Assessment: what to do with students’ oral and written production?

Language Resource Center
Columbia University
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Symbols for correcting student writing/Korrektursymbole beim Schreiben
Department of German Studies

GERST 1210/1220/1230/first level

S  Syntaxfehler / syntax problems
   Tipp/hint: → move word to the right / ← move word to the left

F  Fall / case incorrect

K  Konjugation (oder Kongruenz) / verb-subject agreement is wrong

P  Präposition / preposition

   Rechtschreibung / spelling or ending is wrong

   Semantisch schlecht gewähltes Wort für den Kontext / bad word
   choice for the context

V  ein Wort fehlt oder Wörter fehlen / word is missing; if more than one word is
   missing the number will be written in the "V"

[  ] Konstruktion / ??? / construction
   a number of things are incorrect in the sentence that might lead to problems
   with comprehension
Student reflections on written text entries in their e-portfolio  2. Semester

G
I was happy with the variety of sentence structures I was able to use as I wrote this letter. As usual, the vocabulary is a bit of a problem, but I was generally able to figure out a way of saying what I wanted to say (even if it was usually in a roundabout way). I actually think I may have just spotted a mistake: “seine Praktikum” should be “ihre Praktikum”, since I’m talking about a female. I’m pleased that we know all the declensions now and most, if not all, of the tenses. I guess the vocabulary just tends to build up, so the longer I study German, the more words I will be able to recall.

D
Getting a hair cut (his hair used to be very long)
In this assignment, I was able to relay the explanation for why I got my hair cut over Spring Break, and some of the details about the event itself. I got the idea from this entry primarily from everyone repeatedly asking me why I got my hair cut, and I had to say it so many times that I thought if I were in Germany I would have to be able to express it in German. I think the translation turned out fairly well, and I enjoyed using relatively more abstract nouns.

E
Die Zäune (the fences)
I tried to use “werden” as much as possible in the text, but I am not sure if I used it properly every time. I am still having some trouble trying to figure out what form of werden to use and which order the verbs go in even when I consult the course packet. I also needed to look up some of the nouns, like fence, and quite a few of the verbs that I wanted to use. In my next essay, I think that I will try harder to phrase more sentences using words/verbs I remember so that I do not have to rely on a dictionary as much. I am satisfied with my choice of topic because it is an issue that has been bothering me, and I felt like expressing my opinion.

Ki
First of all as a disclaimer, I’d like to say that some of this I made up! I finished all my homework before, except for this post =) In any case, I had a really hard time writing this entry just because writing a narrative that includes a lot of passive constructions isn’t natural in English. So I apologize for the randomness of this post and for the lack of structure. Although this post wasn’t the most well-constructed entry, it did allow me to practice using not only the passive but the subjunctive and some modal verbs constructions as well. I got a little confused with using adverbs such as “deshalb” and “danach” because I wasn’t sure whether they required the verb to go in the last position or not. I also had a lot of trouble with the sentence “Meine Hausaufgaben haben vorher gemacht werden sollen aber ich bin sehr nachlässig gewesen!” I wanted it to translate to “My homework should have been done before but I have been neglectful!” I wasn’t sure whether or not the perfect tense accomplished this or not. Despite the fact that this post had no true linear progression, it helped me review a lot of key grammar constructions.
H
I have put the things I am not sure about in bold again. I forget what the conditions for using “mehr” are. I only remember that it is not the same as using “more” in English and certain applications require some other construction that escapes my mind. I also used “dass” gratuitously because I am not sure about how to use “dass” as that like a pronoun and “dass” like that as a conjunction. Is the only way to tell contextual so the burden is not on the writer but the reader or no?

S
This was the first text I’ve written since the very beginning that wasn’t a continuation of the Ulrich story, so it was definitely interesting. I found the subject very easy to write about, since I love talking about my plans for next year—I’m very excited! However, I got sidetracked by a few things: for one, I don’t know how to say “to take a class.” I had the impression that, like in French, you can’t just transliterate the English exactly. Also, there were a few conjunctions that I used that I wasn’t sure necessitated any strange syntax. On a side note, I also tried to add in a few new concepts like future tense and “nicht nur...sondern auch” and “zwar...aber.” I really enjoyed writing this, though!

K
He wrote on a German album he bought. First he described the songs and then he evaluated them.
I first heard the song Auf auf zum Kampf in the movie Deutschland im Herbst and decided I wanted a recording of it. I found a version by Hannes Wader on Youtube but only the version by Arbeit on iTunes. In the sample, I could only hear the section without the distortion so I bought it. After I listened to the whole song and realized what Arbeit was trying to say, I bought the whole album. I think I was the only person who has bought the album because after I bought it, it went to the top of their songs listing. I wish I could hear better the speech by Honecker that is used in the beginning of the remix because it could add to the understanding of the omission of most of the lyrics. I liked the songs by Brecht and also bought the Nina Simone version of Seeäuberjenny. The other work by Brecht I have read is The Interrogation of the Good.

G. Lischke
4/2010
Guidelines for Student Written Production and Feedback for e-Portfolios
German Studies, Cornell University

Writing in GS
The language program emphasizes student writing for several reasons:

a) We want to develop literacy in German from the start.
b) Our students are used to expressing themselves in writing.
c) Studies in second language acquisition show the positive effect of writing on language acquisition.

Students learning German in the Department of German Studies are encouraged to write as much and as often as they can, beginning in the first semester. Writing assignments range from collaborative writing in class to individual e-portfolio texts writing using a blog application. An important part of the writing process is the reflection written by students themselves and posted below each written text. These reflections help authors organize their texts and provide instructors with invaluable information on the content and linguistic strategies employed by the author.

On the introductory level, students are given as much choice regarding topics as they wish. At times an instructor may make suggestions concerning topics to coordinate writing samples with themes covered in class or when students request suggestions. The dominant text type on the introductory level consists of a narratives, including postcards, notes, and personal letters. In the second semester, the pieces focus on telling a story, reporting on an event (present and past tense), and writing summaries on textbook texts.

On the second level (GERST 2000), we focus on narratives, reporting on events, retelling stories, interpretative and hypothetical texts, and essay writing, as well as audio texts, interviewing a fellow student, and meta-linguistic text discussion.

Feedback:

1.) Feedback by the students themselves.
Students write their own feedback in the form of a reflection posted below the first version of their text. On the first level these are normally in English.

Reflections may include extra information about the topic of the text and comprehension help for the reader. The author of the text might reflect on difficulties s/he experienced with grammar or an aspect of language s/he emphasized. This is also a place where students can express frustration with their linguistic limitations or emotional anxieties. Another focus might be insights into their own learning process or their own culture or the cultures of
German-speaking countries. Sometimes students raise questions regarding content or linguistic usage in order to initiate a dialogue with the instructor.

The identical procedure as described above is used on the second level. In GERST 2000 students may write reflections in English or German, although most write in English.

Beginning with the upper intermediate courses (GERST 2020, 2040, 2060 German), reflections are written in German.

After reviewing the instructor’s feedback the students write a second version of their text and post it as a new entry.

2.) Feedback by the instructor.
It is important to distinguish among three types of feedback:
   a) reacting as a reader,
   b) commenting on content, and
   c) focused linguistic and meta-linguistic feedback.

   a) Reacting as a reader: the instructor reads the entire text through to develop an impression of the text as a text. The instructor then comments on how s/he perceived the text.

   Questions the instructor might ask him- or herself include:
   • Was it interesting to read?
   • Did you want to continue reading?
   • Did the text invite you to think more about the issue at stake in the text?
   • Did you want to discuss the topic further with the author of the text?
   • Do you want to interact with the author about the text?
   • Could you follow the structure of the text?
   • Did you understand the text as a text?
   • Is the text culturally appropriate?

   b) Commenting on the content: After the instructor reads the text a second time s/he should comment on parts of the text that were incomprehensible, confusing, erroneous, or contradictory.

   Questions might include:
   • Did you understand everything?
   • Could you follow which antecedent belongs to which pronoun?
   • Were there gaps (Gedankensprünge) in the text that created confusion?
   • Do you require more information on some parts of the text?
• Is the text appropriate for the genre the student used?
• Does the text flow?

c) Focused linguistic feedback (sprachliche Tipps): The instructor concentrates on a few pattered mistakes of material already covered. Linguistic structures not yet covered in class should be ignored unless the student specifically asks about it in his/her reflection. When beneficial, the instructor might provide additional meta-linguistic explanations or rules to help the student understand his/her mistake.

Questions might include:
• Are there reoccurring mistakes that should be addressed to foster the student’s progress?
• Would it be enough to cast doubt on a certain form? E.g., Is that correct?/Stimmt das?
• Would it help to provide further linguistic explanation as to why something is incorrect?
• Would more examples of the same phenomenon help the student figure out the problem by him- or herself?

Note: Feedback already given on category a) and b) often makes feedback on c) superfluous.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-8</td>
<td>Excellent to Very Good</td>
<td>Demonstrates excellent to very good control of the language with a broad command of structure, syntax, idiomatic usage, and vocabulary. Obvious fluency. Broad range of transitional elements. Few significant errors. A sample that is less impressive with regard to structure and syntax, or range in idiomatic usage and vocabulary earns an 8.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Demonstrates good command of the language. Good, although not always accurate, structure, syntax, idiomatic usage, and vocabulary. General fluency with some awkwardness of expression. A good range of transitional elements. Some grammatical inaccuracies and errors, which do not detract from the generally clear demonstration of competence and control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-5</td>
<td>Acceptable to Adequate</td>
<td>Demonstrates acceptable to adequate use of the language. Basically competent in the language with regard to structure, syntax and range in idiomatic usage and vocabulary. Occasional signs of fluency. Narrower range of transitional elements: some may well be unsuccessful. Occasional serious errors. A sample that prompts recurring questions about sustained control of the language earns a 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-3</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Demonstrates weak use of the language. Less than adequate language skills. Few transitional elements. Numerous errors. Frequent use of non-German syntax and language patterns. Sometimes forces interpretation. A sample that lacks occasional redeeming features, such as correct advanced grammatical structures or range of vocabulary earns a 3. Note: Grammatically correct simple structures are not redeeming features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-1</td>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Demonstrates incompetence in the language. Little or no sense of syntax and few vocabulary resources. Ineffective use of or lack of transitional elements. A sample that is essentially a Germanized version of another language or gobbledygook earns a 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>Is entirely blank, consists of fewer than 50 words, does not address the topic, is written in a language other than German, or contains nonsense, poetry, drawings, obscenities, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deduct one point if the composition is essentially shorter than called for (135 words or fewer).
Berlin Consortium German Studies Test: Writing assessment
Prerequisite for taking the diagnostic test: 4th semester German (upper intermediate level)
Holistic description of oral expression levels:

Very good → 4
flow – ideas and images emerge easily; little or no sense that expression is constrained by language
variety of idioms and vocabulary choices – creative use of idiomatic expression; wide vocabulary range; words are used to contribute to the sense of nuanced, detailed expression
style – enjoyable to read; maintains the reader’s attention and imagination
syntax – good command of syntactical structures allow for rendering complex ideas; a consistent sense of sophistication largely unmarred by syntactic errors

Good → 3
flow – ideas and images are generally fluid; occasionally the writing is hampered by linguistic limitations
variety of idioms and vocabulary choices – creative use of idiomatic expression; wide vocabulary range; words are used to contribute to the sense of nuanced, detailed expression – competent use of idiomatic expression; only occasional missteps in vocabulary choice
style – interesting, with a usually consistent sense of personal voice
syntax – in general, syntactic structures are able to convey ideas, but not always consistently

Adequate → 2
flow – numerous structural and vocabulary errors distract from the flow of ideas
variety of idioms and vocabulary choices – creative use of idiomatic expression; wide vocabulary range; words are used to contribute to the sense of nuanced, detailed expression – adequate vocabulary range; often awkward vocabulary choices
style – personal style occasionally emerges, but is sometimes thwarted by linguistic limitation
syntax – syntax limitations get in the way of expressing ideas; repetitive syntactic structures;

Weak → 1
flow – cohesive ideas and images are seldom discernible in the text
style – tends to be bland and impersonal; the language at the writer’s disposal is unable to elicit personal engagement or interest
variety of idioms and vocabulary choices – creative use of idiomatic expression; wide vocabulary range; words are used to contribute to the sense of nuanced, detailed expression – frequently flawed idiomatic expression; restricted vocabulary range leads to ambiguity and forced interpretation
syntax – structural problems interrupt the text to the point of distraction

Prepared by G. Lischke/Jamie Rankin; October 2006
Table 3. Common Reference Levels: qualitative aspects of spoken language use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANGE</th>
<th>ACCURACY</th>
<th>FLUENCY</th>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
<th>COHERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Shows great flexibility reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey finer shades of meaning precisely, to give emphasis, to differentiate and to eliminate ambiguity. Also has a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.</td>
<td>Maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others’ reactions).</td>
<td>Can express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural colloquial flow, avoiding or backtracking around any difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it.</td>
<td>Can interact with ease and skill, picking up and using non-verbal and intonational cues apparently effortlessly. Can interweave his/her contribution into the joint discourse with fully natural turntaking, referencing, allusion making, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.</td>
<td>Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.</td>
<td>Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly. Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.</td>
<td>Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2+</td>
<td>Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words, using some complex sentence forms to do so.</td>
<td>Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.</td>
<td>Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses.</td>
<td>Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Usage</th>
<th>Language Comprehensibility</th>
<th>Language Production</th>
<th>Sociocultural Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong></td>
<td>Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.</td>
<td>Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.</td>
<td>Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident, especially in longer stretches of free production.</td>
<td>Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest. Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.</td>
<td>Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A2</strong></td>
<td>Uses basic sentence patterns with memorised phrases, groups of a few words and formulae in order to communicate limited information in simple everyday situations.</td>
<td>Uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes.</td>
<td>Can make him/herself understood in very short utterances, even though pauses, false starts and reformulation are very evident.</td>
<td>Can answer questions and respond to simple statements. Can indicate when he/she is following but is rarely able to understand enough to keep conversation going of his/her own accord.</td>
<td>Can link groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A1</strong></td>
<td>Has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations.</td>
<td>Shows only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a memorised repertoire.</td>
<td>Can manage very short, isolated, mainly pre-packaged utterances, with much pausing to search for expressions, to articulate less familiar words, and to repair communication.</td>
<td>Can ask and answer questions about personal details. Can interact in a simple way but communication is totally dependent on repetition, rephrasing and repair.</td>
<td>Can link words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' or 'then'.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assessment criteria for oral tests--first semester German

- **Communication**
  
  4 Points  The speaker understands the situation and reacts mostly appropriately.

  3 Points  The speaker understands the situation for the most part.

  2 Points  The speaker understands the situation partly.

  0 Points  The speaker doesn’t understand the situation.

- **Linguistic correctness**
  
  3 Points  The answers are almost without mistakes.

  2 Points  The answers contain only few mistakes.

  1 Point  The answers contain a series of mistakes.

  0 Points  The answers are for the most part incomprehensible.

- **Pronunciation and Intonation**
  
  3 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are comprehensible.

  2 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are more or less comprehensible.

  1 Point  Pronunciation and Intonation are hard to comprehend.

  0 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are comprehensible.
Assessment criteria for oral tests—second semester German

- **Communication**
  
  4 Points  The speaker understands the situation and participates actively in the conversation.
  
  3 Points  The speaker understands the situation and reacts mostly appropriately.
  
  2 Points  The speaker understands the situation for the most part.
  
  0 Points  The speaker understands the situation partly.

- **Linguistic correctness**
  
  3 Points  The answers are almost without mistakes.
  
  2 Points  The answers contain only few mistakes.
  
  1 Point  The answers contain a series of mistakes.
  
  0 Points  The answers are for the most part incomprehensible.

- **Pronunciation and Intonation**
  
  3 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are comprehensible.
  
  2 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are more or less comprehensible.
  
  1 Point  Pronunciation and Intonation are hard to comprehend.
  
  0 Points  Pronunciation and Intonation are incomprehensible.

- **Vocabulary**
  
  3 Points  The vocabulary is varied and fits the context.
  
  2 Points  The vocabulary fits the context.
  
  1 Point  The vocabulary is unspecific for the context.
**AP German 2008**

**Directed Response Articulated Scale**

**VERY GOOD TO EXCELLENT.** Suggests excellence. Natural and meaningful response to the prompt. Very good range of vocabulary. Complex structures may well be correct. Ease of expression with minimal strain or stumbling.

6

**GOOD.** Hints at excellence. Appropriate and meaningful response to the prompt. Good range of vocabulary. Complex structures may not be correct. Minimal strain or stumbling.

5

**SUCCESSFUL.** Demonstrates competence. Meaningful response to the prompt. Moderate range of vocabulary. Some errors in basic structures. Some strain or stumbling.

4

**ACCEPTABLE.** Suggests competence. Adequate response to the prompt. Limited range of vocabulary. Frequent errors in basic structures. Frequent strain or stumbling.

3

**WEAK.** Suggests incompetence. May not be readily comprehensible or may not clearly be a response to the prompt. Scarcely any range of vocabulary. Minimal control of basic structures. Significant strain or stumbling.

2

**POOR.** Demonstrates incompetence. Incoherent response. Lack of ability to deal with basic structures. Near gobbledygook.

1

**IRRELEVANT SAMPLE.** An "ich-verstehe-nicht" response, a clear evasion, deliberate nonsense, obscenities, or a non-German response. Or no attempt is made (although microphone is turned on).

0

DEDUCT ONE POINT if the response contains fewer than 15 words in German.

DEDUCT ONE POINT if the response includes more than one non-German word not currently used in German.

No more than one point may be deducted.

*University of Nebraska, Lincoln*
**AP German 2007**

**Picture Sequence: Articulated Scale**

**Holistic scoring**

6 **VERY GOOD TO EXCELLENT:** *Suggests excellence.* Story is complex and well related. High level of fluency and grammatical accuracy. Very good range of vocabulary and idiom.

5 **GOOD:** *Demonstrates competence.* Story is well related. Moderate level of fluency. More complicated structures may well be correct. Successful self-correction. Good range of vocabulary and idiom. Little awkwardness of expression.

4-3 **ADEQUATE:** *Suggests competence.* Story is cohesive, or is for the most part cohesive. Signs of fluency. Some errors in basic structures. Some successful self-correction, especially for a 4. Moderate range of vocabulary and idiom. Recurring questions about the ease of expression and range of vocabulary are characteristic of a 3.

2 **WEAK:** *Suggests incompetence.* Story may well be disjointed. Frequent errors in basic structures. Considerable strain or stumbling. Narrow range of vocabulary and idiom. Use of anglicisms or structures that force interpretation.

1 **POOR:** *Demonstrates incompetence.* Lack of ability to deal with structure. Very few vocabulary resources and little or no sense of idiom.

0 **IRRELEVANT SPEECH SAMPLE:** Does not address the picture sequence, is off task (nonsense, obscenities, etc.), uses a language other than German, or makes no attempt (although microphone is turned on).

**DEDUCT ONE POINT** if the candidate does not address a minimum of 4 pictures.

**DEDUCT ONE POINT** if the candidate gives a very brief description of the events (one minute or less).

Dialect should not influence the score.

*University of Nebraska, Lincoln*
Berlin Consortium German Studies Test: Speaking assessment
Prerequisite for taking the diagnostic test: 4th semester German (upper intermediate level)

Holistic description of oral expression levels:

4  Very good
   Natural flow, authentic and natural sounding pronunciation
   very good range of vocabulary and idiomatic usage
   errors in structure or morphology seldom distract from the message
   able to provide detailed descriptions
   adapts language readily to the situation

3  Good
   predominantly natural flow, with occasional awkwardness in expression
   good to moderate range of vocabulary
   occasionally distracting errors in structure and/or morphology
   errors in structure occasionally distract
   detailed descriptions provided, but not consistently

2  Adequate
   suggests competence
   shows a limited range of vocabulary and idiomatic usage
   structural errors impede fluency
   can react to the situation, but with limited detail
   somewhat repetitive, using information chunks

1  Weak
   halting expression leads at times to miscomprehension
   considerable strain and stumbling, with frequent pauses
   consistently limited vocabulary range
   frequent use of chunks and repetition

Prepared by G. Lischke/Jamie Rankin
October 2006