

EFL Testing and University Admission in Finland and Japan

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Using both qualitative and quantitative data, this paper describes the difference between English language testing in Finland and Japan related to university admission. There are undeniable differences between the two countries and cultures. In both countries over 90 per cent of secondary school students study English. However, the foreign language proficiency rates among Finns are significantly higher than those among the Japanese, as illustrated by the TOEFL test scores. This paper reports the results of the language testing section of a much larger study which also investigated the historical background, language policy and planning, textbook design, teaching methods, and classroom interaction with the specific educational settings in Finland and Japan. Results suggest that learner attitudes and goals vary greatly. Finnish learners tended to see English more as a means of communicating while their Japanese counterparts tended to see test taking for high school and university admission as their main reason for studying the language. Results also showed that language testing for university admission in the two countries varied greatly. The insights provided by this study may prove useful for curriculum designers and language assessors in Finland, Japan, and other countries.