STRUCTURAL COMPETENCE

Individual Component Checklist

for use with ONE task

ENGLISH VERSION

ALTE

Association of Language Testers in Europe

INTRODUCTION

This checklist has been designed for use as a practical tool for describing **ONE TASK** in a test of structural competence, the skills which are sometimes tested under names such as 'grammar and usage' or ' language in use'.

Some pages may need to be photocopied to accommodate further items.

General Notes

- **Component**
  One subtest in an examination. Usually an examination is made up of subtests in the different skills, and components are commonly called by the names of skills. This checklist concerns the listening component of an examination. Components are also often referred to as 'papers'.

- **Input**
  The material provided by the candidate for use in order to produce an appropriate response. In a test of listening it is likely to take the form of a recorded oral text plus written items.

- **Item**
  Each testing point which is given a separate mark or marks. It may consist of, for example, one gap in a written text, or one multiple choice question with three or four options.

- **Response**
  The candidate's written or spoken response to a task. The term 'answer' is often used in this context. However, for reasons of precision, it is not used here.

- **Rubric**
  The instructions given to a candidate on how to respond to a particular input. In a test of listening with multiple choice questions, the rubric might be: *Here are some sentences about a visit to a restaurant. Finish the second sentence so that it has the same meaning as the first.*

- **Task**
  A task is defined precisely as a combination of rubric, input and response. For example, a reading text with several multiple choice items, all of which can be answered by referring to a single rubric, can be classified as a task. If another set of items relates to the same text, but requires a different rubric in order for a response to be produced, then that combination of text, rubric and items constitutes a different task. Thus the same text can for part of the same input for one or more tasks.

  The term 'question' which is often used when referring to tasks, whether or not they are presented as grammatical questions, is avoided here because of its ambiguity.

- **Text**
  In the context of a listening component of an examination, a text is a piece of spoken language, used as input to a task, or the term could be used to refer to a piece of written language which the candidate is asked to produce.

  Please note
  Some of the questions in this checklist are to be answered with a couple of words or numbers, and some have boxes to tick 'yes' or 'no'. Others, which involve making some qualitative judgement, ask for an assessment on a scale of 1 – 4, where 1 represents the most negative judgement and 4 the most positive.

Instructions for Individual Questions

1. **INPUT TEXT**

2 **Type of text**
   Texts for use in tests of listening are sometimes taken from sources such as public announcements and radio broadcasts, or recorded from scripts written specially for the examination. When authentic texts are used, they are often adapted. In this question **box 1= an unadapted text, box 2= an adapted text and box 3= specially written for the test**.

3 Writer's overall intention

It is often the case that there may be several intentions associated with any text. However, an *overall* intention should be identified.

4 Target reader (of original text)

It would, of course, be possible to break this list down much further, but for the purposes of this checklist it has been decided to give only these limited categories, with the possibility of specifying more accurately under category d).

5 Topic of text

The likely extent of the topic areas used in tests of listening is covered by the 'notions' in **Threshold Level 1990.**

2 LANGUAGE ABILITY TESTED

1 Main focus of testing
By this is meant the main focus of what is being tested in language terms, although it may also touch on other areas. It is also taken as understood that there is a great deal of ambiguity in this area.

3 EXPECTED RESPONSE

6 To what extent are non-linguistic skills being tested?
This question attempts to gauge the extent to which skills other than language ability are required in order to provide a response. An example of this would be an item which demands some type of mathematical calculation in order to get the correct answer, or an item which involves the candidate reading a map or interpreting a plan or diagram.

7 To what extent is there an overlap with testing another area of linguistic skill?
This question attempts to gauge the extent to which one testing area of language skill involves the candidate's ability in another area of skill. It is difficult to separate skills completely from one another. For example, it is likely that any test of listening will also involve candidates in reading instructions and rubrics, and in writing responses, and tests of structural competence and reading will also involve candidates in writing.

4 MARKING

5 What type of marking is used?

These can be characterised as follows:

a) **Examiner marking**: marking carried out by experts, who are often referred to as examiners. They are required to make use of their professional judgement in awarding marks.

b) **Clerical marking**: marking carried out by non-experts, who have to deal with letters, numbers or words. They are generally required to exercise only very limited judgement, of a non-expert type.

c) **Computerised marking**: marking carried out by a machine such as an optical mark reader. Multiple choice tests are often marked in this way.

The term 'marking' as it is used here refers to the process of assigning a mark to an item, not the way in which the mark is recorded or read. Computerised marking means a candidate's response goes directly to the computer for the mark to be assigned, and no human marker is involved.
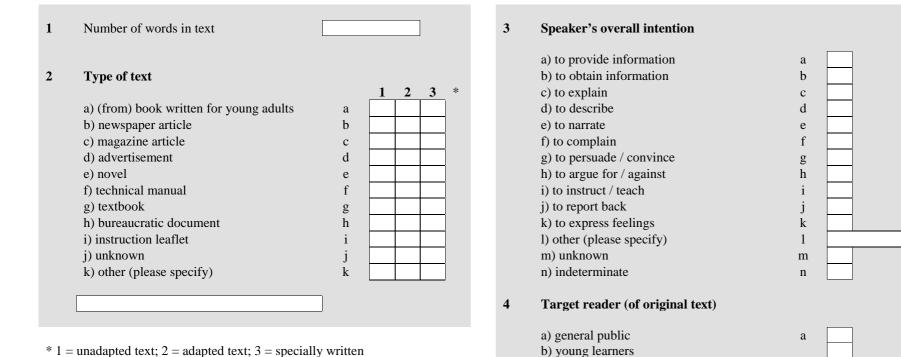
GENERAL DESCRIPTION

NAME OF EXAMINATION	
NAME OF COMPONENT	
NAME / NUMBER OF TASK	

1. INPUT TEXT

1   Number of words in text   [   ]

2   **Type of text**

		1	2	3	*
a) (from) book written for young adults	a				
b) newspaper article	b				
c) magazine article	c				
d) advertisement	d				
e) novel	e				
f) technical manual	f				
g) textbook	g				
h) bureaucratic document	h				
i) instruction leaflet	i				
j) unknown	j				
k) other (please specify)	k				

[   ]

* 1 = unadapted text; 2 = adapted text; 3 = specially written

3   **Speaker's overall intention**

a) to provide information	a	[ ]
b) to obtain information	b	[ ]
c) to explain	c	[ ]
d) to describe	d	[ ]
e) to narrate	e	[ ]
f) to complain	f	[ ]
g) to persuade / convince	g	[ ]
h) to argue for / against	h	[ ]
i) to instruct / teach	i	[ ]
j) to report back	j	[ ]
k) to express feelings	k	[ ]
l) other (please specify)	l	[ ]
m) unknown	m	[ ]
n) indeterminate	n	[ ]

4   **Target reader (of original text)**

a) general public	a	[ ]
b) young learners		[ ]
c) L2 learners		[ ]
d) specialist group (please specify)		[ ]

[   ]

1 INPUT - TEXT

5 **Topic of text**

a) personal identification	a	
b) house and home / environment	b	
c) daily life	c	
d) free time / entertainment	d	
e) travel	e	
f) relations with other people	f	
g) health and body care	g	
h) education	h	
i) science and scholarship	i	
j) current affairs	j	
k) shopping	k	
l) food and drink	l	
m) services	m	
n) places	n	
o) language	o	
p) weather	p	
q) other (please specify)	q	

6 **Is text**

a) complete?	a	
b) extract from longer text?	b	

7 **What details of source text are given?**

a) none	a	
b) type of text (e.g. radio programme)	b	
c) title, name of speaker	c	
d) date	d	

8 Are line – paragraph markers (e.g. numbers) provided?

Yes
No

1 Main focus of testing

Item

	Item						
a) verb form	a	a	a	a	a	a
b) verb tense	b	b	b	b	b	b
c) verb mood	c	c	c	c	c	c
d) verbal construction	d	d	d	d	d	d
e) verb auxiliaries	e	e	e	e	e	e
f) conditionals	f	f	f	f	f	f
g) indirect speech	g	g	g	g	g	g
h) noun forms	h	h	h	h	h	h
i) pronouns	I	I	I	I	I	I
j) adjectives	j	j	j	j	j	j
k) adverbs	k	k	k	k	k	k
l) articles	l	l	l	l	l	l
m) prepositions	m	m	m	m	m	m
n) vocabulary use	n	n	n	n	n	n
o) cohesive devices	o	o	o	o	o	o
p) register	p	p	p	p	p	p
q) punctuation	q	q	q	q	q	q
r) spelling	r	r	r	r	r	r
s) word order	s	s	s	s	s	s
t) other (please specify)	t	t	t	t	t	t

2 LANGUAGE ABILITY TESTED

2   **Item type used**

Item

□	□	□	□	□	□

Item						
a) multiple choice	a □	a □	a □	a □	a □	a □
b) gap filling (cloze)	b □	b □	b □	b □	b □	b □
c) transformation	c □	c □	c □	c □	c □	c □
d) short answer (word / short phrase)	d □	d □	d □	d □	d □	d □
e) short answer (1 – 3 sentences)	e □	e □	e □	e □	e □	e □
f) sentence completion	f □	f □	f □	f □	f □	f □
g) true / false	g □	g □	g □	g □	g □	g □
h) ordering	h □	h □	h □	h □	h □	h □
i) error correction (proof reading)	i □	i □	i □	i □	i □	i □
j) other (please specify)	j □	j □	j □	j □	j □	j □

3   EXPECTED RESPONSE

		Item		**Item**		**Item**		**Item**		**Item**	
1	What type of response is required? a) choice from a list b) one or two word answer c) longer answer	a b c		a b c		a b c		a b c		a b c	
2	Is the type and length of response required indicated to the candidate?	Yes No		Yes No		Yes No		Yes No		Yes No	
3	How limited is the acceptable range of answers?	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4
4	To what extent is specialist knowledge assumed?	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4
5	To what extent is cultural knowledge assumed?	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4
6	To what extent are non-linguistic skills being tested?	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4
7	To what extent is there an overlap with testing another area of linguistic skill?	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4	1 3	2 4

4 MARKING

Task		Item	Item	Item	Item	Item
1	How many marks are available?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Is the number of marks available indicated to the candidate?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐
3	What are the criteria for marking?					
	a) correct choice of option	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐
	b) grammatical accuracy	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐
	c) accurate spelling	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐
	d) other (please specify)	d ☐	d ☐	d ☐	d ☐	d ☐
4	Are marking criteria indicated to the candidate?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐
5	What type of marking is used?					
	a) examiner marking	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐	a ☐
	b) clerical marking	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐	b ☐
	c) computerised marking	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐	c ☐