Test functions

Scope of the presentation

- A classification of test functions
- Definitions of different test functions
- Various decisions made based on test functions
- Why not the same test for all purposes?
Test functions

Prognostic tests

Evaluation of attainment

Selection test

Placement test

Language aptitude test

Proficiency test

Achievement test

Diagnostic test

Knowledge test

progress test

Mastery test

Final test
Prognostic tests

- Predictive in nature
- Not directly related to particular course of instruction
- Decision making about future success based on present capabilities
- Success about fields of study, foreign languages, and career
Selection test (also known as entrance or gate-keeping test)

- Acceptance or non acceptance into a language programme
- Determination of a passing score
- The possibility of a selection test into a competition test
- Increase of facilities
- Modification of passing scores
Placement (pre-achievement) test

- Placing learners into the most appropriate level of ability
- To help learners needing further instruction to reach a predetermined criterion
- To close existing gap among various levels of ability through
- Length of instruction
- And intensity of instruction
- No pass or fail
- Use of either commercial tests or in-house tests
More about placement tests

- Detail of information: general
- Focus or content choice: based on a theory of language proficiency or learning objectives of the syllabus to be taken: in former case, a wide variety of language backgrounds, prior language learning experience, and full range of competencies and skills of language proficiency; in latter case, clearly specified and sequenced objectives
- Purpose of decision: to find each learner’s appropriate level
- Relationship to programme: comparisons within programmes
- Time of administration: at the beginning of the programme
- Investigation of scores: spread of narrower, program-specific range of scores
(Language) aptitude tests

- To predict applicants’ success in achieving certain objectives in the future:
  1) To pursue a field of study
  2) To choose a future career
  3) To learn a foreign language
- To measure capacity or general ability to learn a foreign language and ultimate success in it
- To predict the rate of foreign language learning than its pass or failure
Components of a language aptitude test

I. Phonetic coding or sound coding ability: to identify and recognize and remember new auditory material for longer period

II. Grammatical coding ability: to identify the grammatical functions of parts of sentences

III. Rote learning ability or memorization: the ability to remember words etc in the new language

IV. Inductive learning ability: the ability to work out linguistic forms, rules, patterns, and meanings from new linguistic content
Two examples of language aptitude tests

1. Modern language aptitude test
2. Pimsleur language aptitude battery

Components of a modern language aptitude test

1. Number learning
2. Phonetic script
3. Spelling clues
4. Words in sentences
5. Paired associates
Evaluation of attainment tests

- Based on a theory of language
- Related to educational backgrounds
- Related to course objectives or course contents
Proficiency test (theory based test)

- On the meaning of proficiency or ability

1. Occupation: Knowledge of a particular language for a particular purpose
2. Course of study: The ability to follow a course of study in an English-medium university
3. Admission or very general: achieving a certain standard with respect to certain specified abilities
4. Performance of a cognitive or mental task
Independent of manner of learning and the course syllabi

To measure global competence or general language proficiency or ability of learners

1. Language knowledge
2. Language use
3. Language use in different situations

- Detail of information: very general
- Focus and content: usually general skills prerequisite to entry
- Purpose of decision: comparing a learner’s performance to that of other learners
- Relationship to programme: comparisons with other institutions or programmes
- Time of administration: before entry and sometimes at exit
- Interpretation of scores: spread of wide range of score
Achievement (attainment) tests

✓ To measure success
✓ Prepared by teachers
✓ Instructional and evaluative purposes
✓ Directly related to course content or course objectives
Detail of information: specific

Focus and content: terminal objectives of course or programme

Purpose of decision: to determine the degree of learning for advancement or graduation

Relationship to the programme: directly related to objectives

Time of administration: end of courses

Interpretation of scores: overall number and percentages of objectives learned
Approaches to achievement tests:

1. Syllabus-content approach
2. Objectives approach: explicitness of objectives, the possibility of knowing the degree of achieving the objectives by students, more accurate information about individual and groups, and promotion of beneficial backwash effect
Types of achievement tests

- Progress test: throughout the course
  1. To measure learners’ progress through pop quizzes, chapter questions, and midterms
  2. Directly linked to a particular set of instructions or a particular course of instruction through
     a. Repeated administration of final achievement tests
     b. Establishing well-defined short term objectives
Mastery test: only end of the course
To check mastery or non-mastery of content covered in the course
Diagnostic test

- Either related to content of the course or course objectives (theory based or syllabus based)
- To diagnose specified aspects of a language, mainly, strengths and weaknesses
- To identify necessity for future teaching: to develop remedies
- To help individualized instruction or self-assessment
More on diagnostic tests

- Detail of information: very specific
- Focus and content: terminal and enabling objectives of the course
- Purpose of decision: to inform students and teachers of objectives needing more work
- Relationship to programme: directly related to objectives still needing work
- Time of administration: beginning or middle of the course
- Interpretation of scores: percentage of each objective in terms of strengths and weaknesses
Knowledge tests

- Medium of instruction a language other than mother tongue
- Knowledge and content tested through this other language
- Not necessarily a language test
Various decisions made based on test types

- **Micro-evaluation**: Decisions about students and teachers
- **Macro-evaluation**: Decisions about programmes

A. **Formative**: to make changes to improve an existing programme
B. **Summative**: to continue an existing programme or implement a new programme
Why not the same test for all purposes?

I. Differences in ranges of ability
II. Differences in variety of content