

ABOUT LANGUAGE TESTING



Abstract:

This article provides a detailed information about language testing and validity in applied linguistics. In the field of linguistics, language testing refers to the process of evaluating tests to assess language proficiency and candidate's ability.

Key words:

Language testing, achievement test, proficiency tests, placement tests, diagnostic tests, aptitude tests, validity, Cronbach and Meehl's findings.

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Language testing in linguistics focuses on how language is acquired, used and measured in different contexts. Professionals who work in the area of language testing are interested in creating valid and reliable tests that accurately measure language skills and capabilities. They consider factors such as context, types of tasks, scoring methods and test administration to ensure that testing process is fair and reliable. There are some standardized tests for assessing language proficiency, such as TOEFL{Test of English as a Foreign Language}or IELTS{International English Language Testing system}. Linguistics can be also involved in researching and evaluating the validity and effectiveness of language tests, as well as exploring new approaches to language assessment.

Language tests are used for a various of purposes. In academic studies, it is used to assess a student's knowledge or progress for the purposes of academic area. Additionally, it is widely used in professional job opportunities whether a candidate has language skills needed for the job or not.

There are several types of language testing that are commonly used in the field of linguistics. Some of the main language testing types include: 1. Aptitude tests. Aptitude tests are aimed to measure a person's capacity for language learning. It concerns about a person's ability to learn new language skills. The difference of these tests from other types of tests, it mainly focuses on how students can acquire new language skills faster and effectively and it is more general compared to other tests due to the particular nature of these tests. Furthermore, it improves candidates' problem-solving skills, critical thinking and other characteristics that indicate their success in specific academic or professional contexts. Aptitude tests are typically administrated under controlled, standardized conditions to ensure fairness in the process of evaluating that the test results are valid.

2. Diagnostic tests .Diagnostic tests are especially used for identifying individual's abilities and knowledge in a certain areas. Interestingly, diagnostic tests will be given in the beginning of language learning program. It helps them to identify their strengthens and weaknesses and approaching according to their knowledge. Not only for students, but also for the teacher or tutors. Because they need to meet individual's learning needs such as clarifying their improvement, appropriate levels for language courses or providing standardized feedbacks for language learners. Diagnostic tests are individualized assessment in that target

language skills such as reading comprehension, writing or speaking fluency. They can be modified to target different age groups or specific learning objectives.

3. Achievement tests. Achievement tests are used to know how their learning progressed. These kinds of tests will be given after finishing a certain unit or chapters. In university for example, tests will be given for evaluating their language skills in the semesters. Achievement tests are typically graded and are meant to reflect how language tester is performing in their learning studies. By analyzing test results, teachers can determine whether instructional strategies are working and how they are affecting.

4. Proficiency tests. Proficiency tests are aimed to assess individual's overall ability to use a language and especially concentrates on four language skills. They are: reading, writing, listening and speaking- are used to determine person's language proficiency. These tests are used for many purposes such as: a) Language certification for academic institutions or for employers, b) for determining language placement. It helps learners in language courses to start at an appropriate level based on their acquired language skills, c) for language evaluation, assessing the effectiveness of language instruction and curriculum in education. Some examples of proficiency tests include Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency tests.

5. Placement tests. Proficiency tests are given before a program of study begins. Teachers use this test to group language learners into classes according to their language knowledge. These tests are used in educational institutions such as language schools, universities and vocational programs, to ensure that students are placed and matched according to their current knowledge. Based on the results of the placement tests, students may be recommended for specific interventions to improve their skills that they are struggling.

When it comes to the process of the test validation, it concerns about trait from test scores, essentially, testing should be concerned with the evidence-based validity. Test developer need to provide clear argument for test's validity in assessing a particular trait with the credible evidence to support the plausibility of the argument (Kane1992). In 1995, Cronbach and Meehl identified four types of validity: predictive validity, concurrent validity, content validity and construct validity. Content validity refers to the test content represents language skills and abilities which are intended to measure. It includes language skills and tasks are appropriate and relevant to language being tested. Concurrent validity concerns with how test scores corresponded to the criterion measure of language ability being assessed. Construct validity involves examining theoretical constructs that test targeted to assess. This can be done by statistical analyses and comparing test results with other measures.

It is essential for test developers and administrators to consider these different types of validity during test development progress that the test is fair, valid and reliable. It aims at investigating the meaningfulness and defensibility of the inferences we make about individuals based on their test performance (Mc Namara 2004). Davies, Brown & Bailey propose, the field of language testing needs to evaluate systematically in terms values, practices around language testing in order to establish standards and qualifications.

Overall, language testing plays a crucial role in language learning and teaching, as it helps learners to progress and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, language test are used for educational purposes, employment opportunities and communication.

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