

THE PROBLEM OF TEST-MAKING (WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH): THE MAIN TEST-CREATIVE QUALITIES

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Using tests in classroom-activities is still much argued about. It goes without saying, that this type of students' knowledge assessment has a lot of disadvantages, among which the most important ones are that it doesn't cover all students' language skills and does not evaluate students' knowledge objectively. Test-making and test-checking processes are rather complicated and time-consuming. Besides, there is always a chance to be lucky and to guess the answers. But, nevertheless, when involving tests into the studying process, we should make them come up to the proper test qualities, such as:

1. **Reliability.** It is the permanence of the measurement results produced by a test. If the teacher gives the same test to the same subject or matched subjects on two different occasions, the test itself should yield similar results. A reliable test is consistent and dependable. Testing productive skills such as speaking and creative writing is less reliable than testing listening and reading. E.g. there is always more room for subjectivity in assessing an essay than a dictation. "Reliability" is the opposite to "randomness" in the marking given by the teachers or examiners. The sources of unreliability may lie in the test itself or in the scoring of the test (rater reliability).

2. **Decisiveness.** The test contains all the information required to automatically determine success or failure. The test is expressed in a way that produces a pass/fail answer rather than a numerical or qualitative result. Decisive tests are often expressed as assertions.

3. **Consistency.** That is "agreement between parts of the test. All the tasks in a consistent test have the same level of difficulty for the learners" [2: 208]. Some tests are more difficult to make consistent, than others, e.g. a dictation will contain the words with a different level of difficulty for spelling.

4. **Validity:** construct, concurrent, content and pragmatic. *Construct validity* pertains to whether the text measures what it claims to measure. If a test claims to measure such "construct" as "oral" skill, than a valid test should measure exactly an "oral skill" but not other constructs such as the "knowledge of grammar". **Concurrent validity** is the coincidence of the test scores with other measures of the learner's language performance, e.g. teacher's marks. The **content validity** of a test is assured by the accuracy of the specification. In reviewing results, if results are the same as before, or as intended or reasonable in the circumstances for which the test is designed, the test can be counted as satisfactory. **Pragmatic validity** is the correlation of test scores with the scores or ratings obtained from a criterion measure. By definition, anything which serves as a criterion is taken to possess validity [3]. Instructions given to students on how to do test are an important aspect of validity. The wording should be chosen very carefully, especially at lower levels

5. **Practicality** is the degree to which a test can be used as a convenient tool for measuring language performance. A good test is practical. It is within

the means of financial limitation, time duration, ease of administration, scoring and interpretation. If a test needs much preparation time, or takes up too much time in a lesson, it will be perceived as impractical.

6. **Completeness.** The test is to contain all the information it needs to run correctly with a given test harness and work artifact under test. The test should perform all activities and provide all the data necessary, not requiring any input outside of itself in order to run.

7. **Isolation.** The test result is not affected by other tests run before it nor does a test affect the results of tests run after it. The test and the test harness work together to clean up after every test is run. A collection of tests can be run in any order and always produce the same results. Any test that depends upon the results or side-effects of a previous test is not isolated.

8. **Motivation.** If material is presented in a lively and attractive manner, consistent with the age and background of the test-takers, then they are more likely to engage positively with a test and to perform to their best [4]. It also helps to use tasks which are 'active' or 'game-like', computer-based tasks, which offer the appeal of games through various facilities such as: click and drag, highlight, scroll, rearrange, art-palette and etc.

Moreover, too much of testing could be disastrous. It can entirely change the students' attitude towards learning the language, especially if the results are usually dissatisfying and decrease their motivation towards learning and the subject in general. It is unlikely that in the near future we can stop testing or using tests as one way of assessing our students, unless we drastically change the educational system and society. Therefore, we should try to use tests only when necessary. Thus, we need to change how we incorporate them into classroom practice.

How can we make up a good test? Making up fair tests is a real skill which many teachers don't have. For example, having students memorize verbs without knowing how or when to use them or, even worse, what they mean, is inexcusable. A pure grammar test does not show what our students know and certainly does not teach our students how to use the language. When will anyone ever ask them fill in blank spaces with the correct form of the word? If the student isn't taught how to transfer his/her knowledge of tenses to correct usage in speaking and writing, nothing will have been learned. And that's what we must always take into account, when creating and using tests at out double-periods, on top of adhering to the proposed test-qualities.

References

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