Chapter Two: Language Test Functions

1. TWO MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE TESTS

1.1. Evaluation of Attainment Tests

Measure to what extent examinees have learned the intended skill, performance, knowledge, etc.

1.1.1. Achievement tests

Directly related to classroom lessons, units, or even a total curriculum.

➢ *General achievement tests* → deal with a body of knowledge

The content is based directly on a detailed course syllabus → *syllabus-content approach*
  - ☺ It is a fair test.
  - ☹ The results of a test can be very misleading.

The is based on the *objectives* of the course
  - ☺ It compels course designers to be explicit about objectives.
  - ☺ It shows how far students have achieved those objectives.

    Tests based on objectives work against the perpetuation of poor teaching practice, something which course-content-based tests fail to do.
  - ☹ It is unfair.

➢ *Diagnostic tests* → measure the degree of students' achievement on a particular subject/topic

Test Qualities	Criterion-Referenced	
	Achievement	**Diagnostic**
Details of Information	Specific	Very specific
Focus	Terminal objectives of course	Enabling objectives of courses
Purpose of Decision	To determine the degree of learning for advancement or graduation	To inform students and teachers of objectives needing more work
When Administered	End of courses	Middle of courses

1.1.2. Knowledge tests

Used when the medium of instruction is a language other than examinees' mother tongue

1.1.3. Proficiency tests

Tap the overall language ability, i.e. global competence

Not limited to any one course curriculum, or single skill in the language

Measure:

degree of his capability to demonstrate his knowledge in language use
degree of capability in language components

💣 **Note:** Difficulty centers on the complexity of defining 'proficiency'

🌑 **Note:** <u>Gate-keeping</u> role for accepting or denying someone passage into the next stage

1.2. Prognostic Tests
Not related to a particular course of instruction

Predict and *make decisions* about future success and actions of examinee based on present capabilities

1.2.1. Placement tests
Used to determine the most appropriate channel of education

Measure the capabilities of an applicant in perusing a certain path of language learning

  🌑 **Note:** No pass or fail
  🌑 **Note:** The *length* of instruction vs. the *intensity* of instruction
  🌑 **Note:** Teachers benefit → homogeneous ability levels
  🌑 **Note:** Mismatch between the placement test and what is taught in a program?!?!

1.2.2. Selection tests
Provide information on acceptance or non-acceptance

  🌑 **Note:** Pass or fail
  🌑 **Note:** May turn into **competition tests**

1.2.3. Aptitude tests
Predict applicants' success in achieving certain objectives in the future

2. CONTRASTING CATEGORIES OF LANGUAGE TESTS

2.1. Knowledge vs. Performance
Knowledge tests → show how well students know *facts* about the language
Performance tests → involve people in actually performing the behavior that we want to measure → *authenticity*

2.2. Speed vs. Power
Speed tests → items are within the ability level of the test but the time limit is too short
Power tests → items are too difficult for anyone to solve so that no one can get a perfect score

2.3. Direct vs. Indirect
Direct tests → require the candidate to perform precisely the skill we wish to measure
Indirect tests → measure the abilities which underlie the skills in which we are interested
  • Ease of construct;
  • Authenticity
  • Reliability
  • Positive backwash

- Interpretable results

2.4. Discrete-point vs. Integrative
See chapter 7

2.5. Norm-referenced vs. Criterion-referenced
See chapter 1

2.6. Teacher-made vs. Standardized
See chapter 1

2.7. Proficiency vs. Achievement
See above

2.8. Subjective vs. Objective
See chapter 3

2.9. Productive vs. Receptive
See chapter 3

2.10. Alternative vs. Traditional
See chapter 3

3. COMPUTER-ADAPTIVE TESTING (CAT)

A specific type of computer-based test

Starts with questions of moderate difficulty → the computer scores → the computer determines which question will be presented next → a dependable estimate is arrived at based on Item Response Theory