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# TEST DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT

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Summary Lectures for 4th year students

## **4<sup>th</sup> Lecture: Characteristics of a Good Test**

Summarized by

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## 2.1 Teaching & Testing

to testing.

However, teaching influences testing. The approach adopted in language teaching, the type of textbook we have and the type of teachers available direct the approach to language testing and the techniques used to measure the different elements of language.

### Importance of Testing

English language tests used at school aim at evaluating :

1. individual performance,
2. group performance,
3. and teacher performance (or teaching effectiveness)

By individual performance we mean the achievement of one learner over a period of time, say, a month, a term, or an academic year in connection with a specific course of study. By group performance, we mean the achievement of all the learners we have in the course compared with one another or even compared with another group of learners at the end of a month, a term or an academic year.

As for teaching effectiveness, it can be said that there is only one kind of teaching effectiveness and that is the kind that results in effective learning. To determine the level and pace at which teaching is likely to be effective it is necessary to have « a » an estimate of the pupil's present

knowledge of the subject and « b » an estimate of the pupil's ability to learn. This information can be obtained by the use of achievement tests.

Evaluation of the learners' achievement helps the language teacher to :

1. identify the problematic areas that need to be re - explained or drilled,
2. enable the learner to realize his ability in expressing himself using correct forms of the language he is learning,
3. enable the learner to identify his errors and learn from them, i.e., the test can serve as an excellent teaching device,
4. discover his learners' errors and prepare the necessary remedial exercises,
5. upgrade his learners to a higher stage (i.e level) when he finds that possible .

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Like other instruments, tests can be of great use or of little use . Tests vary in aim, accuracy, sharpness or length . A language teacher is supposed to know how to set valid and reliable test papers.

~~Full-period tests can be used to evaluate the learners' achievement at the end of a unit or a set of units .~~ However, ten - minute tests (i.e., quizzes) consisting of a few items of the short - answer type, based on vocabulary, structures or reading comprehension items taught in a previous lesson can be used as :

1. a review of the material given earlier,
2. a basis for a new material to be given .

A perfect or a near perfect score on a "daily quiz" gives the learner confidence and motivation to learn the foreign language . The following points are suggested when giving a daily quiz :

1. Base the quiz on what you have taught the lesson before .
2. Tell the learners exactly what you want them to do .

3. Correct the test papers and return them the next lesson, if possible .
4. Discuss areas of difficulty .

## 2.2 Test Constructions (Test Design)

When starting to construct a test, one should try to answer the following questions:

- What kind of a test is to be made? Achievement (final or progress), proficiency, diagnostic, or placement?
- What is its precise purpose?
- What abilities are to be tested?
- How detailed must the results be?
- How accurate must the results be?
- How important is backwash?
- What constraints are set by unavailability of expertise, facilities, time (for construction, and scoring)?
- Who will take the exam?
- What is the scope of the test? Classroom, schools, district, country?

## 3.2 Stages in Test Constructions (Test Development)

Test development is organized into the following four stages:

**1. Planning stage** includes the following components:

- a) Describing the purpose of the test,
- b) Identifying and describing tasks in the domain,
- c) Describing the characteristics of the language user/ test takers,
- d) Defining the construct to be tested,
- e) Developing a plan for evaluating the qualities of test usefulness,
- f) Identifying resources and developing a plan for their allocation and management,
- g) Determining format and timing of the test,
- h) Determining critical levels of performance, and
- i) Determining scoring procedures.

**2. Writing stage** includes the following components:

- a) Sampling, and
- b) Item writing.

**3. Reviewing stage** includes the following components:

- a) Moderation of the items,
- b) Moderation of the scoring key, and
- c) Preparation of instructions.

**4. Pre-testing stage** includes the following components:

- a) Try-out, and
- b) item analysis.

### **3.3 Characteristics of a Good Test Design**

The following points highlight the four main characteristics of a good test. The characteristics are:

#### **3.3.1. Validity**

The first important characteristic of a good test is validity. The test must really measure what it has been designed to measure. Validity is often assessed by exploring how the test scores correspond to some criteria, that is same behaviour, personal accomplishment or characteristic that reflects the attribute that the test designed to gauge.

#### **3.3.2. Reliability**

This means that the test should give similar results even though different testers administrate it, different people scores in different forms of the test are given and the same person takes that test at two or more different times. Reliability is usually checked by comparing different sets of scores.

#### **3.3.3. Objectivity**

By objectivity of a measuring instrument is meant for the degree to which equally competent users get the same results. This presupposes subjective factor. A test is objective when it makes for the elimination of the scorer's personal opinion bias judgment. The recognition of the quality objectivity in a test has been largely responsible for the development of an arised and objective type tests.

### 3.3.4. Norms

In addition to reliability and validity good test needs norms. Norms are sets of score obtained by whom the test is intended. The scores obtained by these groups provide a basic for interpreting any individual score.

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