

# **USING TESTS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES**

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402-group

# Testing Writing

- **Best way to test writing ability is to get test takers to write.**
  1. **Set writing tasks that are representative of the population of tasks that we should expect the students to be able to perform.**
  2. **Tasks should elicit samples of writing which are truly representative of the student's ability to write.**
  3. **Samples of writing must be scored reliably.**

# Testing Writing

## Setting the Tasks

- **Specify Appropriate Tasks and Select a Sample**
  - Need to be clear at the outset the tasks students should be able to perform.
  - Should be identified in test specifications.
    - **Example: (Basic Level) Operations, types of text, addressees, topics.**
      - **Operations:** Expressions of thanks, opinions, apology, etc.
      - **Text Types:** Form: Type -- Letter: Announcement; Postcard: Description; Note: Narration; Form: Comment
      - **Addressees:** Acquaintances/Colleagues/Sales Clerks, etc.
      - **Topics:** Social Interaction with Native and Non-native Speakers of English; Dealing with Official and Semi-official bodies; Shopping and Using Services; Visiting Places of Interest, etc.

# Testing Writing

## Setting the Tasks

- **Obtain Samples that Properly Represent Each Candidate's Ability**
  - **Set as many tasks as are feasible.**
    - Offer test takers as many fresh starts as possible – each task can represent a fresh start.
    - Reason for including as many different tasks as is possible.
    - Must be balanced with Practicality.
    - Depends on the purpose of the test.

# Testing Writing

## Setting the Tasks

- **Obtain Samples that Properly Represent Each Candidate's Ability**
  - **Test Only Writing Ability, and Nothing Else**
    - Is not an Intelligence or a Knowledge Test.
    - Make the Instructions Short and Simple. Reading Ability can hence interfere with measuring Writing Ability.
      - Make Use of Illustrations.
  - **Restrict What Candidates are Allowed to do**
    - Writing tasks should be well-defined: test takers should know exactly what it is they are required to do.

# Testing Writing

## Setting the Tasks

- **Set Tasks Which Can Be Reliably Scored**
  - Set as many tasks as possible
  - Restrict what test takers can do
  - Give no choice of tasks: makes comparisons between test takers easier
  - Ensure long enough samples for reliable judgments.

# Testing Writing

## Setting the Tasks

- **Obtain Reliable Scoring of Writing**
  - **Holistic Scoring:**
    - Also known as “Impressionistic Scoring.”
    - Involves the assignment of a single score to a sample of writing on the basis of an overall impression.
    - Very Rapid.
  - **Analytic Scoring:**
    - Methods of scoring which require a separate score for each of a number of aspects.

# Testing Oral Ability

- **We want to set tasks which are representative of the population of oral tasks that we expect test takers to be able to perform.**
- **Hence, the tasks should elicit behavior which is truly representative of the test taker's ability and which can be scored validly and reliably.**



# Testing Oral Ability

## Setting the Tasks

- **Specify Appropriate Tasks**
  - **Content**
    - *Operations (Expressing, Narrating, Eliciting, etc.).*
    - *Types of Text (Dialogue, Multi-participant Interactions [face-to-face and also telephone])*
    - *Addressees*
    - *Topics*
  - **Format**
    - *Interview*
    - *Interaction with Peers*
    - *Response to tape-recordings*

# Testing Oral Ability

## Setting the Tasks

- **Obtaining Appropriate Samples and the Reliable Judging of Tests:**
  - **Advice for Oral Tests**
    - Make tests as long as possible
    - Include a wide sample of specified content
    - Plan test carefully
    - Give test taker as many “fresh starts’ as possible
    - Set only tasks and topics that would not cause the test taker difficulty in their own language
    - Choose a quiet room with good acoustics
    - Put test takers at ease
    - Interviewer should not talk too much. Let the test taker do the talking

# Testing Oral Ability

## Setting the Tasks

- **Elicitation Techniques**
  - Questions and Requests for Information
  - Pictures (for eliciting descriptions)
  - Role Play
  - Interpreting
  - Discussion
  - Tape-recorded Stimuli (e.g. language lab)
  - Imitation (i.e. repetition)

# Testing Oral Ability

## Setting the Tasks

- **Elicitation Techniques:**
- **NOT RECOMMENDED**
  - Prepared Monologue
  - Reading Aloud

# Testing Oral Ability

## Setting the Tasks

- **Obtaining Valid and Reliable Scoring**
  - **Scoring will be valid and reliable only if**
    - **Appropriate descriptions of criteria levels are written out and scorers are trained to use them.**
    - **Irrelevant features of performance are ignored.**
    - **There is more than one scorer for each performance.**

# Testing Reading

## Specifying What Test Takers Should Be Able to Do

- ***Content***
  - **Operations: Macro**
    - » Scanning text to locate specific information
    - » Skimming text to obtain the gist
    - » Identifying stages of an argument
    - » Identifying examples in support of an argument
  - **Operations: Micro**
    - » Identifying referents of pronouns
    - » Using context to guess meaning of unfamiliar words
    - » Understanding relations between parts of text
    - » Understanding grammatical structures and meanings of words

# Testing Reading

## Specifying What Test Takers Should Be Able to Do

- ***Content***
  - **Types of Text**
    - » Textbook, Novel, Magazine, Newspaper, Letter, Poem, etc.
  - **Addressees: Implied**
  - **Topics: General**

# Testing Reading

## Setting the Tasks

- ***Selecting Texts***
  - Try to select a representative sample as possible
  - Choose texts of appropriate length for the required task
  - Include as many passages as possible giving test takers as many “fresh starts” as possible
  - For testing scanning, use pieces with lots of discrete pieces of information
  - Choose interesting pieces but not ones which will overly excite or disturb
  - Avoid texts which are made up of test takers’ general knowledge
  - Do not use texts which students have already read



# Testing Reading

## Setting the Tasks

- ***Writing Items: Possible Techniques***
  - Multiple Choice (with or without pictures)
  - Unique Answer (only one possible answer: e.g. answer to a question or fill in the blank)
  - Short Answer
  - Guided Short Answers (students fill in the blanks).
  - Summary Cloze: the reading passage is summarized by the tester with gaps left in the summary for completion by the test taker.
  - Information Transfer: test taker shows completion of reading task by (1) supplying simple information in a table, (2) following a route on a map, (3) labeling a picture, etc.

# Testing Reading

## Setting the Tasks

- ***Writing Items: Possible Techniques***
  - Identifying Order of Events, Topics, or Arguments
  - Identifying Referents: (e.g. “What does the word ‘it’ [line 25] refer to?” \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context

# Testing Reading

## Setting the Tasks

- ***Procedures for Writing Items***
  - Careful reading of text with specified operations in mind.
  - Determining what tasks are appropriate
  - Writing Draft Items
  - Paragraph numbers and line numbers added if necessary
  - Should be checked by colleagues

# Testing Listening

- **There are times when no speaker is called for such as when listening to the radio, listening to lectures, or listening to announcements. Therefore, listening can be separated from speaking. There are other times when it is inconvenient to test speaking and testing listening can have a backwash effect on oral skills.**

# Testing Listening

## Specifying What Test Takers Should Be Able to Do

- ***Content***
  - **Operations: Macro**
    - » Listening for specific information
    - » Obtaining the gist of what is being said
    - » Following directions
    - » Following instructions
  - **Operations: Micro**
    - » Interpretation of intonation patterns (recognition of sarcasm, etc.)
    - » Recognition of function of structures (such as interrogative as request).

# Testing Listening

## Specifying What Test Takers Should Be Able to Do

- ***Content***
  - **Types of Texts**
    - » Monologue
    - » Dialogue
    - » Multi-participant
    - » Announcement, Lecture, Instructions, Directions
  - **Addressees**
    - » General public, Students, Young Children, etc.
  - **Topics**
    - » General Terms

# Testing Listening

## Setting the Tasks

- ***Selecting Samples of Speech***
  - Native of Non-native Speech
- ***Writing Items: Possible Techniques***
  - Multiple Choice: choices need to be kept short and simple
  - Short Answer
  - Information Transfer
  - Note Taking: Students respond to questions after talk
  - Partial Dictation: when no other listening test practical
  - Recordings or Live Presentations?
- ***Scoring the Listening Test***
  - Receptive Skill: No need to deduct points for errors in grammar or spelling

THE END!  
Thank You!

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