

## **Frequently asked questions (GCT)**

### **1. Why is the skill of guessing from context important?**

Guessing from context is the most frequent and preferred strategy when learners deal with unknown words in context (Cooper, 1999; Fraser, 1999; Paribakht & Wesche, 1999). However, their guesses often result in failure (Nassaji, 2003; Parry, 1991). The improved skill of guessing from context has the potential to facilitate vocabulary learning through reading and listening because learners rely on the guessing strategy most frequently when dealing with unknown words in context and good guessers are likely to have a greater opportunity to derive the appropriate meaning of an unknown word and learn it.

### **2. What does the GCT measure?**

The guessing from context test (GCT) is designed to measure how well learners can guess the meanings of unknown words from context. In order to comprehensively measure the skill of guessing, it has three sections. The first section measures knowledge of part of speech. The second section measures the ability to use contextual clues. The last section measures the ability to derive the meanings of unknown words. These three steps are included in previous studies (Bruton & Samuda, 1981; Clarke & Nation, 1980; Williams, 1985).

### **3. How was the GCT validated?**

The GCT was validated with 428 Japanese learners of English through Rasch analysis. Items that did not fit the Rasch model were excluded from the GCT. The validation study generally indicates that the GCT is a valid and reliable measure of the skill of guessing from context.

### **4. How can the scores be interpreted?**

The GCT provides three different scores from the three sections in order to diagnose learners' weaknesses. For example, a low score on the contextual clue section may indicate that this learner's weakness lies in finding contextual clues that help guess the meanings of unknown words.

Rasch analysis indicates that the GCT can differentiate four statistically different levels for each section. The scores may be interpreted by simply counting the number of correct answers. The four levels and their raw score ranges are shown in the table below.

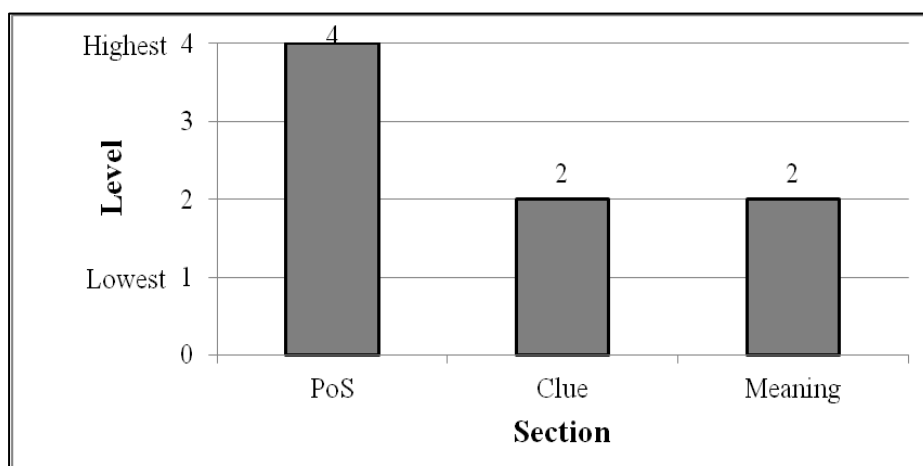
For example, if a learner got 12 items correct for all three sections, then this learner's levels are Level 2 for the part of speech section, Level 3 for the contextual clue section, and Level 3 for the meaning section. This may indicate that this learner's weakness lies in identifying and using knowledge of part of speech.

Level	Label	Raw score range		
		P	C	M
4	High	16-20	16-20	16-20
3	Relatively high	13-15	11-15	11-15
2	Relatively low	10-12	6-10	6-10
1	Low	0-9	0-5	0-5

Note: P = part of speech section (Section 1), C = contextual clue section (Section 2), M = meaning section (Section 3).

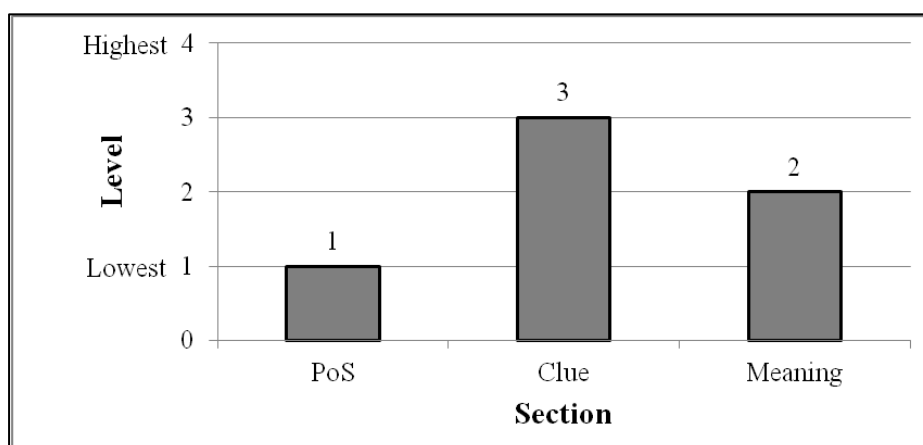
### 5. How can the scores be reported to learners?

For practical use of the GCT, diagnostic feedback needs to be easy for learners and teachers to understand so that learners' weaknesses in guessing from context may be clearly indicated. To meet this need, a bar graph may be useful because the information is visually presented and intuitively interpretable. For example, Learner A's estimated ability (P = Level 4, C = Level 2, M = Level 2) is presented in a bar graph in Figure 1. The horizontal axis indicates the section of the GCT (PoS = part of speech section, Clue = contextual clue section, and Meaning = meaning section). The vertical axis indicates the level of the learner. The bar graph shows that this learner demonstrated very good knowledge of part of speech (Level 4), but his performance on the contextual clue and the meaning sections was relatively low (Level 2); thus, his weakness lies in finding contextual clues (and deriving the meaning based on that information). The learner (or teacher) may then be able to prioritize the learning of contextual clues to potentially improve guessing.



**Figure 1. Score report (Learner A)**

Another typical example may be seen in Learner B (P = Level 1, C = Level 3, M = Level 2). This learner's performance is presented in Figure 2. This learner demonstrated relatively good knowledge of contextual clues, but her performance on the part of speech and the meaning sections was relatively low; thus, this learner's weakness lies in identifying the part of speech of unknown words (and deriving the meaning based on that information). This indicates that this learner's guessing skill may be improved with knowledge of part of speech.



**Figure 2. Score report (Learner B)**

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