

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 => associated with CRT

- *General achievement tests* → deal with a body of knowledge
 - Content based directly on a detailed course syllabus → *syllabus-content approach*
 - ☺ fair test
 - ☹ results can be very misleading
 - Content based on the *objectives* of the course
 - ☺ compels course designers to be explicit about objectives
 - ☺ shows how far students have achieved those objectives
 - ☺ works against the perpetuation of poor teaching practice
 - ☹ 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

Measure knowledge of a scientific subject not language ability → language is not the purpose of the test but the medium of instruction

1.1.3. Proficiency tests

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

Not limited to any one course curriculum => associated with NRT

Measure:

- degree of his capability to demonstrate his knowledge in real-life contexts
- degree of capability in language components

- ☛ **Note:** Difficulty centers on the complexity of defining 'proficiency'
- ☛ **Note:** Gate-keeping role

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

Place participants into an appropriate level or section of a language curriculum or school → create homogeneous groups → benefits teachers

●* **Note:** No pass or fail

●* **Note:** Mismatch between the placement test and what is taught in a program?!?!

Help those who need more instruction:

length of instruction vs. *intensity* of instruction

→→ Used to determine the most appropriate channel of education

1.2.2. Selection tests

Provide information on acceptance or non-acceptance based on a cut-off point (CRT)

●* **Note:** May turn into **competition tests** (NRT)

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

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