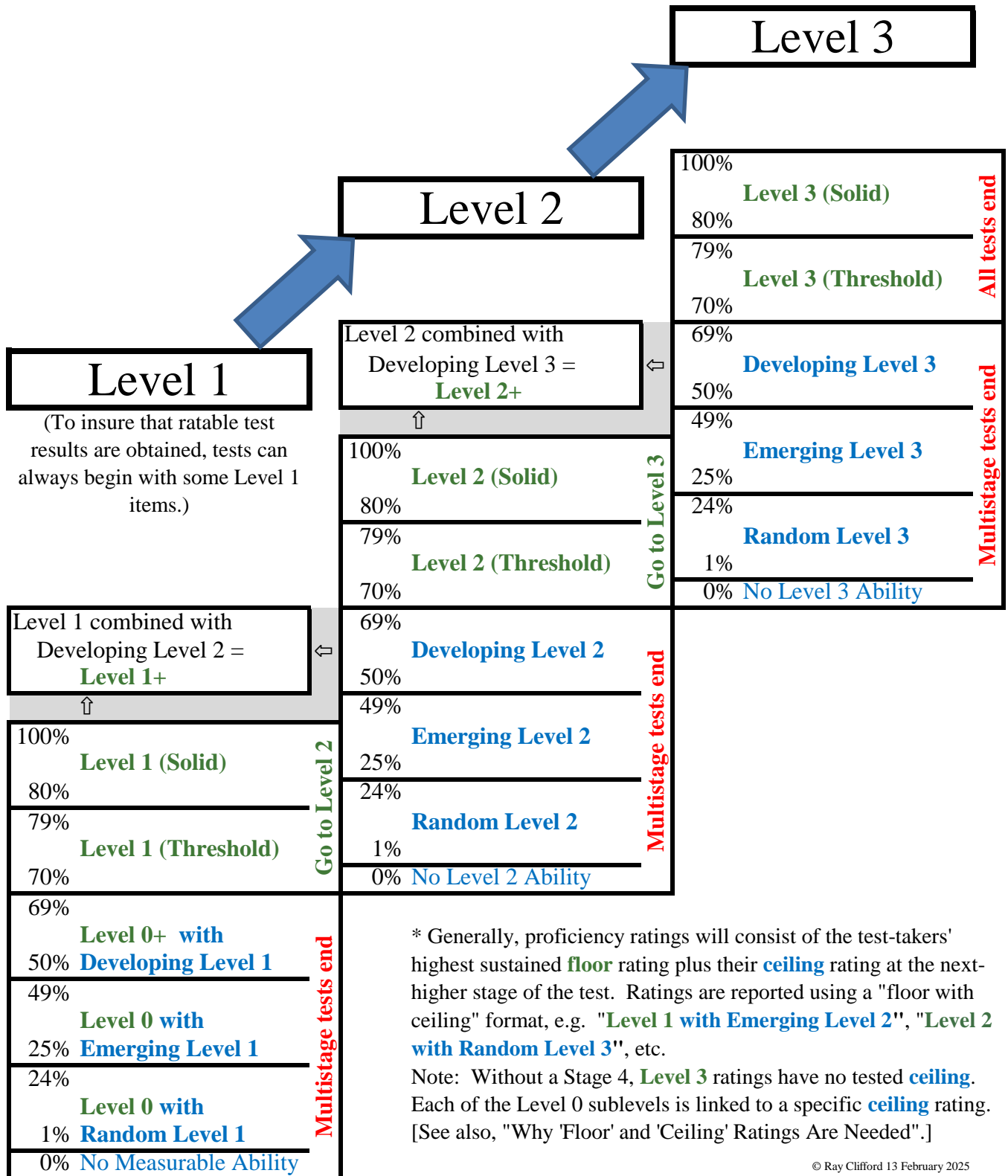


Assigning NATO Reading and Listening Proficiency Ratings Using "Floor" and "Ceiling" Results on Computer Adaptive, Multistage, and Other Proficiency Tests *



Why “Floor” and “Ceiling” Ratings are Needed

Language learners do not completely master the communication tasks and topical domains of one proficiency level before they begin learning the skills associated with the next higher level. Thus, it is common for learners to develop conceptual control or even partial control over language features required at the next higher proficiency level by the time they have attained sustained, consistent control over their current proficiency level.

This reality of language learning—combined with the fact that NATO language proficiency scales apply criterion-referenced, non-compensatory rating criteria—means that a single test score is inadequate to represent language learners’ proficiency profiles. By assigning both “floor” and “ceiling” ratings, it is possible to document both the test takers’ “floor” level of sustained, consistent performance and their progress toward the next higher proficiency level, which is called their “ceiling” level. Statisticians will note that the use of both rating criteria captures and explains distinctions that would be regarded as error variance in tests that generate only a single score or rating.

To provide more information about test takers’ progress within each major proficiency level, the “floor” and “ceiling” rating system uses subcategories that generate the mnemonic “**REDS**”:

- **R** stands for **Random** ability – a score or ability that is at or below the level of random guessing.
- **E** stands for **Emerging** ability – a score or ability that is better than chance but is not equal to at least half of the items or tasks presented at that level.
- **D** stands for **Developing** ability – a score that shows the ability at a given level to respond to at least half of the items or tasks correctly but does not show sustained, consistent performance at that level.
- **S** stands for **Sustained** ability – a threshold qualifying score or level of performance (usually 70% or higher) is used to define sustained performance at each level. It is not possible to earn a “Plus” rating for a given level unless the test taker shows both **sustained** ability at that level and **developing** ability at the next higher level.