

The Development and Evaluation of a C-Test for Business German: A Work-in-Progress Report



EALTA Turku, June 6th, 2009

Torsten Schlak (TU Berlin, Germany)

C-Testing



- The C-Test is a variant of the Cloze-test. Both tests are based on the „reduced redundancy approach“. In C-testing, parts of words are deleted, not whole words
- The C-Test was first introduced by Christine Klein-Braley and Ulrich Raatz in 1981
- C-Tests have been shown to be objective, reliable as well as economical instruments to measure general L2 proficiency in various languages
- C-Tests have **NOT** commonly been used yet in language for specific purposes testing

Goal of the project



- To develop a variety of C-Tests for LSP testing with a focus on „Business German“
- So far, work has been done on three different C-Tests:
 - A „C-Test for Business German“ corresponding to the „Prüfung Wirtschaftsdeutsch International (PWD) examination“ offered by the Goethe-Institut
 - A „C-Test German for Economics“
 - A curriculum-based C-Test „German for Tourism“

Who we are:



- A group of graduate students und graduate research assistants under my supervision
- Heike Molnar is doing work on the age factor in SLA and is also interested in C-testing. She has been developing C-Tests for the TestDaF-Institute.
- Kerstin Zimmermann has also worked for TestDaF and is interested in language aptitude and C-testing
- Liudmilla Vasilieva is working in language testing and intercultural communication as well as C-testing
- I'm supervising the project and try to come up with ideas for new C-Tests for LSP and how we should go about developing them and what we can use them for. Heike, Kerstin and Liudmilla are doing the actual test development.
- My colleague Rüdiger Grotjahn is giving us a hand with statistics

C-Testing – Construction Principles I



- C-Tests consist of 4 to 5 short texts with 20 to 25 gaps each. Regularly, 100 gaps in total are used for easy calculation
- In our tests, we decided to aim for 5 texts with 20 gaps each
- Deletion technique („rule of two“): „Beginning with the second word of the second sentence the second half of every second word is deleted“ (Grotjahn, Klein-Braley & Raatz 2002: 95). There is a short „run out“ at the end of each text
- Text are ordered in increasing difficulty. The first text is often used as an „icebreaker“

C-Testing – Construction Principles II



- Usually, the development process starts with 10 or more texts.
- Those texts are completed by native speakers in order to
 - spot out texts that are too difficult even for native speakers (texts with mean difficulty lower than 90% are usually discarded)
 - find acceptable solutions
- The remaining texts are pretested with the target population. Classical item analysis is used. Texts are seen as „superitems“. Based on item difficulty, item discrimination and reliability data, the number of texts are reduced to 5

C-Test for Business German I



- The C-Test for Business German is based on the Goethe-Institut's „Prüfung Wirtschaftdeutsch International (PWD) examination“ which is supposed to test the CEFR- level C1.
- The PWD is aimed at people with some background knowledge in business but not at highly specialized business experts
- The PWD consists of a written examination (180 minutes) and an oral examination (20 minutes)
- The C-Test for Business German takes less than 25 minutes in total

C-Test for Business German II



- The C-Test for Business German can be used e.g. in the following ways:
 - as a placement test for Business German courses that prepare students for the PWD examination
 - as a screening test for students who plan to take the expensive PWD examination
 - as a screening test for job applicants in business contexts as well as for jobs related to teaching Business German (e.g. teacher of Business German at a Goethe-Institut)
 - as a selection instrument in different Business contexts
 - as final examination in Business German courses
 - as an evaluation instrument in a multi-level Business German programm
 - as part of a language entrance test for business schools
 - as a research instrument

C-Test for Business German III



- Selection of text types and topics: in broad correspondence with the PWD examination, two text types were included in the C-Test for Business German:
 - Current trends and topics from the (German) Business World
 - Company and product presentations
- For current trend and topics, business related texts from the following daily/weekly newspapers were chosen:
 - *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*
 - *Süddeutsche Zeitung*
 - *WirtschaftsWoche*
 - *Handelsblatt*
- Company and product presentations were taken from company websites as well as the publications above

C-Test for Business German IV



- In total, 12 texts were chosen that broadly covered the content of the PWD examination
- The 12 texts were pretested with 15 native German business majors.
- 4 texts were discarded, the remaining 8 texts were pretested twice with a group of Business German students preparing for the PWD examination. Once at the beginning and once at the end (three months later) of their Business German course.
- The C-test was found to have excellent psychometric properties, including high reliability (around .9) as well as high re-test reliability (around .92).

C-Test for Business German V



- **Some ideas for future research on the validity of the C-Test for Business German**
 - Correlating the C-Test results with the results from those of the PWD examination.
 - Comparing groups of Business German students after taking part in level I, level II, and level III of a Business German programm respectively
 - Comparing the performance of C1-level German students with and without business background.
 - Examining the content validity of the C-Test for Business German through interviews with experts in Business German
 - etc.

C-Test for Business German VI: A sample text



Mitarbeiter als Gesellschafter

Bei Müller-BBM sind die Mitarbeiter Gesellschafter und können jeden Tag den Stand ihres Gewinnanteils verfolgen. Gekoppelt an die individuelle Leistung, Fehlzeiten und Betriebszugehörigkeit ermittelt das Management jährlich eine persönliche Gewinnbeteiligung. Das Geld wird nicht sofort ausgezahlt, sondern über 10 Jahre verzinst in dem Unternehmen angelegt. Das Ziel ist die Identifikation zu erhöhen, den Krankheitsstand zu senken – und vor allem die Mitarbeiterfluktuation in der Belegschaft zu vermeiden. Das Konzept funktioniert.

(Source: Handelsblatt, 2008/07/29)