

## 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*
    - ☺ It is a fair test.
    - ☹ The results of a test can be very misleading.
  - Content 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
<b>Details of Information</b>	Specific	Very specific
<b>Focus</b>	Terminal objectives of course	Enabling objectives of courses
<b>Purpose of Decision</b>	To determine the degree of learning for advancement or graduation	To inform students and teachers of objectives needing more work
<b>When Administered</b>	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, or single skill in the language => 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:** Pass or fail

☛\* **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 → *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