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Scandinavia: EUROTEST

Introduction

Title: EUROTEST - Free Language Test
Country: Originally Developed in cooperation from the Scandinavia Countries and now it is used by (indicative cases):

- Studieskolen i København (Denmark)
- Folkuniversitetet (Sweden)
- Studieforbundet Folkeuniversitetet (Norway)
- International Certificate
  - ✔ Conference Languages (ICC - Languages)
  - ✔ ASOCIATIA EUROED
  - ✔ Volkshochschule Frankfurt am Main
  - ✔ Dansk Industri
- Fagligt Fælles Forbund DK (Trade Unions) - Denmark
- Fagbokfovlaget Vigmostad &Bjorke AS (Publisher) - Norway
- DAFNI KEK- Greece

Type of tool: The test is a placement test which is available for the 5 major European languages English, French, Italian, Spanish and German as well as the continental Scandinavian languages and Turkish and Arabic. The test can be used for placing a course participant at the correct level.
Target group: Any individual regardless of their socio-economical context.
Potential transferability: It is now actively applied in the context of the above mentioned countries and more.

Organisation and description of the tool

Christoph Schepers (CS) works at **Studieskolen** in Copenhagen, Denmark. Studieskolen is a language school of which the main department works with Danish as a second language and the departments foreign languages. They teach about 24 languages. Their target group is adults in non-formal education and CS work as a senior consultant for development responsible for the development department. In Studieskolen's Danish department they work substantially with migrants in Denmark having vital need of inclusion.

Studieskolen's experiences regarding accessing non-formal/informal learning is mainly based on **language assessment**. For that reason they have developed an online test for testing languages combining self-evaluation and a multiple choice test. As the institution in charge of the test, according to the need of the participants a new test can be made, for example if migrants want to get any assessment in their parents' language, to use it for education - for formal education (in Denmark you need a second foreign language to start a different education at university), they can make the assessment for these languages (already the tool is available in Arabic and Turkish and others). The test is for free and anyone can just sign on the test and go through it. In the end the assessee gets a result sheet with a result for every language competence, meaning a separate result for writing, reading, listening, speaking and conversation. If possible, for the placement of the individual the procedure starts with the online test and then is followed by an interview for about 20 minutes. After that, the learners get a formal piece of paper that they can use.

Organisation and description of the tool

The Tool step by step:

The language skills writing competences, spoken production and spoken interaction are difficult to examine in an online test so here the user only fills in the self-assessment. You get separate results for self-assessment and actual testing for each skill. The test is interactive and self-regulating in the following manner:

You choose an entry level and you are presented with a self-assessment for "writing competences". If you respond "can" to all 6 language skills you are asked to do the self-assessment at a higher level. If you respond "can" to only 1 or none of the statements, you will be asked to do the self-assessment at a lower level.

When you have found the right level in the self-assessment process, you will be directed to the next part of the test "vocabulary and grammar" at the level indicated in the self-assessment. If the test shows that you are at the right level, the result is registered and you are directed to the self-assessment for "reading competences" at the same level. If you score 90% or more, you are asked to take the test at a higher level. If you score 20% or less you are asked to do the test at a lower level.

In this way the level is regulated all the way through the test.

Implementation

The skills that we target are **language skills**. In an online test it is difficult to test active spoken written language and this is why the self-evaluation stage is this innovative, it works absolutely sufficiently in that this assessment system enrolls the student. What doesn't work that sufficiently is that it can be difficult for students that are not very aware of their own learning process, those "can feel lost" when they are taking the test, CS tells us.

The strong point of the assessment method of EUROTEST is that it is **easy** to find and use and also **cheap**. You don't need a lot of resources because the test is online. What is also very strong about the method is that, for example migrants taking the Danish test they can choose a lot of different instruction languages and that means they can fill out the self-evaluation in their mother tongue (Arabic, Turkish or what else…) and they can take the test in the language they want to take it. The weak part is that this is not enough, this is just a placement test and it is important to say that this test exists to give, for example migrants, first and second generation, about what their competences are in the language that they are now learning or in their parents language. The tools main weakness, thus, is that this is not formal documentation, "there is not a counselor or a living person involved and of course in some ways, this could make it easy to cheat", CS informs us. So it is always important to be aware that we are talking about an **informal** assessment system and not a formal examination.

Description of the target group

The tool's main target group is just **adults** who want to extend their language competences in a language they learned before and who do not have an idea where to start and what they can or cannot do. They might have learnt the language before at school, or maybe they lived in a country for a year or two but they are not aware of how much knowledge of the language they have and where they should start. According to CS, "Sometimes migrants know a lot of languages but they don't have a piece of paper, for example a lot of migrants are from Iran and actually they speak marvelous Turkish but they don't have any piece paper, they don't have any documentation on it and this test can give them an idea of how much Turkish they are able to speak and write and understand and they can use this documentation for applications or use it as part of a validation process".

What is also important, in the eyes of the assessee, is that the tool is not an examination. You can't use it as a form of certification, although it can be used as part of a further validation process, but you can use this assessment system to find out on what you need to work with before you have a formal validation. "And that means also that people usually feel very safe with the system because it is not an examination".

On the accommodation of the process, CS tells us that a typical process could be, instead of just giving people a link, it could be that this assessment system starts a whole process of formal validation knowing where to start from and having a written and a spoken test with them, afterwards, if the assessee is ready or competent.

By contacting Christoph Schepers we came across the following **examples** on the impact of EUROTEST in the life of the assesses:

A woman from Iran, she lived quite close to Azerbaijan, and she was speaking Azerbaijani and Farsi and… she also spoke a lot of Turkish but she had no idea how much Turkish she really spoke and when taking the test she found out that she really was able to speak Turkish on a B2 level (might be a little bit higher) and based on this test, she applied for a job where she needed some Turkish because the owner of this company was Turkish and they had a lot of relations with Turkey and actually she got the job and she still works there and she's very happy for this.

We had some Turkish speaking assesses that wanted to apply for a test which is about an A2 in the Danish system and they needed this for starting some formal education and they had no idea how much Turkish they were able to speak because they only spoke Turkish with their mother in the kitchen about minor everyday things and instead of just having to apply for the formal test we could ask them to do the Eurotest and the Eurostest showed that they weren't under B1, writing was a bit weak (but writing was not important in this case). So, after taking this test they could apply for a formal validation and it was quite easy for them to go through this validation.

The test is not an examination, so one can't really use it for education use, e.g. a university would not accept the assessment for a formal application. But a lot of employees (meaning employers or HR employees) they just want to have an idea of where the individual stands and they tend to use EUROTEST; as an example CS gave us the following, "… in several application processes needing the assessee to show that they speak e.g. English, or any other language, the assessee provides the employer with the result sheet, and then during the interview the interviewer used English to be sure if the applicants really spoke the language, if they do, the employer accepts the EUROTEST'S results without further requests, and most of the times the test has been trustful".

As for most assessees, Studieskolen gets a very **good feedback** on this process because "it is cheap, at this current time the test is for free, it is quite easy, as you can use it on your own computer, it takes about an hour, so it isn't very quick but it is quick enough and it is comfortable to take it and we get a very precise result", CS tells. As shown by CS' experience "… some of the assessees wish that this was more of a validation or a formal examination than it is but it can be a marvelous way to give both the assessee and the assessor an idea about the level, the right, to start the assessment and in this way to be more focused on the assessment, while the most important aspect and the message of the combination between self-evaluation and formal testing is that it makes the assessee aware of the assessment process. Sometimes this is even the greatest benefit because it is not just assessing from outside but it helps the assessee collecting everything he or she can do and it makes them proud about how much they can do, it makes them motivated to continue with the language or to use, for example, their parents' language for application for education or job. I think that's the most important part."

Interviewee	Christoph Schepers has been working with project management in language education for more than 10 years at Studieskolen. His work with language testing, his fluency in the Scandinavian languages as well as German and English and last but not least his years of experience working with people of many different cultural backgrounds makes him an efficient communicator and coordinator. In addition to his experiences as a project manager, he is also a skilled language teacher in German.