

Hi-Tech English Placement Test Project 2004-2006

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Manual for Relating Language Examinations to CEF

GENERAL EXAMINATION DESCRIPTION	
General Information Name of examination Language tested Examining institution Date of second version Type of examination Purpose Target population No. of test-takers/ year	English Placement Test English Helsinki University of Technology (TKK) April 2006 <input type="checkbox"/> International <input type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Institutional Exemption/placement <input type="checkbox"/> Lower Sec <input type="checkbox"/> Upper Sec <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Uni/College Students <input type="checkbox"/> Adult 800
What is the overall aim? The aim of the test is to provide Helsinki University of Technology with a tool to assess the English of their students.	
What are the more specific objectives? If available describe the needs of the intended users on which this examination is based. The test is a computerized (server-side) placement test for English, which has two functions: 1) students who pass the exam receive 1-3 ECTS, depending on their performance and these credits fulfill the university requirements for foreign language studies, and 2) students who fail the exam are directed to a course. This placement test is suitable for both Finnish and international students in a degree program at TKK. The exam is given every period (at least four times) during the academic year. The exam is not compulsory.	
What is/are principal domain(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Personal <input type="checkbox"/> Occupational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational

Which communicative activities are tested?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Listening comprehension <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2 Reading comprehension <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 Spoken interaction) <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Written interaction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 Spoken production <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Written production <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7 Integrated skills) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9 Spoken mediation of text) <input type="checkbox"/> 10 Written mediation of text <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 11 Language (e.g. Grammar, Vocabulary, Cohesion) <input type="checkbox"/> 12 Other: (specify): _____	Name of Subtest(s) reading test (speaking test) <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Give name and duration of test subtests	Name of Subtest 1 reading test (2 speaking test)	Duration of Subtest 90 minutes (15 minutes)
What type(s) of test tasks are used?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Multiple choice (dropdown box) <input type="checkbox"/> True/False <input type="checkbox"/> Matching <input type="checkbox"/> Ordering <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gap fill sentence (drag ‘n drop) <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence completion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gapped text / cloze, selected response <input type="checkbox"/> Open gapped text / cloze <input type="checkbox"/> Short answer to open question(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Extended answer (text / monologue) <input type="checkbox"/> Interaction with examiner <input type="checkbox"/> Interaction with peers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> c-test <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> highlighting (terms)	Subtests (Write numbers above) 1 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
What information is published for candidates and teachers?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Overall aim <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Principal domain(s) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test subtests <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Sample test papers <input type="checkbox"/> Video of format of oral	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample answer papers <input type="checkbox"/> Marking schemes <input type="checkbox"/> Grading schemes <input type="checkbox"/> Standardised performance samples showing pass level <input type="checkbox"/> Sample certificate
What is reported?	<input type="checkbox"/> Global Grade <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grade per subtest	<input type="checkbox"/> Global Grade plus profile <input type="checkbox"/> Profile per subtest

Form A1: General Examination Description

For a full description, go to <http://users.tkk.fi/~dpihko/test/index.htm>

Test Characteristics

- Reading comprehension
- Cut-off aimed at C1
 - Overall Reading Comprehension – C1
Can understand in detail lengthy, complex texts, whether or not they relate to his/her own area of speciality, provided s/he can reread difficult sections.
 - Reading for Information – B2
Can obtain information, ideas and opinions from highly specialized sources within his/her field. Can understand specialized articles outside his/her field, provided s/he can use a dictionary occasionally to confirm his/her interpretation of terminology.
- Server-side test
 - Delivered via Mozilla browser
 - From a secure server
 - To a designated language laboratory
 - At a specified time
- Duration: 90 min
 - no set time limits for separate tasks
- Contents: 5-7 tasks
 - 80 – 100 items
 - Length of text varies - minimum word count: 35, maximum word count: 803
- Four pilot versions: 800 test takers (2005-06)
- Database: 80 tasks
 - maths, environment, chemistry, physics, computer science, architecture, engineering

Technical Features

- Open source code
- Front-end written in JavaScript
- Security
 - SSL certificate
 - Passwords: Server, Administrator, Student
 - One-time log in
 - Front-end exam reads a static exam file
 - Special Windows Profile
 - Disabled keyboard shortcuts, right-clicking (mouse), printing, screenshots
 - Access limited to specified place at specified time
- Students' exam user interface
 - Log in
 - Navigation: task list, back, next, undo and redo
 - Clock displaying amount of time left
- Computer crashes?
 - Answers recoverable from login
- Friendly teacher interface

Challenges and Questions

- Linking the new reading test to the CEFR
 - test content
 - linking LSP / university tests to general language CEFR?
 - developing and linking new LSP descriptors to CEFR (in particular for comprehension and for C2)?
 - test results
 - which standard setting method(s) are most appropriate?
 - continuous quality assurance
- Validity of current linking to CEF in light of future developments of CEF and Manual?
- Relationship of our test to other LSP type tests?
- Is a link via CEF scales enough?
- European auditing / accreditation procedures on linking to CEFR?

Quality Control and Validation Research

- Pilot testing plus classical and IRT analyses
- Students' background and their test results
- Students' reactions to interface, user-friendliness, face and content validity
- Comparison with external criteria

Table 1. Analysis of Items and Tests: First Results

	Pilot 1	Pilot 2	Pilot 3	Pilot 4
n of students / tasks / items	184 / 4 / 90	189 / 7 / 78	172 / 7 / 91	149 / 5 / 101
mean result	70 (= 78%)	64 (= 80%)	68 (= 75%)	78 (= 75%)
st.deviation	13.4	9.5	13.9	13.0
st. error	3.3	2.9	3.5	3.6
reliability (alpha)	.94	.91	.94	.92
estimated alpha for a 40 item version of the test	.87	.83	.86	.82
average item total correlation	.41	.36	.40	.34

Table 2. Research/Validation: First Results

External criterion	Description	Correlation (with Rasch estimate of ability)	
		Pilot 3	Pilot 4
English grade in the Matriculation Examination.	Nationwide exam for 18-year-olds. The English grade is based on writing (33%), reading (25%), listening (25%), vocabulary & grammar (17%). On a 7-point scale.	r = .691 p = .000 n = 163	r = .646 p = .000 n = 139
Final English grade	Final grade in the school-leaving certificate given at the same time as the Matriculation exam. A school-based grade on 4 – 10 scale.	r = .659 p = .000 n = 167	r = .641 p = .000 n = 142
Self-assessment	Completed just prior to the test, on simple 5-point scale (poor – satisfactory – good – very good – excellent)	r = .592 p = .000 n = 171	r = .423 p = .000 n = 149

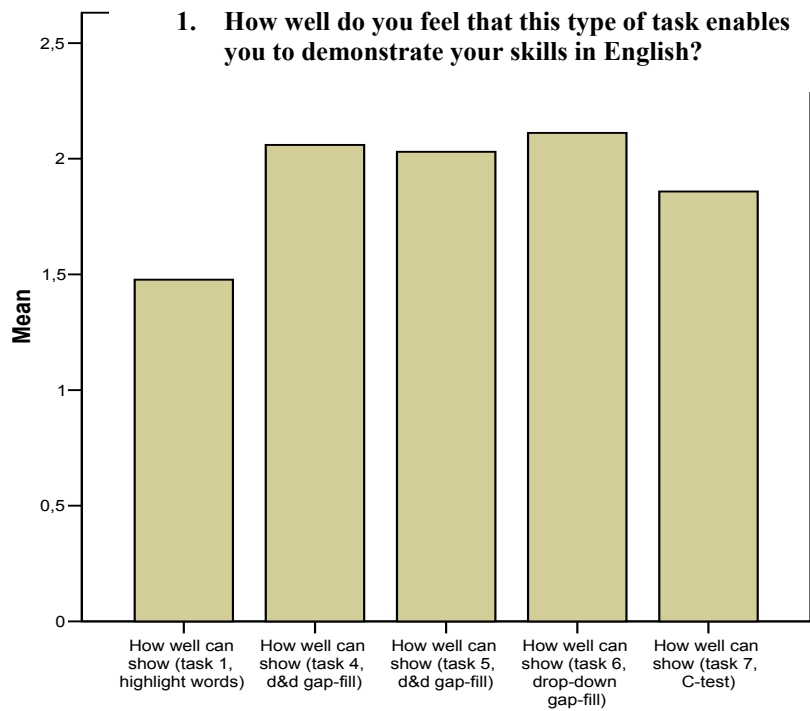
Table 3. Test Results and Students' Background

Background variables	Correlation	
	Pilot 3	Pilot 4
Total length of English studies	non sig.	non-sig.
Length of university studies	r = .326 p = .000, n = 170	r = .281 p = .001, n = 149
Frequency of speaking English	non sig.	r = .178 p = .030, n = 149
Frequency of reading English	r = .393 p = .000, n = 171	r = .341 p = .000, n = 149

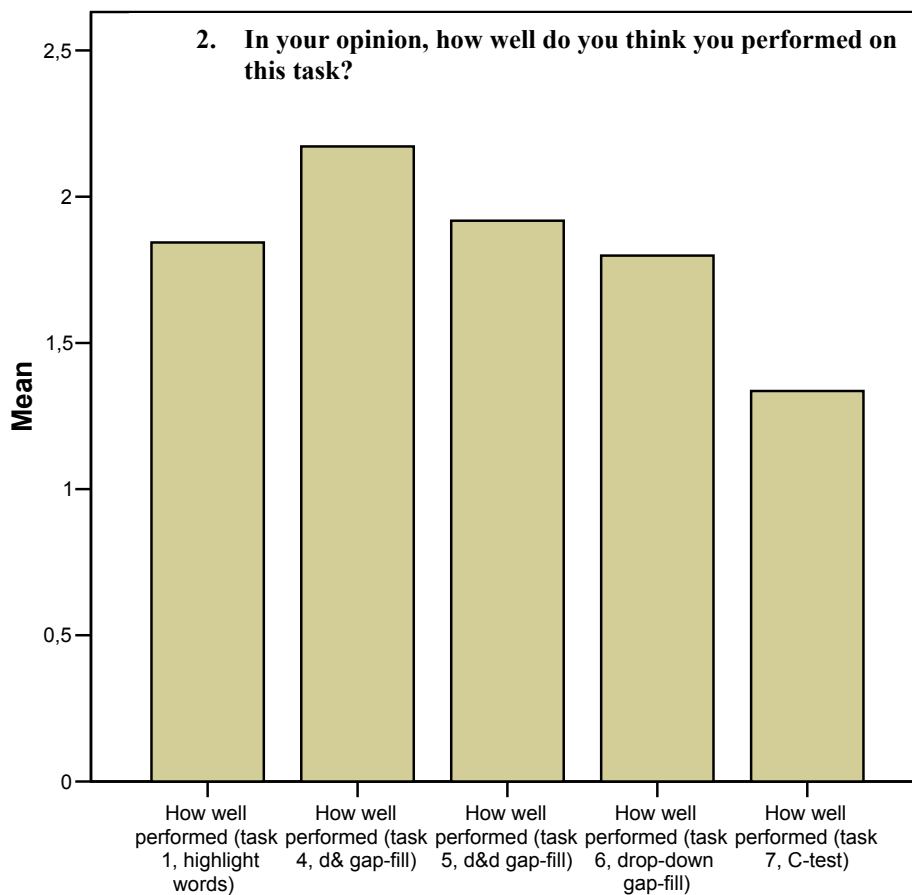
Table 4. Test results and Students' Opinions

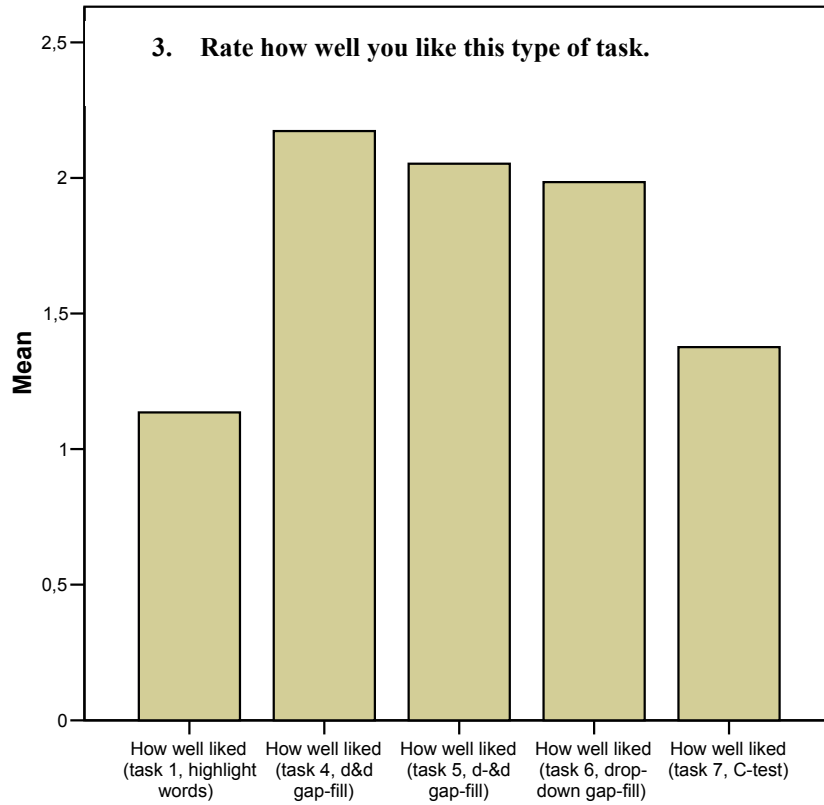
Students' opinions	Correlation (overall opinions with overall test results)	
	Pilot 3	Pilot 4
How well the task enabled students to demonstrate their proficiency	non sig.	non-sig.
How well could perform on the task	r = .262 p = .003, n = 129 (task 5&6 in particular)	r = .439 p = .000, n = 142 (strongest in task 7 (C-test))
How well liked the task	r = .175 p = .047, n = 129	non-sig. (except task 7 where r = .24)
Difficulty of the task	N / A	r = -.266 p = .001, n = 142 (in all tasks)
Familiarity of the topic	N / A	non-sig. (except task 6, rank order corr. .18)

Analysis of Questionnaire: Pilot 4

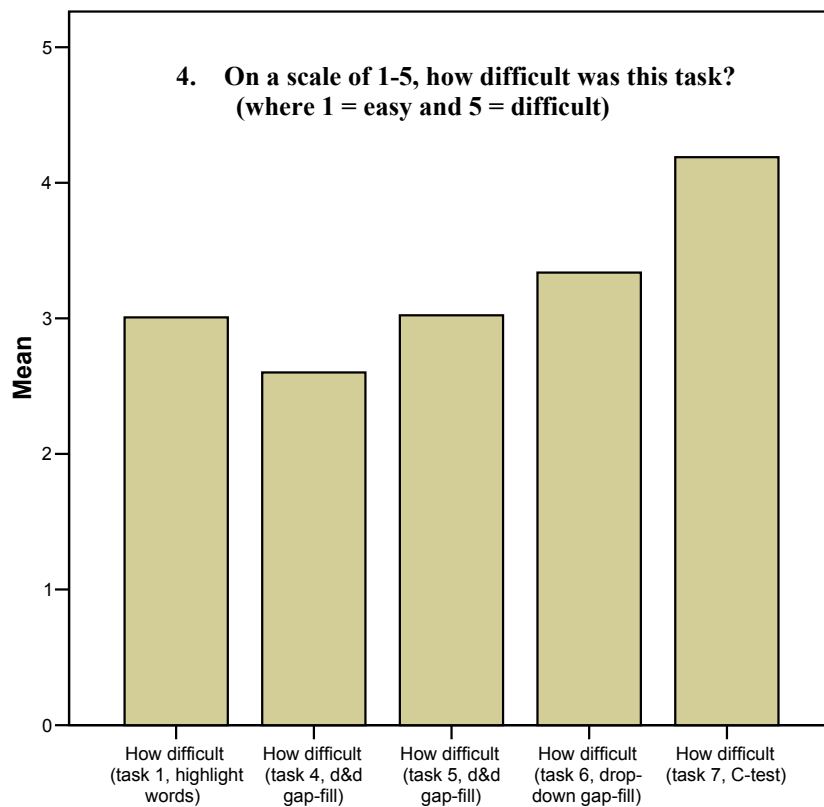


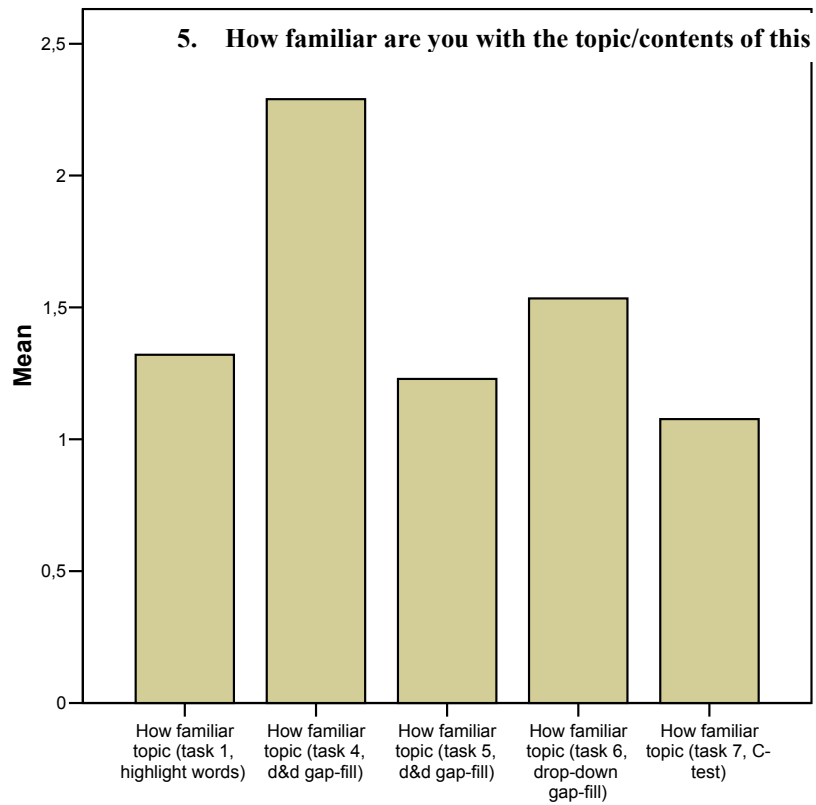
0 = not well at all 1 = not so well 2 = rather well 3 = very well





0 = not well at all 1 = not so well 2 = rather well 3 = very well





**0 = not at all 1 = not very familiar 2 = somewhat familiar
3 = quite familiar 4 = very familiar**