Notes:** 1. The socio-demographic profile is measured by the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status (ESCS).

Statistically significant values are shown in a darker tone.

Countries and economies are ranked in ascending order of the difference in the index of respect for people from other cultures, after accounting for gender, and students' and schools' socio-economic profile.

**Source:** OECD, PISA 2018 Database, Table VI.B1.4.12.

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## How did PISA design its framework to test foreign language learning?

The PISA Foreign Language Assessment builds on other international experience in assessing foreign languages, in particular:

- The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) descriptive scheme: The CEFR is a framework for describing language proficiency that is used across the world. It identifies six key levels of proficiency (from A1 to C2), which can be expanded to a seventh pre A1 level, for a number of distinct language activities.
- A socio-cognitive model of language use: Weir's 2005 socio-cognitive model sees language use as an interplay of cognitive and social factors. Its subsequent skill-specific models show how the use of reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills vary along the beginner-expert continuum (see "Further reading").

### **PISA defines foreign language proficiency as the ability to use a foreign language to communicate effectively**

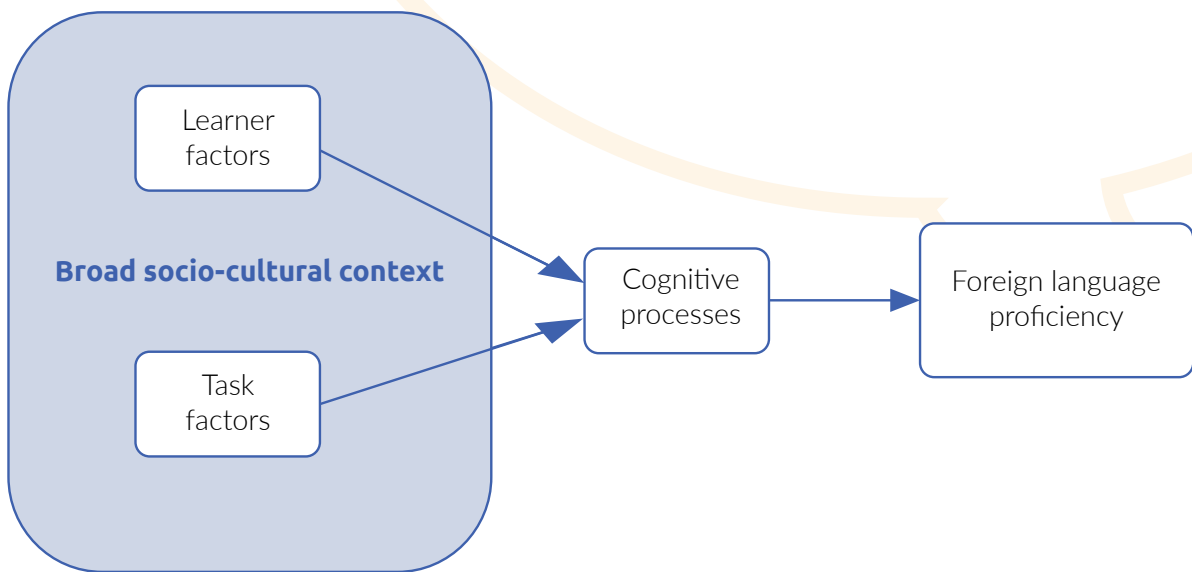
It requires a combination of communicative language competences and general competences that allow the foreign language learner to perform communicative language activities (reception, production, interaction and mediation), which involve one or a combination of the following skills: reading, listening, speaking or writing. It also requires the activation of appropriate language strategies.



## What contributes to foreign language proficiency?

The PISA Foreign Language Assessment views foreign language proficiency as the joint outcome of two combined sources of influence: learner factors and task or activity factors. These, in turn, determine the cognitive processes that the learner employs when using a foreign language. Learner and task factors interact within a broad socio-cultural context (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Factors that contribute to foreign language proficiency**



Source: OECD (2021), PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment and Analytical Framework, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.  
Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/foreign-language/>



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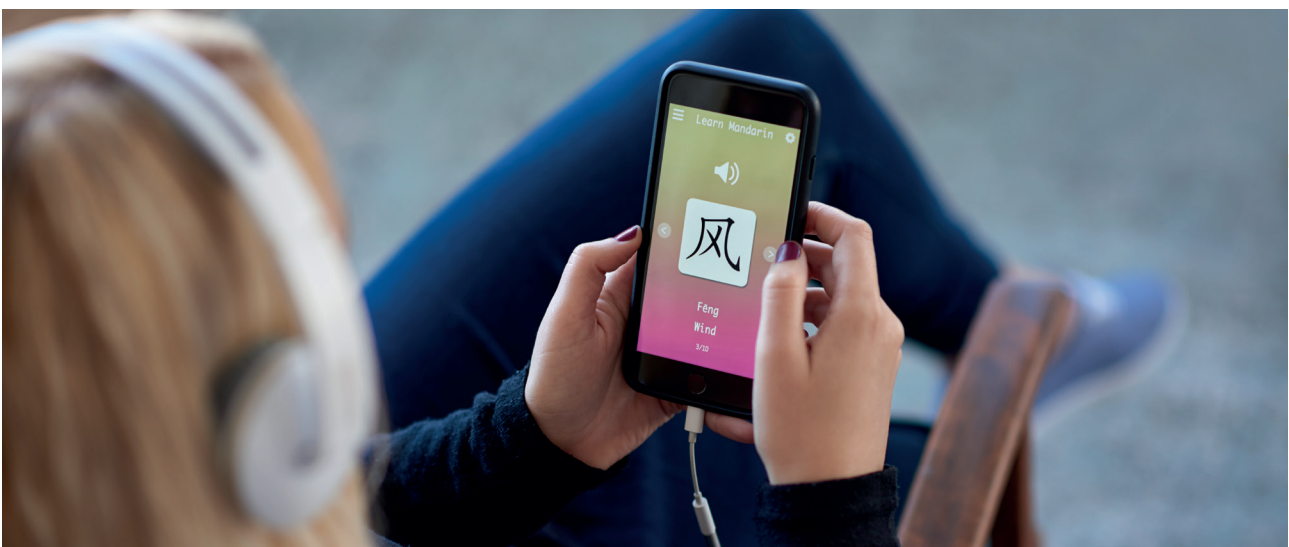
## What will the PISA Foreign Language Assessment assess?

The PISA Foreign Language Assessment will test 15-year-old students' foreign language reading comprehension, listening comprehension and spoken production. Written production and more complex language activities that require multiple skills may be included in future PISA assessments.

### How will learner factors be addressed?

The students in the more than 80 countries and economies that participate in PISA differ widely in their background knowledge, native language and English language proficiency. The Foreign Language Assessment will build on PISA's experience with international assessments to enable fair and objective comparisons of language proficiency across different school systems. To ensure that the test is fair, PISA will:

- select texts that are appropriate to the age group and are not biased against a particular gender or country
- use background questionnaires that allow for the investigation of some of the learner factors expected to relate to proficiency (e.g. attitudes, motivation, etc.)
- familiarise students with the test-navigation interface and the task types before having them complete the test
- ensure that test instructions are accessible for all students, irrespective of their language ability.



## How will task factors be addressed?

### Variety of English

The PISA Foreign Language Assessment will take into account that students around the world are learning different varieties of English. A neutral, unmarked form of English will be used at lower proficiency levels. Texts at the higher levels will typically be taken from authentic sources and may be marked as British or American English.

### Test forms

Reading and listening are adaptive, meaning that student's performance in initial sections of the test determines, in part, the final assignment of forms to students.

Speaking is non-adaptive; it is the characteristics of the spoken output that will determine the proficiency level.

### Task focus

Each task will provide evidence about one or more “can-do” descriptors included in the corresponding CEFR scale.

- **Reading tasks:** Texts for the reading assessment will be selected by considering length, lexico-grammatical characteristics and other features that affect the level of difficulty, as well as the genre, purpose and contexts that reflect the typical progression for language learners in school settings.
- **Listening tasks:** Auditory input for the listening assessment will be selected by considering speech rate, number of speakers, functional characteristics of the text, semantic characteristics (e.g. whether the audio provides factual information or conveys opinions) and linguistic characteristics.
- **Speaking tasks:** The speaking tasks will be carefully selected to ensure that students at all levels being assessed can demonstrate their speaking ability.

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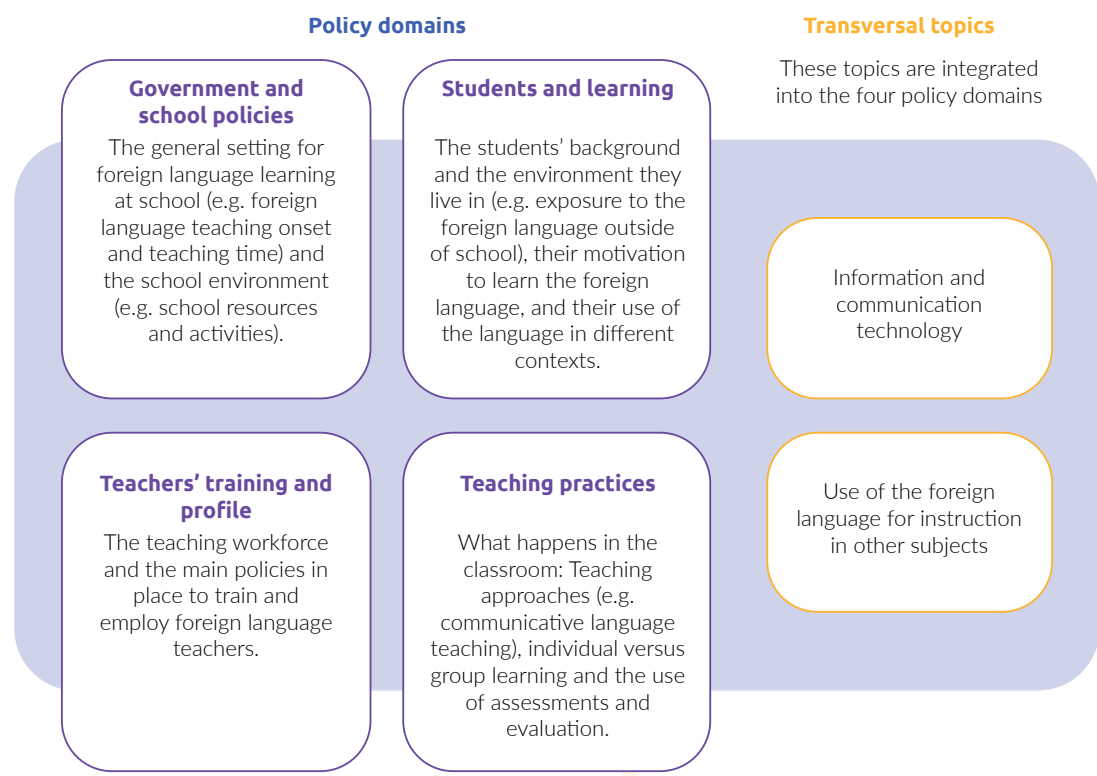
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## How will background factors be addressed?

The PISA Foreign Language Assessment will develop a set of questions to be included in the PISA questionnaires for teachers, students, school principals and parents, as well as a system-level questionnaire that collects information on foreign language teaching and learning from policy officials. The information gathered through the questionnaires will be analysed together with the information on foreign language proficiency collected through the tests to provide a comprehensive picture of the factors that influence foreign language learning inside and outside school.

The questionnaire framework was developed based on an in-depth review of the scientific literature and past large-scale international assessments, and on the input received from experts and policy makers. The framework identifies four main policy domains, as illustrated in Figure 3. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) and foreign languages for instruction in other subjects is integrated into the discussion of these four policy domains.

**Figure 3. Framework for the PISA Foreign Language Assessment background questionnaires**







# How will PISA report foreign language proficiency?

PISA reports students' results through proficiency scales. For the PISA 2025 Foreign Language Assessment, each skill assessed (reading, listening and speaking) will be reported on a separate six-point scale aligned with the CEFR scales for related language activities. The use of these globally recognised scales will facilitate easy and appropriate interpretation of PISA results by educators and policy makers.

The CEFR level descriptors correspond to a progression in language competence; for each level, a series of “can-do” statements indicate what language learners whose competence falls within that level are typically able to do, as can be seen in the example for reading in Table 1. The levels covered in PISA 2025 will be from Pre-A1 to C1.

**Table 1. The PISA scale for reading in a foreign language**

Adapted for the PISA Foreign Language Assessment from the CEFR overall reading comprehension scale

<b>C1 and above</b>	Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided he/she can reread difficult sections. Can understand a wide variety of texts including literary writings, newspaper or magazine articles, provided that there are opportunities for re-reading.
<b>B2</b>	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively. Has a broad active reading vocabulary, but may experience some difficulty with low-frequency idioms.
<b>B1</b>	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interests with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
<b>A2</b>	Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest-frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.
<b>A1</b>	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.
<b>Pre-A1</b>	Can recognise familiar words accompanied by pictures, such as a fast-food restaurant menu illustrated with photos or a picture book using familiar vocabulary.

Source : Adapted from Council of Europe (2020), Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion Volume, © Council of Europe, Strasbourg, p. 54.



## Further reading

- Field, J. (2011), "Cognitive validity", in Taylor, L. (ed.), Examining Speaking: Research and Practice in Assessing Second Language Speaking, UCLES/Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 65-111.
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- Weir, C. (2005), Language Testing and Validation: An Evidence-Based Approach, Palgrave MacMillan, Hampshire.
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<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/-/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching-assessment-companion-volume>.

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Co-funded by the  
European Union

