

DIFFERENT TYPES OF TESTS USED IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Summary: There are various methods of tests in teaching language and each of them has its influence on teaching.

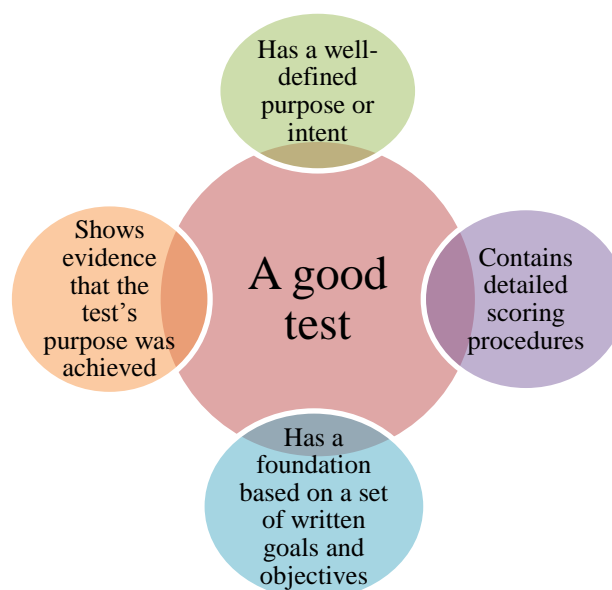
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There are various methods of tests in teaching language and each of them has its influence on teaching. In relation to testing grammar and vocabulary and the four language skills, there are two major categories of techniques plays an essential role on teaching.

Different scholars in their researches ask the similar question – why test, do the teachers really need them and for what purpose. Further, they all agree that test is not the teacher’s desire to catch the students unprepared with what they are not acquainted; it is also not the motivating factor for the students to study. In fact, the test is a request for information and possibility to learn what the teachers did not know about their students before. We can add here that the test is important for the students. The test is supposed to display not only the students’ weak points, but also their strong sides. Moreover, we can cite the idea of Hughes who emphasizes that we can check the progress, general or specific knowledge of the students, etc [1, 89].

This claim will directly lead us to the statement that for each of these purposes there is a special type of testing. *Tests* are commonly used in association with cognitive goals, to review students’ achievement with respect to a common body of knowledge associated with a discipline or practice. There are several reasons for testing. Tests may be used as a means to:

1. give the teacher information about where the students are at the moment, to help decide what to teach next;
2. give the students information about what they know, so that they also have an awareness of what they need to learn or review;
3. assess for some purpose external to current teaching (a final grade for the course, selection);
4. motivate students to learn or review specific material;
5. get a noisy class to keep quiet and concentrate;
6. provide a clear indication that the class has reached a ‘station’ in learning such as the end of a unit, thus contributing to a sense of structure in the course as a whole;
7. give students tasks which themselves may actually provide useful review or practice, as well as testing;
8. provide students with a sense of achievement and progress in their learning. We should not use the tests when there is disagreement about the choice, design, or content of the test to be used, the scoring of the test is not reliable or valid, the content of the test does not match the goals of the department and the number of participants is small. If we use tests in these ways our tests will not be reliable and valid [4, 35]. Good tests also have a positive rather than a negative effect on both students and teachers. The features of a good test are:



We have five basic principles for designing effective tests and assessments in our classroom: practicality, reliability, validity (content, face, and construct), authenticity and washback. The test should be practical, or in other words, efficient. It should be easily understood by the examinee, ease scored and administered. It should not last for eternity, for both examiner and examinee could become tired during five hours non-stop testing process. Moreover, the test should be a friend, not an enemy. Thus, the issue of validity and reliability is very essential in creating a good test. The test should measure what it is supposed to measure, but not the knowledge beyond the students' abilities. Reliability shows that the test's results will be similar and will not change if one and the same test will be given on various days. A reliable test will contain well-formulated tasks and not indefinite questions, the student will know what exactly should be done. Every test should be reliable as well as valid. Both notions are very crucial elements of testing.

Validity deals with what is tested and degree to which a test measures what is supposed to measure. For example, *if we test the students writing skills giving them a composition test on Ways of Cooking, we cannot denote such test as valid, for it can be argued that it tests not our abilities to write, but the knowledge of cooking as a skill.* There are three types of validity: content validity, face validity, and construct validity. If a test actually samples the subject matter about which conclusions are to be drawn, if it requires the test-taker to perform the behavior that is being measured, it can claim content validity. A concept that is very closely related to content validity is face validity. If the test samples the actual content of what the learner has achieved or expects to achieve, then face validity will be perceived. A third category of validity that teachers must be aware of in considering language tests is construct validity. One way to look at construct validity is to ask the question "Does this test actually tap into the theoretical construct as it has been defined?" "Proficiency" is a construct. "Communicative competence" is a construct. "Self-esteem" is a construct. Virtually every issue in language learning and teaching involves theoretical constructs [2, 168]. A fourth major principle of language testing is authenticity. Bachman and Palmer define authenticity as "the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given

language test task to the features of a target language task," and then suggest an agenda for identifying those target language tasks and for transforming them into valid test items. In a test, authenticity may be present in the following ways: the language in the test is as natural as possible, items are contextualized rather than isolated, topics and situations are interesting, enjoyable, and humorous, some thematic organization to items is provided, such as through a story line or episode, and tasks represented.

When students take a test, ideally they will receive information (feedback) about their competence, based on their performance. That feedback should "wash back" to them in the form of useful diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses. Washback also includes the effects of an assessment on teaching and learning prior to the assessment itself. If in our language teaching we can attend to these principles in evaluating or adapting existing procedures, or in designing new ones on our own, then we are well on the way to making accurate judgments about the competence of the learners with whom we are working.

There are four traditional categories of types of tests according to some scholars (Thompson, Hughes, Alderson, Heaton, and Underhill): diagnostic tests, proficiency tests, achievement tests, and placement tests [5, 38].

Based on their opinion now we will discuss diagnostic tests and try to analyze them. Every year the administration of the school or lyceum had stemmed a special plan where every teacher was supposed to write when and how they were going to test their students. Moreover, the teachers were supposed to analyze the diagnostic tests, complete special documents and provide diagrams with the results of each class or group if a class was divided. Then, at the end of the study year the teachers were demanded to compare the results of them with the final, achievement test [3, 279].

Professor Hughes adds that diagnostic tests are supposed to spot the students' weak and strong points. Heaton compares such type of test with a diagnosis of a patient, and the teacher with a doctor who states the diagnosis. Professor Underhill adds that a diagnostic test provides the student with a variety of language elements, which will help the teacher to determine what the student knows or does not know [6, 87].

It is true that this type of test checks the students' knowledge before starting a particular course. The diagnostic test displays the teacher a situation of the students' current knowledge. We think this is very essential especially when the students return from their summer holidays or if the students start a new course and the teacher is completely unfamiliar with the level of the group. To conclude, we can conceive that interpreting the results of diagnostic tests the teachers apart from predicting why the student has done the exercises the way s/he has, but not the other, will receive a significant information about his/her group s/he is going to work with and later use the information as a basis for the forming syllabus.

To summarize we can claim that there are different types of tests that serve for different purposes. Teachers should know how and when to use various types of tests as they all are necessary for the teacher's work.

References:

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