

FORM IN LEARNING FOREIGN LEXIS

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ABSTRACT

Interest in lexis and the nature of mental lexicon leads researchers to various theoretical positions and stimulates research on learning foreign vocabulary. The article argues for a stance according to which lexical form is greatly responsible for learning meaning. The research and its findings presented below support the claim that drawing learners' attention to the graphic form of words enhances the process of learning L2 vocabulary.

The unceasing interest that researchers take in the processes of learning foreign lexis and in the nature of the L2 mental lexicon derives from the recognized fact that lexical knowledge is definitely a fundamental factor both in the development of second language competence and in all aspects of its subsequent use (cf., e.g., Lewis 1993; Nation 1995). One of the controversial issues with regard to the learner's mental lexicon is the question of the roles that lexical form and lexical meaning play in the process of acquisition of foreign lexis. On the one hand, it is claimed that L2 lexical operations are basically phonological (Carter 1987; Channel 1988; Gass and Selinker 1994); on the other, in stark opposition to this view, it is maintained that connections between lexical items are semantic, i.e. the organization of the L2 mental lexicon is of a semantico-pragmatic nature (cf., particularly, Singleton 1999).

However, even if the latter position is assumed to be correct, the claim that the other position is totally wrong and should, thus, be unreservedly rejected, does not seem fully justified. The truth, as is very often the case in controversies, may lie somewhere between the two positions. The present paper suggests that the L2 lexicon is, at least to some extent, also phonologically driven (represented graphically in writing). If this is true, the two above-mentioned opposite positions can be reconciled. This belief is derived from both facts observed in the classroom and some experimental findings presented below. They support

the assumption that lexical form does play quite an important role in the process of foreign vocabulary learning, particularly among older learners. Evidence from second language acquisition research clearly indicates that adults do not have the same natural capacity for learning from exposure to language that children have, which means that learners presumably lose this capacity with age. Even though the question of what factors this loss should be attributed to, biological or others, still remains unanswered, it is understandable, in the light of this fact, that in formal language learning something is required, and in teaching – should be done, to compensate for the deficit. It is suggested here that the “something” is attention to form. Furthermore, it is also claimed here that focusing on form is an effective aid supporting foreign language learning processes in general, and foreign lexis in particular. Adherence to this conviction is promoted by the belief that attention to form in the language classroom is greatly beneficial to learners: it helps them overcome a number of affective constraints in learning; attention to form, actually, enhances the development of classroom communicative competence. Additionally, even mere observation of learners’ performance during classroom interaction inclines one to infer that certain formal factors have a positive effect on vocabulary recall and, in consequence, on learning it.

The term *form* and the expression *focus on form* are used here in the sense that has been advanced and used by Long (1991). Long introduced a distinction between the notions of *formS* and *form*. He pointed out that *focus on formS* is characteristic of traditional methodology where emphasis is put on discrete elements of the target language, such as inflectional endings (for example, *-s* for plural nouns and for 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular verbs, or *-ed* for past tense in English). For Long and Robinson (1998) such methodology implements a synthetic approach to language teaching in which it is assumed that language learning is merely a linear additive process. In contrast, an analytic approach places focus on meaning; its advocates, consequently, promote a noninterventionist pedagogical perspective. While *focus on formS* mostly confines itself to accuracy, *focus on meaning* generally disregards it. Following this line of reasoning Long and Robinson (1998) have suggested that a third approach is also possible: it focuses on form, and is also analytic, yet not in total opposition to either of the other two. Long and Robinson (1998) stress, rather, that form entails meaning, i.e. that by focusing on form language teaching integrates form and meaning. They argue convincingly that during interactive events of various kind (especially in verbal interaction with others, but also with written texts) learners encounter a great deal of learning opportunity from exposure to input. Of particular advantage is the negotiation for meaning where modifications of input occur frequently and, actually, have necessarily to occur so as to make communication effective. Clearly, the modifications often involve a change of form – they are

made consciously or subconsciously by either the learner or the interlocutor or by both. It should be emphasized that modifications increase the comprehensibility of input, even though it may still contain difficult or unfamiliar words or forms. What seems even more beneficial to learning is that these modifications, as Long and Robinson have put it, “provide important information about L2 form-function relationships” and that the feedback elicited in the negotiation “draws learners’ attention to mismatches between input and output, that is, causes them to focus on form and can induce noticing of the kinds of forms for which a pure diet of comprehensible input will not suffice” (1998: 23).

Given that the input the learner is exposed to is, on the whole, comprehensible or near-comprehensible, the learner’s attention to form strengthens the association between form and meaning. Truly, attention to form is often coincidental – activated by problems encountered in communication, but it appears to be particularly valuable in the course of language learning. Experienced teachers notice what learners themselves admit: they very often learn more effectively what pops up unexpectedly during a language class than what has been carefully planned and is on the agenda in a lesson plan. An incidental and/or totally unpredicted occurrence of a given form captures the learner’s attention just because it appears unexpectedly. Attention attracted this way is certainly selective but, nevertheless, it may be particularly useful for highlighting (and learning) L1 – L2 contrasts.

Clearly, discrete grammatical elements do not function separately, but are usually and normally bound. From this it follows that these elements (and, simultaneously, formally incomplete lexical items) should be recoverable when missing (in a context). The context normally contains adequate redundant information of various kind and therefore provides sufficient cues for supplying the formal part of a word even if the word is not familiar to the learner. To verify and corroborate this conviction the present author has conducted some relevant research. Its principal aim was to discover whether learners rely (and to what extent) on formal lexical features in the process of learning foreign vocabulary. The results obtained apparently support this position.

The instruments employed in the experiment were three vocabulary tests, all designed on the basis of one authentic text. These were: a Cloze test, a C-test and its modified version. Actually, tests of this kind are tools that are used mainly to measure L2 proficiency, but are definitely very appropriate for determining lexical knowledge, too. In standard Cloze tests certain words are deleted from the original text and test-takers are expected to fill in the resultant gaps using all kinds of linguistic knowledge they possess. This procedure makes possible the measurement of points of lexical indeterminacy (number of possible options in a given text). The C-test differs in principle from the regular Cloze – in contrast, it requires the test-takers to restore a short mutilated text in which ev-



ery second word has its second half removed (the first sentence of the text, however, is preserved to encourage the subjects, to raise their self-confidence, and to introduce them into the context, i.e. to provide a contextual framework). Also preserved in the test are proper names and one-letter words; moreover, those words with an odd number of letters have additionally one more letter deleted. The modified version of the C-test used in the experiment was constructed following the principles underlying the construction of the original C-test, but provided a certain type of clue: test-takers were explicitly informed about the number of letters missing in the incomplete words – each missing letter being represented by one dash.

It is believed that the C-test is an appropriate instrument to investigate learners' use of formal aspects in learning foreign lexis. An argument in favour of this belief is that test-takers have to focus primarily on the local environment of the particular gap that they are filling in: the task requires the test-taker to take into account the formal characteristics of the neighbouring word/words that are left standing in the text. This, naturally, is not to say that the semantico-pragmatic context is completely disregarded. With regard to this remark it seems worth pointing out that some words, once used in a text, tend to appear in it again, although not necessarily in the same form. On the one hand, this phenomenon may be attributed to possible contextual reasons; on the other, however, it may also be due to a kind of "lexical priming" where, in discourse, anaphoric reference is made to keep texts coherent. This sort of lexical re-appearance enables us to make an assumption that this phenomenon is facilitative for test-takers in gap filling.

As a matter of fact, the C-test has been successfully used in lexical research elsewhere and, admittedly, the decision to use it for the purpose of this paper was strongly influenced by the line of reasoning provided by Singleton (1999). An argument of particular significance is that, because of the density of deletions, C-test data are "researcher-friendly in terms of their encompassability and codability" and also because "the C-test appears to offer particular advantages with reference to lexical research; ... the knowledge that is probed by the test would appear to be essentially lexical in nature – knowledge of content words, grammatical words, word structure, collocability, colligability, grammatical class adherence of particular items, subcategorization frames, etc." (1999: 198).

It seems worth adding that a C-test, just like any well-constructed test, has also a pedagogical/learning value. It is a problem-solving task and, as such, requires the learners to employ all their current L2 knowledge, including that which is not yet complete or fully internalized. Furthermore, it encourages risk-taking and strengthens motivation, which, as is commonly recognized, greatly enhances learning in general. In making an effort to put all their formal (or meta-linguistic) lexical knowledge to practical use while working on the test,

the testees arrive at solutions that give them a basis for consolidating the knowledge about which they have not yet become fully confident. Finally, one more remark seems relevant and worth making; namely, that even though the procedure is experimental it is, nevertheless, naturalistic, too: on the one hand the language used for the test is authentic and contextualized; on the other, the task of reconstructing the test-text is similar to other "real-life" tasks like restoring disintegrated or illegible texts (stained, faded, etc.).

Furthermore, we assume that the very form of the words that the learner arrives at, having completed the gaps, assist in the learning of L2 vocabulary: on the one hand it is actually (self-)input to the learner, but on the other, as "product", it is output, too. One should be aware of the fact that a possible consequence of output is that it often makes the learner aware of his TL deficiency – he may "notice the gap". Conscious recognition of a linguistic problem may direct his attention to what he needs to learn. Such circumstances may incite in the learner certain cognitive processes that lead to his making efforts towards compensating for the deficiencies in his current lexical knowledge.

In order to counter potential doubts about the value of the C-test as an appropriate instrument for the kind of research described here it should be remembered that the major objective of the C-test is for its takers to recover the original forms, or supply appropriate alternatives, for those that are missing and that this lexical-cognitive activity occurs in particular lexical environments/context. As it is the initial parts of the mutilated words that provide the necessary lexical information, the recovery of the word form itself is clearly based on formal lexical cues.

In designing the Cloze heed was given to deleting only those words that were mutilated in the C-tests. The reasons for observing this principle were twofold: first, to avoid giving students a chance of remembering those words which they may have provided correctly on taking the Cloze on the first occasion: this might/would, potentially, facilitate reconstruction of their mutilated forms; secondly, I was interested in whether any of the words not provided by the students in the Cloze were, nonetheless, reconstructed by them in the C-tests: if so, this might be indicative of the fact that form (the remaining part of the mutilated word together with the neighbouring words and the surrounding context) facilitates the restoration of what is missing. In this case form can even enable the learner to construct forms that might be novel to him: grammatical constraints and/or rules may determine that the testee complete the word in a way that renders a word that is unfamiliar to him.

The words deleted from the original text used to design the Cloze test are considered "easy" for the learners on the advanced level represented by the subjects (all the words appear in low frequency bands; cf. *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*). It can thus be assumed that the subjects were familiar with them.

Yet, as the results of the test show, quite a number of apparently easy words were not filled in. So it is not the students' unfamiliarity with words but their lack of linguistic or, more precisely, lexical experience that seems to be the main obstacle to using known vocabulary in a variety of contexts. In contrast, the C-test provides further clues which are evidently formal; these clues facilitate not only the recoverability of an item but also indicate its role in the context. Therefore this kind of test appears to be of significant pedagogical value which resides in the activity itself: by reconstructing the form, the learner either discovers a new function of the word or becomes more confident as to its use with reference to its concordance, collocability, etc.

As regards the three tests, it was assumed that the Cloze test is ordinarily more challenging than the other two: gap-filling probably requires higher competence, both grammatical and pragmatic. It was thus hypothesised that students would do worse in this test on first taking it than in the other two. The C-test should be easier than the Cloze due to the formal clues provided in the tests for lexical recall. The modified C-test should be easier still, for the students knew the number of letters missing from the incomplete words.

To validate the assumption that formal factors facilitate reconstruction, and thus, support and enhance learning foreign lexis, the three test versions of the same text were administered to the same groups of students for comparison of their lexical performance.

The experiment was conducted in three stages. First, the Cloze test was administered to all participants in order to assess their overall lexical competence. Six months later one half took the C-test and the other half took the modified C-test. Three months later all students were given the Cloze test for the second time. The lengthy time intervals between administering the tests were intended to prevent the learners from recalling collocations that included the words that were actually tested, or, in other words, to eliminate the danger of the practice effect – learners remembering what they had written in an earlier test. The last test was given to compare the scores with those obtained on the first occasion. It was assumed that the final results would be better for those students who took the modified C-test, and worse with those who took the C-test.

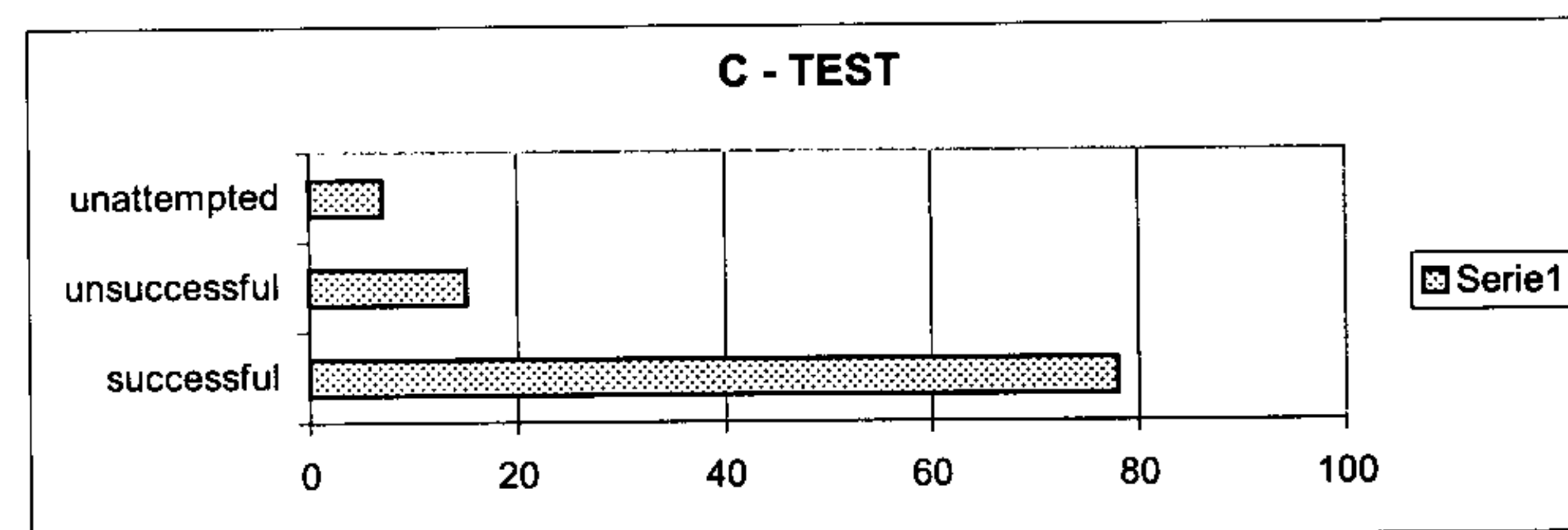
Altogether, 207 university students, all English majors at the advanced level, of approximately the same age (20-21) participated in the experiment. All of them took the tests voluntarily. After the whole procedure was over they admitted that they had taken them with pleasure: even though each time a fifteen minute time limit was given to complete a test, those who had not managed to finish did not want to submit them, but were eager to finish them. They enjoyed doing the tests: as they were anonymous the students worked under no pressure, and since they did not compete for grades they considered them as an individual challenge.

For the Cloze test 45 words had been removed from an authentic text and then it was administered to all 207 students participating in the experiment. The C-test and the modified C-test were constructed using the same text and each contained identical forms of the same 123 mutilated words. The C-test was given to a group of 102 students, which means that for this test 12,546 reconstructions were required. The modified C-test was given to the remaining students who made a group of 105; consequently, 12,915 reconstructions were expected with this test.

The following tables present the results of the tests; the accompanying graphs are provided to illustrate the proportions between the respective figures.

#### C-test (102 students / 12,546 items to recover)

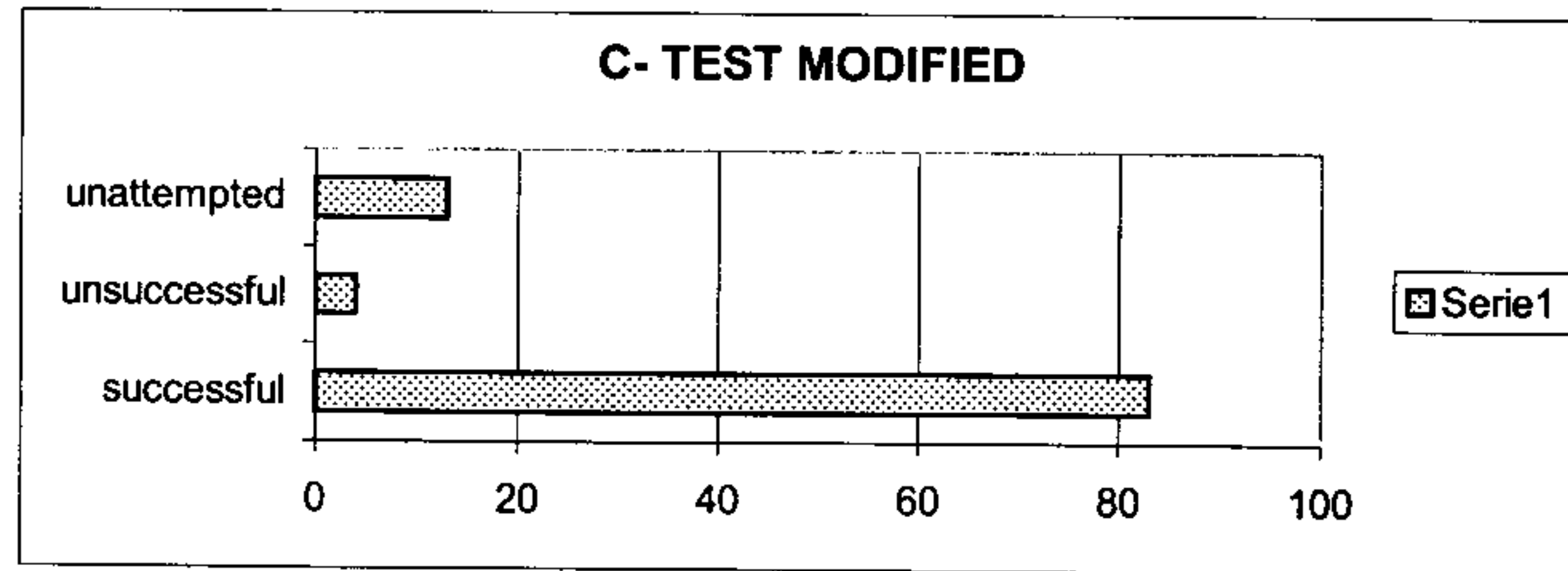
reconstructions	No.	%	mean no. per student
1. successful	9,816	78,24	96,23
2. unsuccessful/incorrect	1,232	9,82	12,08
3. unattempted	820	6,54	8,04



#### Modified C-test (105 students / 12,915 items to recover)

reconstructions	No.	%	mean no. per student
1. successful	10,696	82,82	101,87
2. unsuccessful/incorrect	559	4,34	5,32
3. unattempted	1,658	12,84	15,79

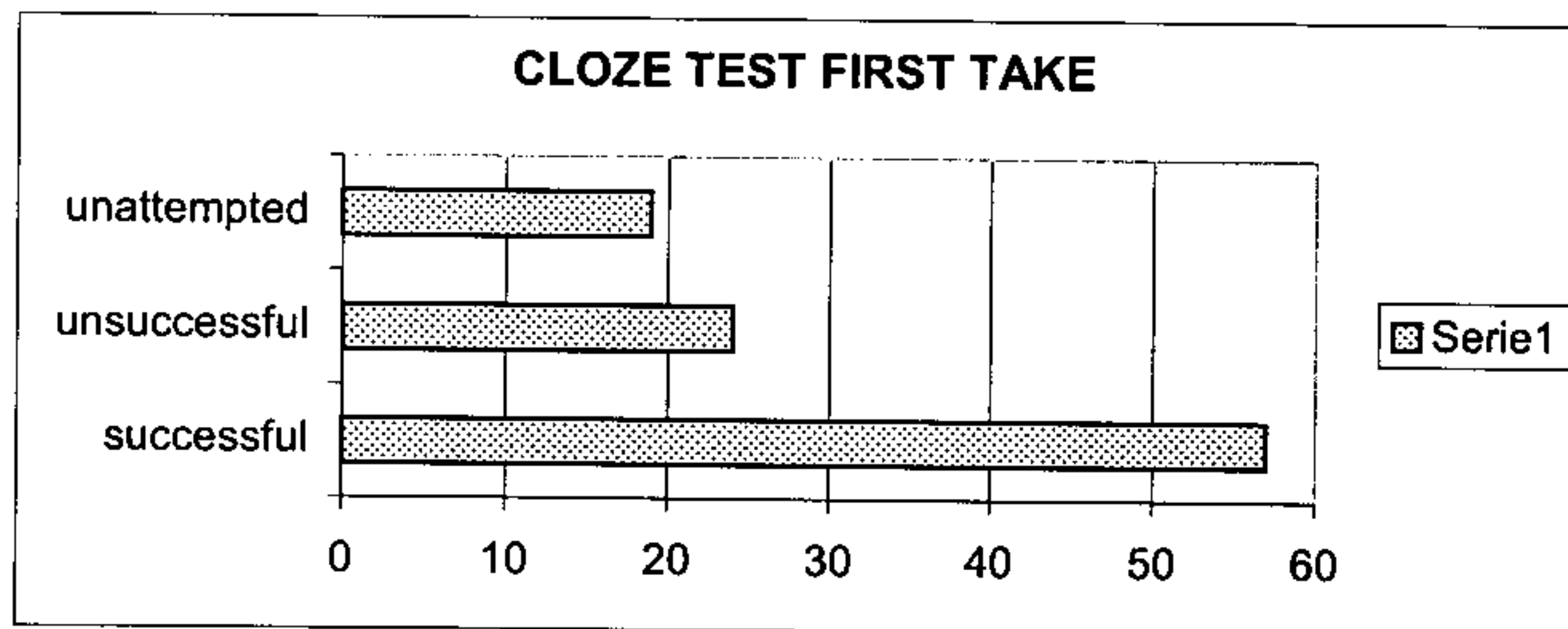




**Cloze test** (207 x 45 = 9315 gaps to fill)

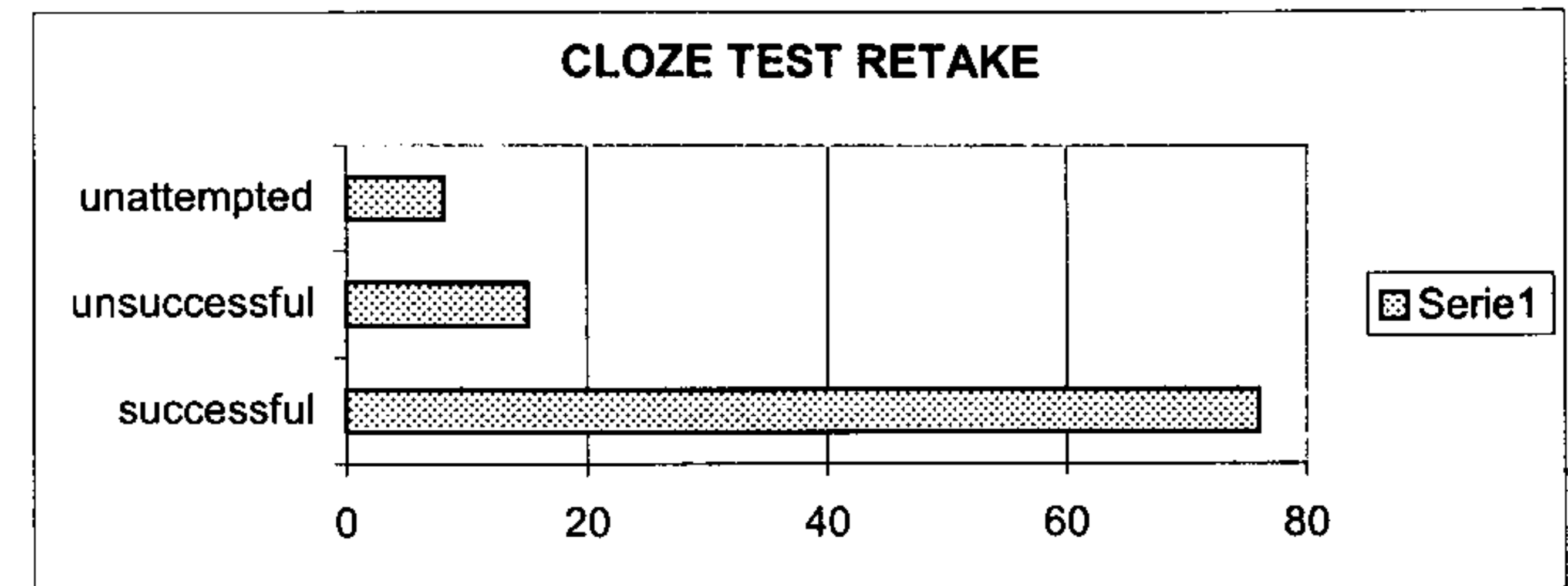
### first take

gaps filled	No.	%	mean no. per student
1. successful	5,312	57,03	25,66
2. unsuccessful/incorrect	2,271	24,38	10,97
3. unattempted	1,732	18,59	8,37



### retake

reconstructions	No.	%	mean no. per student
1. successful	7,143	76,68	34,51
2. unsuccessful/incorrect	1,376	14,77	6,65
3. unattempted	796	8,55	3,85



From the figures presented above it follows that the first assumption, i.e. that Cloze is more difficult than the other two (cf. p. 6) has proved to be correct. The scores achieved by students: 57.03% (first take) and 76.68% (second take) against 78.24% (C-test) and 82.82% (modified C-test) seem to be significant enough to substantiate this claim. The second assumption turned out to be correct, too: fewer words were recovered in the C-test than in its modified version; this finding refers to the successful reconstruction of incomplete words, as shown directly above: 78.24% (C-test) against 82.82% (modified C-test). However, the comparison of the unsuccessful and incorrect reconstructions in these two tests reveals a complete surprise: against expectation, the figures are definitely in favour of the C-test: 15.22% versus 4.34% for the modified C-test. It seems that the only plausible explanation of this can be found in the results obtained in the "unattempted" category. The constraints imposed in the modified C-test (the number of required letters) must have discouraged quite a number of students from taking risks. On the contrary, in the C-test where no constraints are present, students are willing to take risks and, consequently, make more errors: cf. 15.22% vs. 6.54% (C-test) and 4.34% vs. 12.84% (modified C-test) for the unsuccessful/incorrect and unattempted categories, respectively.

Admittedly, the increase in scores after the final test might, to a certain extent, be attributed to the fact that, in the course of the nine months that elapsed from the first taking of the tests, learners developed their vocabulary naturally. Nevertheless, it seems equally valid to assume that the in-between tests did contribute to vocabulary acquisition, too. This assumption is based on the fact that the final scores differed depending on whether the test taken earlier was the C-test or its modified version. Since the modified C-test was done more successfully by learners than the standard C-test, i.e. more words were recovered in the required form, it means that recoverability based on formal cues not only enables learners to combine form with meaning, but also that lexical learning processes are easier the more formal cues there are in a text.

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## APPENDIX

## Cloze test

Reconstruct the following text filling each numbered gap with one word

University degrees – like hamburgers and soft drinks – have become just another *product* which can be sold to whoever wants to buy them. Overseas students now (1) \_\_\_\_\_ for almost one in five (2) \_\_\_\_\_ at British universities – and (3) \_\_\_\_\_ numbers look set to grow (4) \_\_\_\_\_ more rapidly in future. Though (5) \_\_\_\_\_ attempts of British higher (6) \_\_\_\_\_ institutions to recruit (7) \_\_\_\_\_ students have received (8) \_\_\_\_\_ of publicity, a quiet revolution has (9) \_\_\_\_\_ unnoticed. For an (10) \_\_\_\_\_ proportion of these students are (11) \_\_\_\_\_ at university in Britain at all – (12) \_\_\_\_\_ follow their studies (13) \_\_\_\_\_ their home states without setting (14) \_\_\_\_\_ on a British campus. The (15) \_\_\_\_\_ by Paul Bennel and Terry Pearce argues (16) \_\_\_\_\_ this is part (17) \_\_\_\_\_ a process of internationalising higher education, (18) \_\_\_\_\_ will have far-reaching (19) \_\_\_\_\_ for universities in developed countries (20) \_\_\_\_\_ well as the Third World. They (21) \_\_\_\_\_ a picture of cut-throat (22) \_\_\_\_\_ competition and predict potentially disastrous (23) \_\_\_\_\_ for institutions in developing countries which are (24) \_\_\_\_\_ to lose out (25) \_\_\_\_\_ British, American and Australian universities. Needless to say, big (26) \_\_\_\_\_ is involved, although the authors (27) \_\_\_\_\_ that reliable figures are not (28) \_\_\_\_\_. According to some (29) \_\_\_\_\_ overseas validated courses are now (30) \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 410 million a (31) \_\_\_\_\_ to British universities. The growth has (32) \_\_\_\_\_ mainly driven by the new (33) \_\_\_\_\_. In fact, many of the (34) \_\_\_\_\_ universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Edinburgh have (35) \_\_\_\_\_ of these courses (36) \_\_\_\_\_, which the report attributes to "a (37) \_\_\_\_\_ on their part to maintain (38) \_\_\_\_\_ international status and exclusiveness of (39) \_\_\_\_\_ qualifications". The key question is to what (40) \_\_\_\_\_ other countries will also attempt (41) \_\_\_\_\_ internationalise their education (42) \_\_\_\_\_. The report believes that Australia and the UK are (43) \_\_\_\_\_ leaders and that the rest of developed (44) \_\_\_\_\_ economies will follow their lead (45) \_\_\_\_\_ the next five to ten years.

**C-test**

Reconstruct the following text by completing the unfinished words

University degrees – like hamburgers and soft drinks – have become just another *product* which can be sold to whoever wants to buy them. Overseas stud \_\_\_\_\_ now acc \_\_\_\_\_ for alm \_\_\_\_\_ one i \_\_\_\_\_ five stud \_\_\_\_\_ at British univer \_\_\_\_\_ and t \_\_\_\_\_ numbers lo \_\_\_\_\_ set t \_\_\_\_\_ grow ev \_\_\_\_\_ more rap \_\_\_\_\_ in fut \_\_\_\_\_. Though t \_\_\_\_\_ attempts o \_\_\_\_\_ British higher educ \_\_\_\_\_ institutions t \_\_\_\_\_ recruit for \_\_\_\_\_ students ha \_\_\_\_\_ received lo \_\_\_\_\_ of publ \_\_\_\_\_, a quiet revol \_\_\_\_\_ has go \_\_\_\_\_ unnoticed. F \_\_\_\_\_ an incre \_\_\_\_\_ proportion o \_\_\_\_\_ these stud \_\_\_\_\_ are n \_\_\_\_\_ at unive \_\_\_\_\_ in Britain a \_\_\_\_\_ all – th \_\_\_\_\_ follow th \_\_\_\_\_ studies i \_\_\_\_\_ their ho \_\_\_\_\_ states wit \_\_\_\_\_ setting fo \_\_\_\_\_ on a British cam \_\_\_\_\_. The rep \_\_\_\_\_ by Paul Bennel a \_\_\_\_\_ Terry Pearce argues th \_\_\_\_\_ this i \_\_\_\_\_ part o \_\_\_\_\_ a process o \_\_\_\_\_ internationalising hig \_\_\_\_\_ education wh \_\_\_\_\_ will ha \_\_\_\_\_ far-reaching conseq \_\_\_\_\_ for univer \_\_\_\_\_ in deve \_\_\_\_\_ countries a \_\_\_\_\_ well a \_\_\_\_\_ the Third Wo \_\_\_\_\_. They pa \_\_\_\_\_ a picture o \_\_\_\_\_ cut-throat glo \_\_\_\_\_ competition a \_\_\_\_\_ predict poten \_\_\_\_\_ disastrous eff \_\_\_\_\_ for instit \_\_\_\_\_ in devel \_\_\_\_\_ countries wh \_\_\_\_\_ are lik \_\_\_\_\_ to lo \_\_\_\_\_ out t \_\_\_\_\_ British, American and Australian universities. Need \_\_\_\_\_ to s \_\_\_\_\_, big mo \_\_\_\_\_ is invo \_\_\_\_\_ although t \_\_\_\_\_ authors ad \_\_\_\_\_ that reli \_\_\_\_\_ figures a \_\_\_\_\_ not avai \_\_\_\_\_. According t \_\_\_\_\_ some exp \_\_\_\_\_ overseas valid \_\_\_\_\_ courses a \_\_\_\_\_ now wo \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 410 million a ye \_\_\_\_\_ to British univer \_\_\_\_\_. The gro \_\_\_\_\_ has be \_\_\_\_\_ mainly dri \_\_\_\_\_ by t \_\_\_\_\_ new univer \_\_\_\_\_. In fa \_\_\_\_\_, many o \_\_\_\_\_ the ol \_\_\_\_\_ universities, inclu \_\_\_\_\_ Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Edinburgh have no \_\_\_\_\_ of th \_\_\_\_\_ courses abr \_\_\_\_\_, which t \_\_\_\_\_ report attri \_\_\_\_\_ to “a des \_\_\_\_\_ on th \_\_\_\_\_ part t \_\_\_\_\_ maintain t \_\_\_\_\_ international sta \_\_\_\_\_ and exclus \_\_\_\_\_ of th \_\_\_\_\_ qualifications”. T \_\_\_\_\_ key ques \_\_\_\_\_ is t \_\_\_\_\_ what ext \_\_\_\_\_ other coun \_\_\_\_\_ will al \_\_\_\_\_ attempt t \_\_\_\_\_ internationalise th \_\_\_\_\_ education serv \_\_\_\_\_. The rep \_\_\_\_\_ believes th \_\_\_\_\_ Australia and t \_\_\_\_\_ UK are mar \_\_\_\_\_ leaders a \_\_\_\_\_ that t \_\_\_\_\_ rest o \_\_\_\_\_ developed indus \_\_\_\_\_ economies wi \_\_\_\_\_ follow th \_\_\_\_\_ lead dur \_\_\_\_\_ the ne \_\_\_\_\_ five t \_\_\_\_\_ ten ye \_\_\_\_\_.

**Modified C-test**

Reconstruct the following text by completing the unfinished words. Attention: each dash stands for one missing letter

University degrees – like hamburgers and soft drinks – have become just another *product* which can be sold to whoever wants to buy them. Overseas stud \_\_\_\_\_ now acc \_\_\_\_\_ for alm \_\_\_\_\_ one i \_\_\_\_\_ five stud \_\_\_\_\_ at British univer \_\_\_\_\_ – and t \_\_\_\_\_ numbers lo \_\_\_\_\_ set t \_\_\_\_\_ grow ev \_\_\_\_\_ more rap \_\_\_\_\_ in fut \_\_\_\_\_. Though t \_\_\_\_\_ attempts o \_\_\_\_\_ British higher educ \_\_\_\_\_ institutions t \_\_\_\_\_ recruit for \_\_\_\_\_ students ha \_\_\_\_\_ received lo \_\_\_\_\_ of publ \_\_\_\_\_, a quiet revol \_\_\_\_\_ has go \_\_\_\_\_ unnoticed. F \_\_\_\_\_ an incre \_\_\_\_\_ proportion o \_\_\_\_\_ these stud \_\_\_\_\_ are n \_\_\_\_\_ at unive \_\_\_\_\_ in Britain a \_\_\_\_\_ all – th \_\_\_\_\_ follow th \_\_\_\_\_ studies i \_\_\_\_\_ their ho \_\_\_\_\_ states wit \_\_\_\_\_ setting fo \_\_\_\_\_ on a British cam \_\_\_\_\_. The rep \_\_\_\_\_ by Paul Bennel a \_\_\_\_\_ Terry Pearce argues th \_\_\_\_\_ this i \_\_\_\_\_ part o \_\_\_\_\_ a process o \_\_\_\_\_ internationalising hig \_\_\_\_\_ education wh \_\_\_\_\_ will ha \_\_\_\_\_ far-reaching conseq \_\_\_\_\_ for univer \_\_\_\_\_ in deve \_\_\_\_\_ countries a \_\_\_\_\_ well a \_\_\_\_\_ the Third Wo \_\_\_\_\_. They pa \_\_\_\_\_ a picture o \_\_\_\_\_ cut-throat glo \_\_\_\_\_ competition a \_\_\_\_\_ predict poten \_\_\_\_\_ disastrous eff \_\_\_\_\_ for instit \_\_\_\_\_ in devel \_\_\_\_\_ countries wh \_\_\_\_\_ are lik \_\_\_\_\_ to lo \_\_\_\_\_ out t \_\_\_\_\_ British, American and Australian universities. Need \_\_\_\_\_ to s \_\_\_\_\_, big mo \_\_\_\_\_ is invo \_\_\_\_\_, although t \_\_\_\_\_ authors ad \_\_\_\_\_ that reli \_\_\_\_\_ figures a \_\_\_\_\_ not avai \_\_\_\_\_. According t \_\_\_\_\_ some exp \_\_\_\_\_ overseas valid \_\_\_\_\_ courses a \_\_\_\_\_ now wo \_\_\_\_\_ \$ 410 million a ye \_\_\_\_\_ to British univer \_\_\_\_\_. The gro \_\_\_\_\_ has be \_\_\_\_\_ mainly dri \_\_\_\_\_ by t \_\_\_\_\_ new univer \_\_\_\_\_. In fa \_\_\_\_\_, many o \_\_\_\_\_ the ol \_\_\_\_\_ universities, inclu \_\_\_\_\_ Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Edinburgh have no \_\_\_\_\_ of th \_\_\_\_\_ courses abr \_\_\_\_\_, which t \_\_\_\_\_ report attri \_\_\_\_\_ to “a des \_\_\_\_\_ on th \_\_\_\_\_ part t \_\_\_\_\_ maintain t \_\_\_\_\_ international sta \_\_\_\_\_ and exclus \_\_\_\_\_ of th \_\_\_\_\_ qualifications.” T \_\_\_\_\_ key que \_\_\_\_\_ is t \_\_\_\_\_ what ext \_\_\_\_\_ other coun \_\_\_\_\_ will al \_\_\_\_\_ attempt t \_\_\_\_\_ internationalise th \_\_\_\_\_ education serv \_\_\_\_\_. The rep \_\_\_\_\_ believes th \_\_\_\_\_ Australia and t \_\_\_\_\_ UK are mar \_\_\_\_\_ leaders a \_\_\_\_\_ that t \_\_\_\_\_ rest o \_\_\_\_\_ developed indus \_\_\_\_\_ economies wi \_\_\_\_\_ follow th \_\_\_\_\_ lead dur \_\_\_\_\_ the ne \_\_\_\_\_ five t \_\_\_\_\_ ten ye \_\_\_\_\_.

### The complete text

University degrees – like hamburgers and soft drinks – have become just another *product* which can be sold to whoever wants to buy them. Overseas students now account for almost one in five students at British universities – and the numbers look set to grow even more rapidly in future. Though the attempts of British higher education institutions to recruit foreign students have received lots of publicity, a quiet revolution has gone unnoticed. For an increasing proportion of these students are not at university in Britain at all – they follow their studies in their home states without setting foot on a British campus. The report by Paul Bennel and Terry Pearce argues that this is part of a process of internationalising higher education, which will have far-reaching consequences for universities in developed countries as well as the Third World. They paint a picture of cut-throat global competition and predict potentially disastrous effects for institutions in developing countries which are likely to lose out to British, American and Australian universities. Needless to say, big money is involved, although the authors admit that reliable figures are not available. According to some experts overseas validated courses are now worth \$ 410 million a year to British universities. The growth has been mainly driven by the new universities. In fact, many of the older universities, including Oxford, Cambridge, Durham and Edinburgh have none of these courses abroad, which the report attributes to “a desire on their part to maintain the international status and exclusiveness of their qualifications”. The key question is to what extent other countries will also attempt to internationalise their education services. The report believes that Australia and the UK are market leaders and that the rest of developed industrial economies will follow their lead during the next five to ten years.