

( ١ )

كلية التربية

المادة: لغويات تطبيقية

الفرقة: الرابعة

القسم: لغة انجليزية

أستاذ المقرر: د/ نسرین عبد الباسط العناني

المحاضرة الأولى

# **Language Testing**

# Reasoning in Language Tests

- ❑ **Language testing** is a process of gathering information about test-takers from observed performance under test conditions. This is done in order to draw inferences either about the likely quality of performance by the test-taker under nontest conditions, or about the test-taker's standing in relation to a relevant domain of knowledge and abilities.
- ❑ We thus make a distinction between the test [the means of drawing inferences] and the criterion [the target of test inferences].

- ❑ Because the criterion cannot be known in any direct sense, our inferences are necessarily mediated through test constructs, that is, our modeling of the criterion in terms of its essential features or characteristics.
- ❑ A language test is used to predict the student's ability to cope with the demands of the university settings. These demands need to be modeled: this involves considerable research into exactly what is required of international students in university settings, including both academic and social domains.

- ❑ Test constructs need to be articulated and defended as part of building a case for the validity of a test.
- ❑ There will be a need for a general or overall sense of the second language ability of the test-taker. Such tests are known as general proficiency tests. The need to articulate a construct of general proficiency in a second language has seen some of the most fundamental work in applied linguistics on the nature of communicative competence.

- ❑ We should distinguish **sociolinguistic competence** [ knowledge of the way language use is shaped by cultural conventions in particular communities of use] from **linguistic competence** [ simple control of the linguistic system (including grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) independently of its use in particular social and cultural contexts] and from **discourse competence** [ the ability to construct coherent texts in speech and writing].
- ❑ Test design rests on test constructs.

# Theories of validity

- ❑ Language tests, like other tests, are deliberate samples of an individual's language knowledge or language behavior, in order to reach a conclusion about the likely general state of that person's knowledge or ability.
- ❑ Language tests require technical expertise in their construction and application, in order to make the inferences that we draw from test results interpretable and supportable.
- ❑ The validation of language tests refers to the process of gathering arguments and evidence in support of the interpretation and uses we make of test scores.

- ❑ **There are two basic processes involved:** an articulation of the exact character of the knowledge we seek and of the purpose for which we seek it; and the gathering of empirical evidence to support the interpretation we wish to make of candidate performance.
- ❑ The fundamental aspects of test validation are set out in the form of a matrix. The column “test interpretation” involves considering the evidence of test validity outside any specific context of its deployment; the column “test use” looks at the actual use of the test in a specific context.



- ❑ The horizontal rows distinguish two aspects of the defense of a test and its use. In the first row, logical argument and empirical evidence from test use are the basis for the claims we wish to make for the validity of the test. The bottom row introduces the notion that testing is not a value-neutral activity but always involves an implicit expression of [social] values.
- ❑ The social consequences of the actual deployment of tests are the focus of the final cell in the matrix.
- ❑ **Figure ( 1 ) shows facets of validity:**

	TEST INTERPETATION	TEST USE
EVIDENTIAL BASIS	Construct validity	Construct validity +Relevance/ utility
CONSEQUENTIAL BASIS	Value implications	Social consequences

Figure 1: Facets of validity

- ❑ Previous approaches had distinguished various kinds of validity: **content validity**, concerning the representativeness of test content; **construct validity**, concerning the coherence and defensibility of the theory[ of knowledge, skill, and so on] on which the test is based, **criterion-related validity**, the extent to which measures produced by the test makes sense in the light of other relevant measures of skill, or predict outcomes associated with the skill being measured in the test, and so on.

# Validation Research in Language Testing

- ❑ **Test validation** is the process of investigating the meaningfulness and defensibility of the inferences we make about individuals based on their test performance.
- ❑ The need to defend our interpretations of the meanings of test scores is because of the necessarily indirect relationship between the test and what we ultimately want to know about, the candidate's standing in relation to the criterion.
- ❑ In general, test scores are a way of coding numerically claims about the abilities of test-takers.

- ❑ **Validation** is the process of investigating the relationship between the claims of the test and evidence in support of these claims, both from the test scores themselves, or from independent evidence.
- ❑ **The process of validating** tests can itself also provides evidence in support of the constructs on which the test is based.
- ❑ **Language aptitude** is the extent to which an individual possesses specific language learning ability. It differs from **language proficiency** [ current level of attainment in second language] in that language aptitude can be measured before an individual commences second language study.

- ❑ **language aptitude** tests are designed to enable us to choose those with the greatest potential to benefit from language study, or to weed out those who will struggle to succeed.
- ❑ What exactly is **language aptitude**? Psychologists and linguists have at various times tried to define the construct in terms of memory skill, ability to perceive patterns, ability to discriminate sounds, and the like.
- ❑ **Aptitude tests** are based on one or other of these constructs. Data from the tests can then in turn be used to investigate the quality of these constructs. For example, **predictive validity** studies can be carried out to investigate the extent to which subsequent achievement is predicted by scores on the aptitude tests.

- ❑ A further kind of validation research is to carry out **statistical analyses** on scores on individual test items and on test sub-components.
- ❑ Another way in which test constructs have been investigated is in the context of research on tests of the productive skills of speaking and writing, which involves judging processes using what are known as **rating scales**.
- ❑ Researchers have also used the methods of **discourse analysis** to understand better what is going on in interaction in oral tests.

- In general, the relationship between test construct and test performance is a two-way street: tests are built on constructs, but can offer evidence of the validity of the constructs on which they are built. The investigation of these relationships is an important component of language test validation research.

## Assignment ( 1 ):

Put [T] in front of true sentences and [F] in front of false ones:

1. Test validation is the extent to which an individual possesses specific language learning ability . [.....]
2. Linguistic competence is the simple control of the linguistic system. [.....]
3. The relationship between test construct and test performance is a two-way street. [.....]



## Assignment ( 2 ):

### Write short notes on:

1. The distinction between sociolinguistic competence, linguistic competence, and discourse competence.
2. Theories of validity.
3. Various kinds of validity.

## Assignment ( 3 ):

### Give the terms for the following definitions:

1. The process of investigating the meaningfulness defensibility of the inferences we make about individuals based on their test performance. [ .....]
2. The extent to which an individual possesses specific language learning ability. [.....]
3. The coherence and defensibility of the theory on which the test is based. [.....]
4. Deliberate samples of an individual's language knowledge or language behavior, in order to reach a conclusion about the likely general state of that person's knowledge or ability. [.....]

With My Best Wishes