

TEST DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT

Assessment

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CHAPTER TWO

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

Modern theories about the nature of language seem to influence theories about language learning, which in turn influence ways and methods of teaching and testing.

The direction of influence is usually from linguistic theory to learning theory to teaching methods and eventually to testing.

This chapter will touch lightly on the 4 major approaches to language testing:

(1) the essay-translation approach:

(2) the structuralist approach

(3) the integrative approach:

(4) the communicative approach.

1. The essay-translation approach

This approach is referred to as the pre-scientific stage of language testing because no special skill in testing is required and also there is a lack of concern for objectivity and for test reliability.

The tests are mainly written exercises, such as: translation, composition, grammatical analysis, and sometimes, aural/oral component.

2. Structuralist Approach:

This approach is mainly characterized by the view that testing can be objective, precise, reliable and scientific.

Objective tests have been developed the most widely used being the multiple-choice items.

The tests measure the learners' mastery of the separate elements of the language: phonology, vocabulary and grammar.

The skills of listening speaking, reading and writing are also tested separately. The best example of these tests is the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

1. I want ----- home now. A. to go B. go C. going D. went

2. She needs to get up earlier so she's buying ----- clock

A. a time B. a bell C. a watch D. an alarm

3. The integrative approach

This approach involves the testing of language in context and is concerned with meaning and the total communicative effect of discourse.

Thus, it is the exact reverse of analytical assessment since it attempts to assess several elements and perhaps skills at the same time.

Integrative tests are best characterized by the use of cloze testing, which reflects the best feature of the two approaches analytical and integrative.

4. The communicative approach

This approach is sometimes linked to the integrative approach as they both emphasize the importance of the meaning of utterance.

However the communicative tests are concerned primarily with assessing real communication. The tests should indicate how well a student can function in the target language. Consequently the tasks should relate to real-life situations with emphasis on authentic materials.

Language use is often emphasized to the exclusion of language usage. **Use** is concerned with how people use language for a multitude of different purposes while **usage** concerns the formal patterns of language.

Finally, communicative testing has introduced the concept of **criterion-referenced** assessment in preference to norm-referenced assessment. **Criterion assessment** rates students against certain standards, but **norm-assessment** compares each student with his classmates.

THANK YOU
SEE YOU NEXT LECTURE