



Quality through Standards: International Language Certificates

Sibylle Plassmann, telc – language tests

Berlin, 25 October 2012

Topics



- Language Skills in a Business Context
- Learning objectives for Company courses
- Standards in Language Testing

Working in a multilingual context



Working in a multilingual context

All these people have language skills – but are they the right ones?



How much English will I need for the job in the Sales Department?

Do I speak enough German to negotiate with the supplier?



Can my employee speak good Arabic?



Communication within the company

Within a company's "Community of Practice", how does the exchange of information work for its...

- working schedule
- holiday planning
- Quality Assurance
- Health and Safety
- in-service training
- ...?

... and what about "Small Talk"?



It's not (just) technical terms which are lacking, but work-related language competence.

The following learning objectives are common requirements:

- **Describing:** writing a description of a product
- **Convincing:** proving a point to a client
- **Negotiating:** closing a deal with business partners
- **Summarising:** writing the minutes of a meeting
- **Doing research:** finding information about markets online
- **Listening:** being able to follow a conference speaker
- ...

The Aim of a Company Course:

**communicative competence
at the workplace**

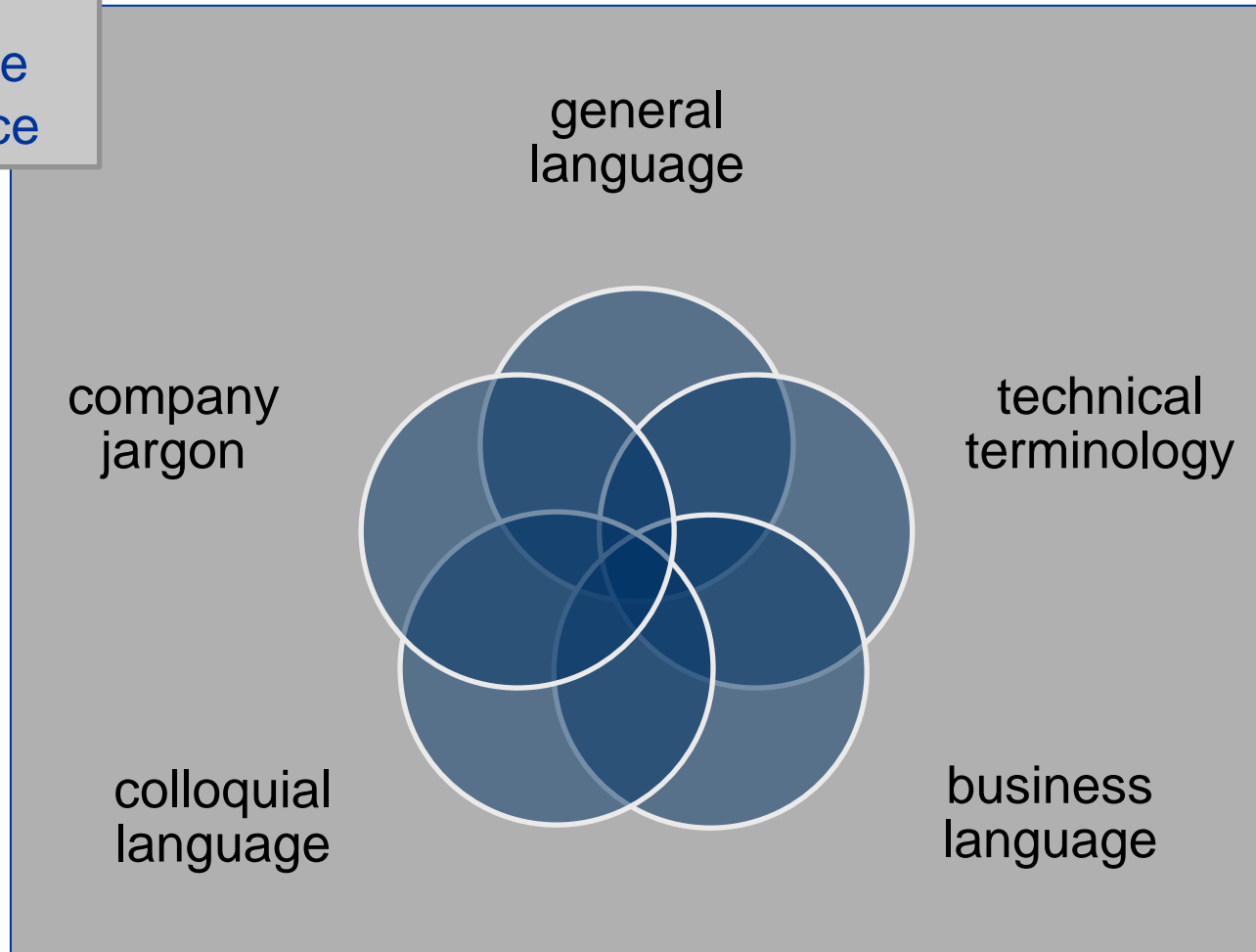
How to Achieve it:

- Build up general language competence as the basic requirement
- Practise utilisation of the language in work-related settings and activities
- Specialise in technical terms only as a sideline





Types of
language in use
at the workplace



Standards in Assessing Language Competence

Why Assess Language Competence?

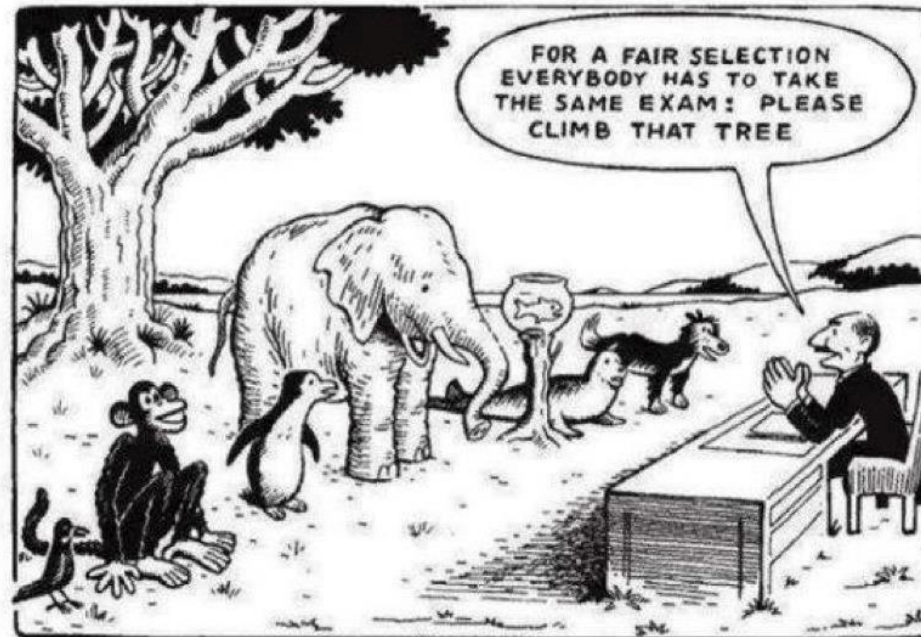
- to document teaching success
- to compare employees
- to measure up against a competence profile
- to motivate staff





"Climb that tree! "

– Standardisation is not an end in itself



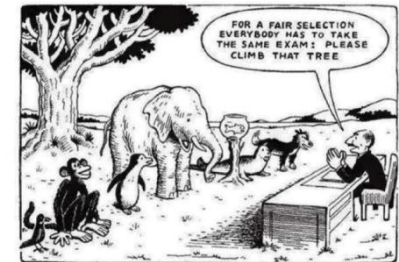
Our Education System



Criteria for Assessment

Fair and standardised:

- valid
- reliable
- objective



Our Education System

Task-orientated:

- related to real life
- in line with stakeholders' needs





Standardised, quality-controlled certification means:

- Competences are determined according to international standards
- Provision of a fair indication as to the candidate's suitability for a desired position
- Clear guidance for further improvement of language skills

Examining according to a needs analysis means:

- Taking the requirements of both candidates and employers into account
- The test reflecting authentic situations of language use





ALTE: The Association of Language Testers in Europe

Aims:

- Refine methods for validity argument
- Add to the CEFR toolkit
- Raise assessment literacy
- Support politics in decision-making





ALTE Minimum Standards:

- Test construction
- Administration/Logistics
- Marking/Grading
- Test analysis
- Communication with stakeholders

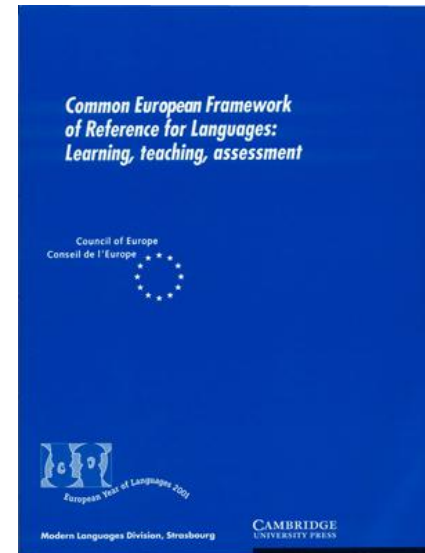


www.alte.org



Test construction

- Needs analysis
- Definition of test construct
- Trialling, pre-testing, monitoring quality
- Linking to the CEFR as an external system of reference



CoE 2009:

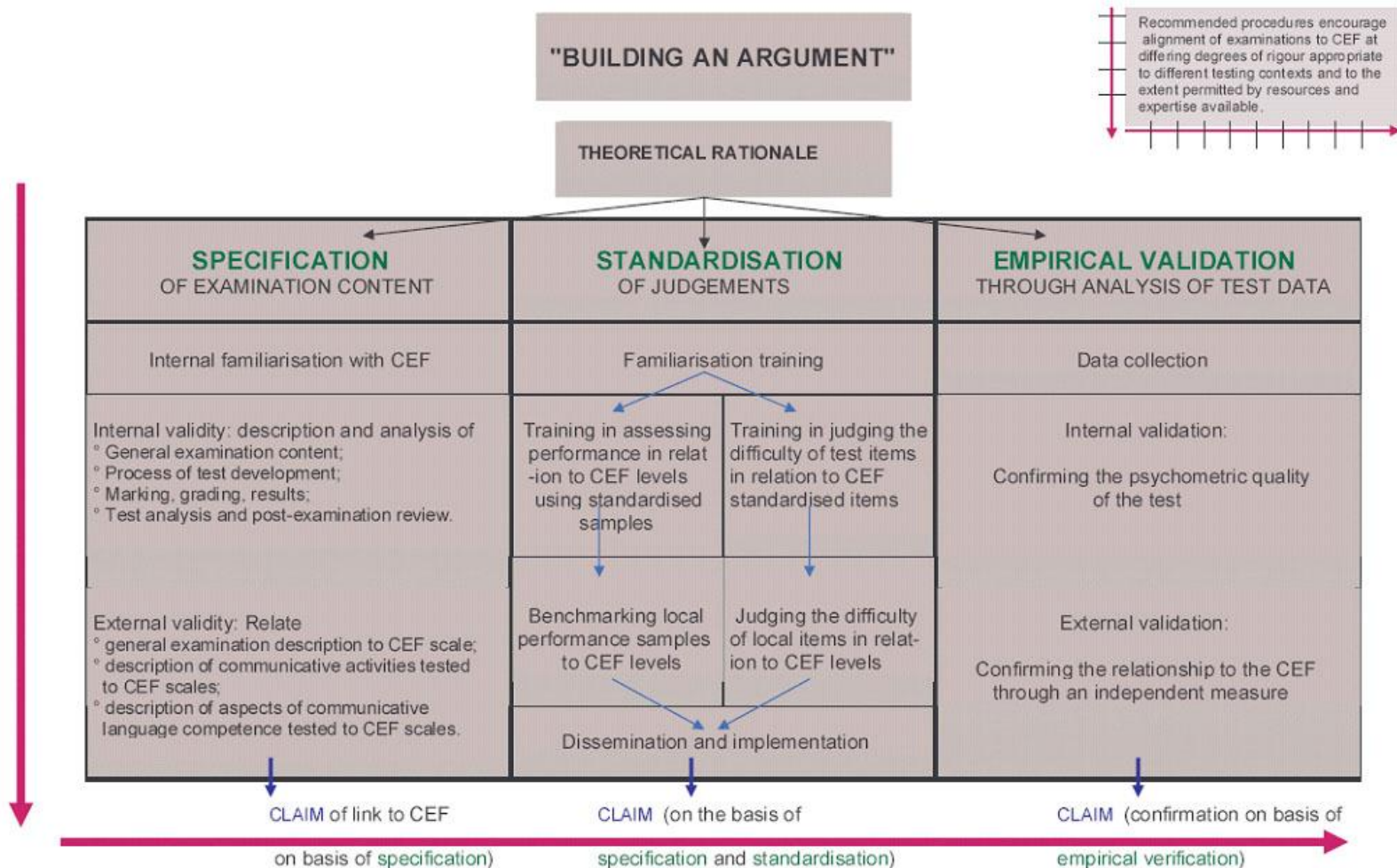
Manual for Relating Examinations to the CEFR

CoE 2011:

Manual for Language Test Development and Examining



FIGURE 1.1: VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF PROCEDURES TO RELATE EXAMINATIONS TO THE CEF





Administration/Logistics

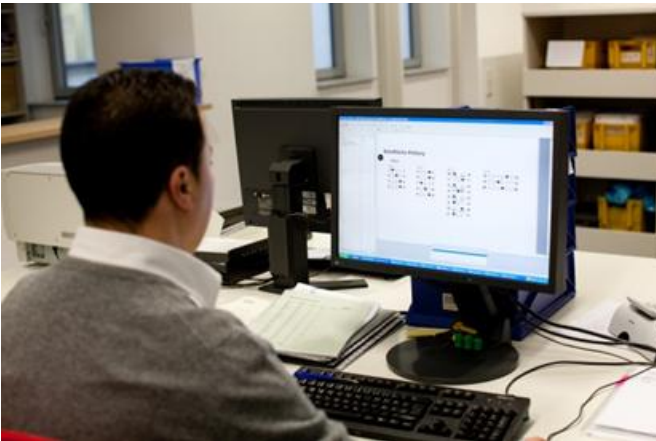


Standardized procedures:

- Examination security
- Data protection
- Objectivity



Marking/Grading

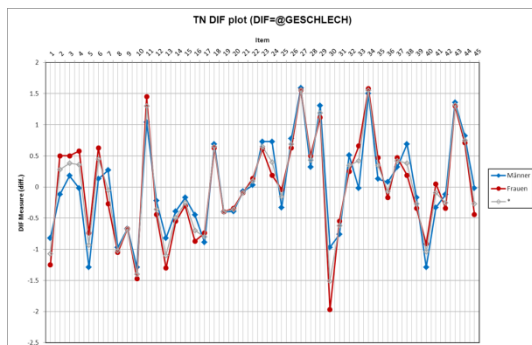


- Machine marking
- Marking by licenced experts: training, calibration, quality control

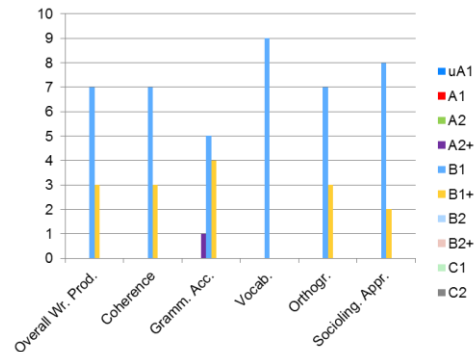


Test analysis

- Linking to CEFR levels
- Difficulty
- Discrimination
- Rater agreement
- Bias
- etc.



Persons	Items										Ability	n/N%	
	i	a	l	b	h	k	d	f	j	e			g
J	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	9	82
C	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	8	73
E	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	7	64
L	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	7	64
I	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	55
F	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	55
K	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	45
A	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	45
G	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	45
D	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	36
B	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	27
H	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	18
Facility	11	10	10	7	7	6	5	5	3	2	1		
n/N%	93	83	83	58	58	50	42	42	25	17	08		





Communication with stakeholders

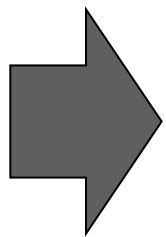


- Information about test formats
- Support in test administration
- Help with the interpretation of results



Quality through Standards

- Companies who want a language certificate as part of application papers: **93%**
- HR specialists who know the name of an exam provider: **under 50%**



Raise assessment literacy

Make informed choices

Thank you!

Dr. Sibylle Plassmann

+49-(0)69-956246-52

s.plassmann@telc.net

telc GmbH
Bleichstr. 1
60313 Frankfurt

