

COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TESTING

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P.C. Manchishi

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Rita and our six children; Nkonde, Chomba, Chilatebe, Shimukunku, Kamfisa and Mwila; and also to my late parents, Mawini and Chilatebe for the right decision they made to take me to school.



## INTRODUCTION

### Brief Evolution of Language Testing

Language testing is a field of study which falls under applied linguistics. Its history can be traced to psychometrics, the field of study which focused on psychological measurement. That is, measurement of skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, personality traits and educational achievement. The earliest works involved measuring intelligence and personality and these led to pencil and paper tests.

In the 1940s, Language testing became the focus of scientific research. Vilareal's *Testing of Aural Comprehension* in 1947, was one of the earliest publications. A comprehensive book in the field of language testing was published in 1961 by Lado R., titled, *Language Testing: The Construction and Use of Foreign Language Tests. A Teachers' Book*. The book contains what are known as discrete tests whose emergency was due to the influence of structural linguistics.

Another publication on, language testing worth mentioning is by Carroll and is titled, *Fundamental Consideration in Testing for English Language Proficiency of Foreign Students*. The 1970s, saw the emergence of integrative tests such as dictation and close test (Oller, 1979). In line with the communicative approach which emerged in the mid-1970s, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of communicative tests. To date, many publications on the same have continued to surface on the market.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book was written for second/foreign language teachers. It is about testing the ability of the learner to use language in real-life situations, hence the title 'Communicative Language Testing.'

The book is arranged as follows; Chapter One presents theoretical preliminaries and types of tests and their purposes. The relationship between teaching approaches and tests is discussed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three presents sample tests. We have tried to present tests which integrate language skills; for example, listening and writing at the same time. This is what actually happens in real-life situations.

Chapter Four describes how tests should be marked. Quantification of test performance is discussed in Chapter Five, and Chapter Six presents areas for research in language testing followed by the conclusion and references.

This book should be treated as a reference material. It is hoped that its contents will be useful to language teachers and students.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## PRELIMINARIES

### Concept of Assessment

Assessment can be defined as procedures or methods used to evaluate the teaching-learning process. In Language, assessment involves evaluating how much learners know a language and their ability to use it in real-life situations. There are a variety of assessments such as tests, assignments, experiments, presentation of projects portfolio assessments, placement assessments, screening assessments, observations, interviews etcetera.

Educators use assessment for various purposes. Some of these are administrative, that is, assessment is used for certification, learner placement, exemption or promotion. The other purpose has to do with instruction; using assessment to have feedback on the progress of learners or evaluating teaching or curriculum. Assessment can also be used to gather information concerning language learning and ability to use it (research) and lastly, assessment can be used as a snapshot on the ability or condition of a language learner, that is, identification or evaluation of a current state or progress of something. From the foregoing, assessment briefly involves collecting information with the purpose of monitoring progress, and, if necessary, make educational decision.

Now that we are clear about the concept of assessment, let us define some key terminologies used in the assessment. The list is not exhaustive.

### Docimology

The first term we would like to define is docimology, which simply means science of examinations. That is, test construction and administration, examining technologies, the role of examinations and the process of marking. In a nutshell, docimology is the study of all that has to do with examinations.

## Test

A test is an instrument or a technique which is used to measure something. It is one form of assessment. Overton defined a test as 'a student's ability to complete certain tasks or demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content' ([www.slideshare.net/...](http://www.slideshare.net/...) Testing- assessment measurement-and-evaluation-d... Accessed on 08/01/15). In language, the purpose of a test is to determine the learners' knowledge of a language and their ability to use it in real life situations.

## Evaluation

Generally, evaluation is an assessment of a programme, a policy or a project in its implementation. The main aim of evaluation is to have a better understanding the outcomes of what is being implemented. In language, evaluation involves assessing language acquisition, that is, the outcomes of language teaching and learning.

There are two main types of evaluation, namely; formative and summative. Formative evaluation is defined as a 'variety of methods teachers use to conduct in-process evaluations. The aim is to improve instruction and student learning while it is happening, to inform in-process teaching and learning' ([edglossary.org/formative-assessment/](http://edglossary.org/formative-assessment/) Accessed on 8/01/2015).

Summative evaluation, is 'used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period, course, semester, programme or school year. The focus is on the outcome of a programme. The other name for summative evaluation is, ex-post evaluation, meaning after the event' ([edglossary.org/summative – assessment/](http://edglossary.org/summative-assessment/) Accessed 8/01/2015).

To sum up, evaluation is a broader concept than assessment in terms of scope, that is, it involves all areas of the process of teaching and learning; syllabus objectives, course design and materials. It is, therefore, all-inclusive.

## Objectivity

A test is said to be objective when the answers are limited; that is, the marks awarded remain the same regardless of who marks it. This is the case with, for example, multiple choice questions, true/false, and yes/no items. Objectivity is very common in discrete – point tests, that is, tests which concentrate on specific structural and lexical items. In other words, objective tests normally have items with only one answer. That is, tests which assess one item of language separately, for example;

When I was at the secondary school, I used to..... in the school football team.

A. Play

B. Played

C. Playing

The only correct answer here is A. The rest are not correct, hence the objectivity we are talking about.

## Subjectivity

A test is said to be subjective when the range of acceptable answers is not limited. Marks change when the test is marked by a different marker, for example, in integrative tests, that is, tests which measure general language ability such as; dictation, composition and close test. There is in these test items, the existence of subjective judgement concerning the marks awarded. For example, in a composition, the marker assesses several things; spellings, arrangement of ideas, grammar in writing style and so on. Hence, subjectivity comes in.

## Measurement

Measurement is the assignment of a number to a character of an object or event which can be compared with other objects or events.

Measurement can have multiple levels which would include normal, cardinal, interval and ratio scales (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/measurement>. Accessed 8/01/15).

## **Self-Evaluation**

Self-evaluation entails looking at one's progress, development and learning to assess how much has been achieved and what remains to be improved.

### **Types of Tests and their Purposes**

In this section, we discuss the types of tests and their purposes. There are two main categories of tests, namely; diagnostic and prognostic tests. These will now be presented in detail.

#### *Diagnostic Tests*

These are tests which are used to establish how much language one knows. There are two types of tests under this category; progress and achievement tests. Progress tests are tests which are normally prepared by teachers. They are on-going, that is, they are administered during the teaching-learning process. The purpose of progress tests is to improve the teaching and learning process. In other words, they offer feedback on what is happening in the classroom in terms of instruction and learner performance. These tests fall under formative assessment, the concept we have explained above.

Achievement tests are tests which seek to evaluate learning achievement at the end of a cycle, for example, at the end of a school term, a year, primary school or secondary school. National examinations fall under these type of tests. Their main purpose is to measure the outcome of learning. These tests are part of the summative assessment which we have already explained.

#### *Prognostic Test*

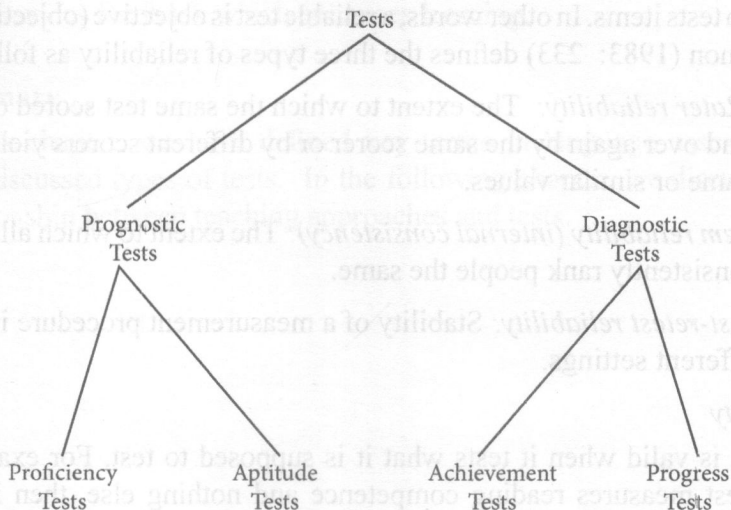
The second category of tests is known as prognostic tests. Under this category, there are again two kinds of tests, namely; proficiency and aptitude tests. Proficiency tests seek to generally establish the learner's knowledge of language and ability. These tests are usually used for placement of learners. Examples of proficiency tests are, "Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) an American official



proficiency test recognised worldwide. The French also have their own under the titles of Diplome d'Etudes de la Langue Françoise (DELF) and Diplome Approfondi de la Langue Francaise (DALF).”

As for aptitude tests, these are used to estimate future success. Hence, they possess predictive value and are used for the selection of learners for new programmes.

To summarise, the classification of tests can be categorised as follows:



### Characteristics of Tests

Five cardinal characteristics of tests have been identified (Brown, 2010), these are authenticity, practicability, reliability, validity and washback. We will now discuss each one of them in detail.

#### Authenticity

A test is authentic if it is contextualised, that is, test items are not presented in isolation but in a context and reflect real-life situations. For example, you are taking a walk with your friend and you meet your teacher of English. Introduce your friend to him.

## *Practicability*

Generally, practicability has to do with the administration of tests and resources. Can the test, for example, be constructed, administered and marked in a given time frame? Is it friendly to teachers? Can it be conducted within the available resources?

## *Reliability*

A test is reliable, when it produces the same results (marks) regardless of who marks it. For example, multiple choice questions, true/false and yes/no tests items. In other words, a reliable test is objective (objectivity). Savignon (1983: 233) defines the three types of reliability as follows:

- (i) *Rater reliability*: The extent to which the same test scored over and over again by the same scorer or by different scorers yields the same or similar values.
- (ii) *Item reliability (internal consistency)*: The extent to which all items consistently rank people the same.
- (iii) *Test-retest reliability*: Stability of a measurement procedure in different settings.

## *Validity*

A test is valid when it tests what it is supposed to test. For example, if a test measures reading competence and nothing else, then it is a valid test for reading. There are different types of validity, namely; face validity, content validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity and construct validity. Savignon (1983: 236) defines the five types of validity as follows:

- (i) *Face validity*: The test looks as though it measures what it is supposed to measure.
- (ii) *Content validity*: The tasks included are representative of the larger set of tasks of which the test is supposed to sample.
- (iii) *Predictive validity*: The test predicts performance in some subsequent situation such as job success, performance on another test or Grade in a course.



- (iv) *Concurrent validity*: The test gives results similar to those obtained from another measure taken concurrently – for example, performance on another test.
- (v) *Construct validity*: The test is an accurate reflection of an underlying theory of what it is supposed to measure.

### **Washback**

A good test should have what is called washback. That is, it has a positive effect on the teaching-learning process. In other words, the test provides feedback which enhances learning.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, we have defined key terms in language assessment and discussed types of tests. In the following chapter, we discuss the relationship between teaching approaches and tests.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHING APPROACHES AND TESTS

In this chapter, we will discuss the relationship between teaching approaches and tests from a historical perspective starting with the oldest teaching approach. The oldest approach is known as the Grammar-Translation. This is the method which was used to teach Latin and Greek. When other languages began to be taught the same approach was adopted. This was at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The focus in this approach was teaching grammar, translation, vocabulary, morphology and syntax and literature. In short, the stress was on syntax and morphology; that is, sentence construction, functions of words such as plural/singular/masculine.

The tests which were in use at the time are known as traditional tests which equally focused on syntax and morphology. The tests only assessed candidates' linguistic competence, that is, knowledge of a language, not the ability to use it.

#### **Example**

Complete the following sentence using 'du', 'de la' 'des'

Passe-moi- sel

Due to inadequacies in the grammar-translation approach, language experts embarked on researching for better ways of teaching second/foreign languages. The studies, resulted into another approach known as the 'natural approach' towards the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century which sought to teach foreign languages similar to the way a child learns his/her mother tongue, hence the term 'natural'. This approach was later known as the 'Direct Approach' which officially came into use towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In this approach, translation or the use of the mother tongue was discouraged in class. To explain new words, teachers used pictures, objects, synonyms and paraphrases.

As for the tests used during this era, they still were traditional; that is, they still focused on syntax and morphology just like those

constructed during the traditional approach period. However, one thing to note is that, there was some progress in the teaching of foreign languages compared to the previous approach.

Due to the influence of structural linguistics and the behaviourist theory of Skinner F.B., a new approach known as the 'oral approach' was adopted to teach foreign languages. The approach had three versions, namely; the audio-lingual (American version), the situational approach (the British version) and the audio-visual approach (the French version). All the three versions emphasised on the teaching of oral language. This was the period when language laboratories became popular in the teaching of foreign languages (1950-1970) and the main exercises in class were known as the 'pattern drills'.

The key activity for the learners was repetition of sentences through substitution, expansion and transformation. The tests which were being used during this approach were known as discrete point tests. These are tests which focus on specific structural and lexical items. Examples of these tests can be found in Lado's textbook (1961).

**Example:** Peter and \_\_\_\_\_ are watching TV.

A - me

B - I

C - myself

D - mine

In the 1970s, as an alternative to discrete point tests, integrative tests were introduced. These are tests that evaluate general language ability. In other words, these are tests which draw on various language skills into operation, for example, vocabulary, reading skills, grammar etcetera. Examples of these kind of tests are dictation, close test and composition writing.

By the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, it was clear that the situational approach had run out of steam. It, therefore, needed to be replaced by another approach. So the mid-1970s saw the birth of the 'communicative approach.' The following contributed to the birth of the 'communicative approach'. The concept of communicative competence coined by Hymes D., studies in pragmatics by Searle and

Austin, social linguistics by Labov, Hymes and Bernstein, semantics by Halliday, Fillmore and studies by the Council of Europe.

The concept of communicative competence, already referred to above, was developed by Hymes (1972) who defined it as knowledge of a language and the socio-cultural rules governing the use of that language. What this means is that knowing a language is not enough, it involves knowing how to use it in its socio-cultural context.

Four components of communicative competence have been identified. These are: Linguistic, sociolinguistic, referential and strategic competencies. Linguistic competence is about knowledge of grammar (syntax and morphology); sociolinguistic competence is knowledge of sociocultural rules of the use and rules of discourse.

Referential competence is simply knowledge of objects and experiences. Lastly, strategic competence refers to verbal and non-verbal communication and is used by the speaker to make up for a breakdown in communication, for example, inadequacies in lexical items (vocabulary).

The concept of communicative competence is one of the contributors to the emergence of the communicative approach which is currently in use in second/foreign language teaching. To be in line with this approach, we are also now talking of communicative testing.

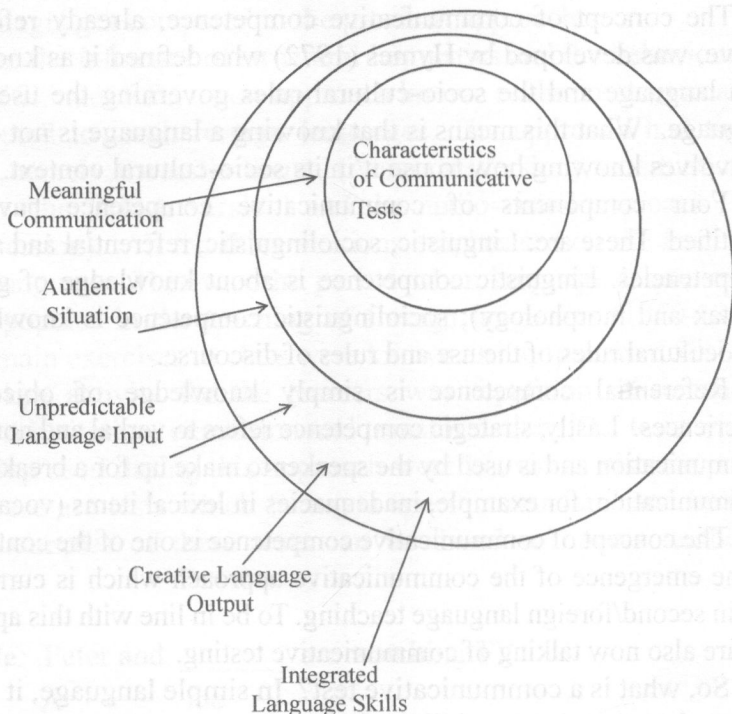
So, what is a communicative test? In simple language, it is a test that seeks to assess the ability of a testee to use a language acquired (or being acquired) in real-life situations. Generally, a communicative test has the following characteristics: meaningful communication, a context (authentic situation), unpredictable language input, creative language output and integrated language skills (Brown, 2005:21).

Grosso modo communicative tests are based on notions and are pragmatic and are developed using the techniques of simulation and role play.

### **Example:**

- (a). Your friend is travelling. Wish him a safe journey.
  - (i) Bon voyage!
- (b). A new pupil in your class is sitting next to you. Ask for his/her Name.
  - (i) What is your name?

The diagram below summarises the characteristics of communicative tests.



## Summary

In this chapter, we have discussed the relationship between the evolution of testing techniques and teaching approaches. In the next chapter, we will present samples of tests.

## CHAPTER THREE

### SAMPLE TESTS

#### Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension involves hearing and understanding the meaning of words, sentences or full texts. That is, understanding, remembering and discussing or retelling what has been heard. In short, listening comprehension is a receptive skill in an oral medium. It involves recognising speech sound, understanding individual words and or sentences. In a nutshell, listening comprehension is about making sense of spoken language.

#### Listening for Vocabulary

##### *Instructions*

The teacher reads out some sentences to which learners are expected to respond by performing what the sentences require them to do.

##### **Examples**

- (i) Walk to the door.
- (ii) Close the door.
- (iii) Write today's date on the board.
- (iv) Sing your favourite song.
- (v) Open your English textbook on page 20.
- (vi) Give me your pen.

#### Listening for Sound Discrimination

The purpose of this test is to assess the learners' abilities to discriminate among different sounds.

##### *Instructions*

Indicate the sound you have heard by marking X in the appropriate box. The sounds being targeted are [Y] [U] [E] and [e].



		[Y]	[U]	[E]	[e]
1	Il a trop bu	√			
2	Vous venez avec moi?		√		
3	Il est sous		√		
4	Tu est fou	√	√		
5	La porte est fermee				√
6	Voila ma mere			√	

## Indicate the Number you Have Heard

### Instructions

A series of numbers are read out to the pupils. Their task is to write down the numbers they have heard.

### Example

#### Numbers

#### Answers

- |                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| 1. Ten         | 10  |
| 2. Twenty      | 20  |
| 3. Thirty      | 30  |
| 4. Five        | 5   |
| 5. Fourteen    | 14  |
| 6. One Hundred | 100 |
| 7. Fifty       | 50  |
| 8. Sixty       | 60  |

## Sound Discrimination

### Instructions

Indicate how many times you have heard a sound in a sentence.

### Example

(a) [U] (sound in French)

#### Answers

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1. Vous vous portez bien? | 2 |
| 2. Vous etes sous.        | 2 |

(b) [Y] (sound in French)

### *Answers*

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. Tiens salut!   | 1 |
| 2. Tu as trop bu. | 2 |

## **Name the Place of the Conversation**

### *Instructions*

Present a short piece of conversation to the pupils then ask them to name the place where the conversation is taking place.

### **Examples**

- (a) (i) What is the problem?  
(ii) I have a severe headache.

**Place:** At the Clinic/Hospital

- (b) (i) I have come to report the theft of my car ALV 8047.  
(ii) Okay, go ahead.

**Place:** At the Police station.

### **Taking Notes (Role Play)**

#### *Instructions*

This test can be executed in pairs. One learner plays the role of a manager in a company while the other one plays the role of a secretary. The Manager dictates to the secretary on a particular issue, for example, reporting late for work; the secretary takes notes. Later, he or she is expected to prepare a memo to the workers in the company for their information.

### **Possible Topics**

- (i) Reporting late for work
- (ii) Reporting drunk on duty
- (iii) Code of dress at work
- (iv) Salary advance application procedure



## **Interviews**

### *Instructions*

A recorded interview with a personality, for example, a politician, on a particular topic is played to the pupils. As the interview is being played, the pupils are free to take notes. Later, ask them to answer some questions in the form of yes/no, true/false, or multiple choice questions.

### **Possible Topics**

- (i) Unemployment in Zambia
- (ii) Corporal punishment in schools
- (iii) Arranged marriages
- (iv) Free education

## **News Items**

### *Instructions*

Pupils listen to news from the radio, or television and after they have listened, they are required to answer questions in the form of multiple choice questions, true/false, yes/no, agreed/disagreed.

### **Example of a news item**

Yesterday, the Zambian president signed the Constitution Amendment Bill at the National Heroes Stadium. This means that Zambia now has a new Constitution which has replaced the 1996 one.

### **Questions**

1. The signing of the constitution took place at State House? True/False
2. The President of Zambia signed the Bill. Yes/No.
3. The new constitution will be used together with the 1996 one. True/False

## **Summary**

### *Instructions*

The teacher reads loudly a text on a particular topic. As he or she is reading, pupils are free to take notes. Then he or she asks the pupils

to summarise it in a written form. Alternatively, they can provide the summary orally.

### **Possible Topics**

- (i) Choice of a career
- (ii) Importance of learning foreign languages
- (iii) Abolition of school uniforms

### **Lecture**

#### *Instructions*

Pupils listen to a recorded lecture then they are asked to answer questions in the form of True/False, Yes/No multiple choice questions.

### **Possible Lecture Topics**

- (i) Shaka Zulu
- (ii) Early Migrations into Zambia
- (iii) Human Rights
- (iv) Teaching Techniques

### **Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is defined as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language ([https://www.rand.org/content/dam/and/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR146/MR1465.ch2.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/and/pubs/monograph_reports/MR146/MR1465.ch2.pdf) accessed 2/12/2015). So, according to this definition, reading comprehension simply means understanding or extracting and constructing meaning from what one reads. The process involves three elements, namely; reader, text and processing the text.

### **Authentic Statements**

#### *(a) Instructions*

You are a Zambian visiting South Africa. You arrive at Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. You have to present your passport to the immigration desk. In front of you, you see and read the following:

A – South African Nationals

B – SADC Countries

C – Other Countries

Where do you present yourself? A, B or C?

(b) *Instructions:* Read the advertisement below and answer the questions.

Expatriate leaving, selling a Toyota Corolla.

**Price:** Negotiable

**Status:** Second hand

If interested, ring 0955784476.

1. The price of the vehicle is indicated

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

2. The vehicle is not new?

True \_\_\_\_\_

False \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary

### (Identify main ideas)

#### *Instructions*

Pupils are asked to read an authentic text on a particular subject. Then they are asked to either orally or in writing say what the text is all about.

## Understanding a Written Passage

#### *Instructions*

Ask pupils to read a text on an appropriate subject, then they should respond to questions (multiple choice, true/false, yes/no, one word answers etcetera).

## Matching of Similar Meanings

### Instructions

Read the following text then answer the questions.

Match the meanings in (2) and the words in (1).

The MMD has declined to comment on overtures from the Patriotic Front (PF) to form an alliance ahead of the August 11, 2016 general elections.

(Source: Daily Nation 20 January 2016: 1)

1	2
Comment	Refused
Declined	Working together
Alliance	Say something about something

## Matching of Opposing Meanings

Match the opposite meanings of words (1) and (2):

1	2
Climbing	Short
Love	Thin
Tall	Descending
Fat	Hate

## What is Your View/Opinion?

### Instructions

A text on a particular topic or subject is read then pupils are asked to give their own view/opinion on the same either orally or in writing.

## Possible Topics

- (i) Employment among the youth
- (ii) Early marriages
- (iii) Arranged marriages are better than unarranged ones
- (iv) Corporal punishment should be re-introduced in schools

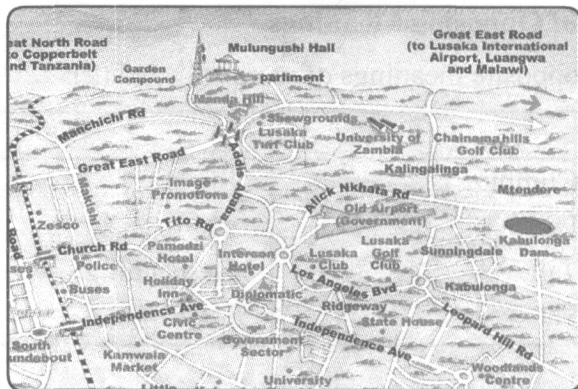
## Speaking Tests

The purpose of speaking tests is to assess learners' abilities to express themselves orally. Here after, are examples of such tests. The list is not exhaustive.

### Direction

#### *Instructions*

Distribute a map of a known town to the pupils and ask them to explain how one would get to point B from point A. This can be done in pairs. Pupil X asks pupil Y how to get to some place on the map.



## Guided Speaking

#### *Instructions*

Present to the pupils different occasions of language use in which formulaic complementary remarks or formulae expressions are employed. Then ask them to provide the appropriate complementary remark or formulaic expression for each of the occasions.

## Examples:

- (1) It is your friend's birthday (Happy birthday)
- (2) It is Christmas day (Happy Christmas)
- (3) It is New Year's day (Happy New Year)
- (4) A friend is leaving on a journey (Bon Voyage)
- (5) You are a class monitor. Your class is waiting for the next teacher to come in but pupils are making a lot of noise. Ask them to keep quiet.
- (6) You are one of the old pupils in your school. A new pupil asks you to show him/her the head teacher's office.
- (7) You are in a long queue waiting to pay your school fees. A pupil comes and by passes all of you and goes in front of the queue. What would you say to him/her?

## Reporting an Event

You have been involved in a car accident. You go to the police station to report. What are you going to say? (Points may be given to help candidates)

## Instructions

### Situation Cards

Distribute cards on which role playing instructions are written and request pupils to perform them in pairs or groups.

## Examples

Invite X (your friend) to accompany you to a film show

Greet your teacher

Introduce your neighbour to the class

Introduce yourself to the class

## Identity Cards

### Instructions

- (a) Ask pupils to answer questions based on an identity card.

Name:	Peter C. Manchishi
Age:	63
Nationality:	Zambian
Position:	Senior Lecturer
Village:	Shipanuka
Chief:	Bundabunda
District:	Lufunsa
NRC:	2277522/11/1

- (i) What is his name?
- (ii) What is his first name?
- (iii) How old is he?
- (iv) What is his position?
- (v) What is his nationality?

Ask learners to ask questions based on an identity card. Allow them to read the information first.

Name:	Mwila Manchishi
Age:	21 years
Nationality:	Zambian
Profession:	Student
Residential Address:	No. 28 Wusakili Crescent, Northmead, Lusaka
Place of Birth:	Lusaka

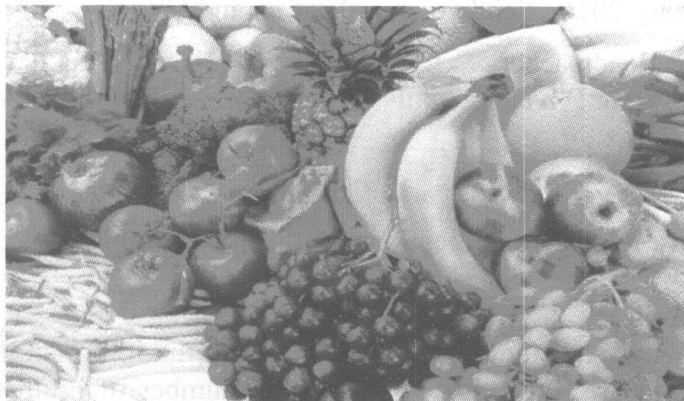
### Examples of Questions:

- (i) How old is Mwila?
- (ii) What is her profession?
- (iii) Where does she live?

## Oral Description

### Instructions

Display authentic visuals like the one below and ask pupils to describe them.



### Written Tests

Writing tests seek to determine the learners' language proficiency to express themselves. The following are some examples of some written tests.

### Advertisements

You want to buy a car but you do not have enough money. You decide to sell one of your properties. Prepare an advertisement which will appear in a local newspaper. Include the following: name of the property, its condition, price, etcetera.

### Example

House in good condition on sale.

- (i) Going at K500,000 = 00 (Negotiable)
- (ii) Contact, 0955784476



## **Responding to a Job Advertisement**

### *Instructions*

We are looking for a teacher of French to teach Grades 8 to 12. The candidate should have a degree in French. The closing date is 30 January 2016. Send your application and CV to:

The Headteacher  
Chongwe Private School  
P.O. Box 30  
**Chongwe**

You have relevant qualifications for this job, do apply.

### **My Family**

Write about your family. Include the following information; how many you are, including your parents, number of brothers and sisters, the profession of your parents and any other information you wish to include.

### **Self Introduction**

#### *Instructions*

You are attending a meeting. The organisers of the meeting have asked the participants to introduce themselves. Write what you are going to say. Include the following; name, age, nationality, residence and profession.

### **My Country**

#### *Instructions*

Your penpal would like to visit your country, but before he/she travels, he/she would like to have more information about your country. Include in your letter the following: location, size, population, main tourist attractions and any other information.

## Completion of a Dialogue

### Instructions

#### Complete the following dialogue

- A - Come in.  
B - \_\_\_\_\_
- A - It's you John, good morning.  
B - \_\_\_\_\_
- A - Can I offer you something to drink?  
B - \_\_\_\_\_
- A - What would you like?  
B - \_\_\_\_\_

## Constructing a Conversation

### Instructions

You are in a shop looking for a shirt to buy. The shop attendant approaches you.

Shop attendant: Good morning. Can I help you?

Customer (you): .....

Continue the conversation.....

## Reporting Writing

### Instructions

It is around 3 a.m, you are at home and you have been attacked by thieves who get away with your car. You report the incident at the police station. Write what you are going to say. (Points may be given to help candidates).

## **Speech Writing**

### *Instruction*

You have been selected to give a vote of thanks at a sports event. The guest of honour is the provincial education officer. Write what you are going to say (some points may be given to help candidates).

## **Grammar Tests**

The purpose of grammar tests is to assess whether learners are able to recognise or write correct grammar. The following are some samples of grammar tests.

## **Editing**

### *Instructions*

An article which contains errors is distributed to pupils. Their task is to edit it.

### **Example**

#### *Fatal Accident on the Lusaka Kabwe Road*

Yesterday around 22 hours, two vecles collided and overtained. Four pipo died on spot. There bodies lying in the Kabwe general hospital motuary. The causer of the accident is not known.

## **Identifying the Errors**

### *Instructions*

A text with grammatical errors is distributed to pupils and they are required to just underline the grammatical mistakes or errors.

## **Using the Future Tense**

### *Instructions*

Write a letter to a friend informing him or her what you are going to do during the forthcoming school holidays. Use the future tense.

## **Identifying the Correct Sentences**

### *Instructions*

A list of sentences is provided and pupils are asked to identify those which are grammatically correct.

### **Example**

1. They is my brothers.
2. They are my sisters.
3. We are discussing about tourism in Zambia.
4. We are discussing tourism in Zambia.
5. He was the causer of the accident.
6. He was the cause of the accident.

## **Avoiding Repetitions**

### *Instructions*

A text with repetitions is given to pupils. They are required to avoid them.

### **Example**

John is a pupil at Munali Secondary School. John is fourteen years old. His sister Mary is also a pupil at the same school. Mary is thirteen years old.

## **Identify the Adjectives**

### *Instructions*

Give pupils a text which contains some adjectives;

- (a) Ask them to identify the adjectives by just underlining them.
- (b) Ask them to use the identified adjectives to describe something.

## **Singular or Plural?**

### *Instructions*

A list of sentences is read to the pupils. They should indicate whether the subject and verb are in the singular or the plural form.

## Constructing Correct Sentences

### Instructions

Using the information given hereafter, construct correct sentences.

Chomba Manchishi

Sixty-three years old

Born on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1952

Zambian

Village Shipanuka, Lufunsa District

### Summary

In this chapter, we have presented samples of tests teachers may construct. These tests are just examples or a guide. The list is not exhaustive. In the next chapter, we discuss scoring of tests or marking.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SCORING TESTS

#### Overview

In this chapter, we shall discuss test scoring. That is, marking both written and oral tests. In doing so, we will focus mainly on composition and conversation tests which are considered to be subjective when it comes to awarding marks. The other forms of tests are easy to mark because they are objective and require responses such as; true/false, yes/no, one word response or multiple choice questions etcetera.

#### Conversation

Traditionally, this form of test is marked taking into consideration the following criteria: Harris (1969) cited in Mothe (1975: 66)

*Pronunciation:* The examiner looks for standard or acceptable pronunciation, that is, are the accent and intonation acceptable.

*Fluency of Speech:* The flow of speech. Is it full of hesitations due to limited vocabulary or not?

*Vocabulary:* The choice of words. Is it rich or inadequate in terms of vocabulary? Is it appropriate?

*Grammar:* Are morphological and syntactic elements being used correctly? That is, are grammatical rules being observed?

*Comprehension:* Is the candidate able to comprehend the examiner's questions and are they being responded to appropriately?

It is suggested that marks be allocated to each of the components stated above to arrive at the total. In this case, for example, if the conversation is out of twenty marks, each component can be allocated a total of five marks (marked out of 5) as follows:

5	-	Excellent
4	-	Very good
3	-	Good
2	-	Satisfactory
1	-	Poor
0	-	Unacceptable

The purpose of having such a marking key is to reduce or lower subjectivity although it cannot be completely removed.

### **Composition**

Harris (1969), cited in Mothe (1975: 7) proposed the following criteria to be considered when awarding marks:

- (i) Content: Ideas (points).
- (ii) Form: How content has been organised or presented.
- (iii) Grammar: Correct use of morphological and syntactic forms (use of language).
- (iv) Style: Choice of words and structures to give a specific tone of the writing different from other writings.
- (v) Mechanisms: Includes such things as spellings, punctuation, capitalisation etcetera.

Each of the components above can be allocated say five marks; that is if the total marks for the composition are out of twenty as follows:

- 5 - Excellent
- 4 - Very Good
- 3 - Good
- 2 - Satisfactory
- 1 - Poor
- 0 - Unacceptable

The purpose of having such a marking key is to reduce or lower subjectivity although it cannot be completely removed.

### **Marking for Communication**

The problem with the marking format described above for both oral and written tests is that it is focusing on the knowledge of language (*savoir* and not learners' ability to use it '*Savoir-faire*'). In this vein, it is advisable to, first of all, ask ourselves as examiners, the following question: Has the pupil managed to communicate the intended message? If yes, marks should separately be awarded

for this aspect, that is, the ability to communicate. Then formal marking described above can follow also separately, marks can then be added up. For example, if the conversation or composition is out of 20, in each case, 10 marks can be fragmented to the ability to communicate and another 10 for the correctness of language (Bolton, 1981).

1	2
Ability to transmit the message, is the message clear or not? (out of 10)	Use of language correct/not correct (out of 10)

The marks the candidate gets out of 10 in (1) and (2) above are added and the total out of 20 allocated to the whole test. In this way, we are being fair to the pupils. Very often, examiners concentrate on language errors and mistakes even if the candidate has communicated the intended message. It is possible to get the message even when it is not in correct language. The current approach, in foreign language teaching, focuses on communication (Communicative Approach). So, the same should apply to testing. It should be communicative testing.

### Summary

In this chapter, we have shown how tests (conversations and composition) should be marked. In the next chapter, we discuss quantification of test performance.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### QUANTIFICATIONS OF TEST PERFORMANCE

Before we present the statistical calculations of results of a test, we would like first to define the following terms:

*Raw score, ranking, range, arithmetic mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and variance.*

**Raw score** is the actual score that a learner gets on a test.

**Ranking** is the process of arranging scores in order of size.

**Range** is the difference between the highest score and the lowest.

**Arithmetic mean** can be defined as the performance of a group in terms of averages.

**Median** is the middle number in a set of scores arranged in order of size.

**Mode** is the most common score in a group of scores.

**Standard deviation** is a measure of the dispersion of a set of data from its mean.

**Variance** is the average squared deviation of each number from the mean. It is the squared standard deviation.

#### Calculations

$$\text{Arithmetic mean} = \frac{\text{Sum of scores}}{\text{Number of scores}}$$

Example: 6, 4, 10, 2, 2, 2,

Sum of scores 26

Number of scores 6

**Mean** 4.3

## Median

Examples:

Scores (a) 1, 2 (3) 4 5

**Median is 3**

Scores (b) 10, 11, 12, 13; 11 and 12 are in the middle of the scores so add them and divide by two.

$$\frac{11+12}{2} = 11.5$$

2

**Median is 11.5**

## Mode

Scores (a) 1,2,2,3, 4

**Mode is 2**

Scores (b) 4,5,5,6,7,8,9,9,10

**Modes are two 5 and 9**

**Standard deviation (SD):** The steps to follow when calculating SD are:

- Calculate the mean
- Calculate the deviation
- Square each deviation from the mean
- Apply the formula

Scores (n)	Deviation (d)	d <sup>2</sup>
8	+2	4
7	+1	1
7	+1	1
6	0	0
5	-1	1
5	-1	1
4	-2	4
42		
42		
7		

**Mean = 6**

SD = square root of total of  $\frac{\sum d^2}{n}$  i.e square root of  $\frac{12}{42}$

**Variance**

$$\frac{\sum d^2}{n} = \frac{\text{Mean}}{\text{Number of scores}}$$

**Example**

Scores 1 2 3

Mean is 2

Number of scores is 3

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Variance} &= \frac{(1-2)^2 + (2-2)^2 + (3-2)^2}{3} \\ &= \underline{\underline{0.667}}\end{aligned}$$

**Summary**

In this chapter, we have defined some statistical terminologies and shown how they are calculated. In the next chapter, we will define research and also indicate research areas in language testing.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE TESTING**

#### **Overview**

In this chapter, the following issues are discussed; meaning of research characteristics, role of research, and types of research. Furthermore, the chapter also presents areas in Language testing which can be delved into.

What is research? Kerlinger (1970) cited in Cohen (1980: 14), defines research as 'a systematic, controlled, empirical and critical investigation of propositions about the presumed relationships among natural phenomena'. From this definition, it is clear that research is simply an investigation into a problem in order to solve it (the problem). In a nutshell, research is about problem solving.

In education, research can be defined as a study which investigates the teaching-learning process including the environment in which the process is taking place. Education research, therefore, is, how teachers teach (pedagogy) and how learners learn.

In Zambia, various institutions are involved in education research. Some of these are public and private universities, Colleges of Education, the Ministry of Education, some NGOs and UNICEF. As regards the researchers on education, these come from both undergraduate and postgraduate students and, academic staff from within and outside Zambia.

#### **What are the Characteristics of Research?**

Research has the following characteristics:

- (a) It is systematic which means that research is conducted in a logical manner or procedure;
- (b) It is controlled, that is, a researcher can control certain variables in a study;
- (c) It is empirical in that the conclusions made are based or anchored on evidence or proof;
- (d) It is critical because the results obtained are open to scrutiny by the public or other fellow professionals (researchers).

## **Role of Research**

Research plays a lot of roles in society. Some of these are;

- (a) It solves problems. That is, it provides solutions to problems encountered;
- (b) It enables us to understand events in our environment;
- (c) It enhances the teaching-learning process (in case of educational research);
- (d) It promotes progress, in terms of innovations or teaching;
- (e) It may influence change of policy; and lastly,
- (f) Research advances or generates knowledge.

## **Types of Research**

There are three main types of research, namely; pure, applied and developmental. Pure research, is that which is just academic and whose purpose, is simply to generate knowledge. For example, most research conducted by both undergraduate and postgraduate students is pure or basic research.

Applied research seeks to provide solutions to problems hence the word 'applied' that is, taking action. Developmental research is a research which promotes innovations or technology. This is very common in science based studies. It is actually also an applied research.

## **Areas of Research in Language Testing**

Research is required in language testing in order to enhance it. Hereafter, are some areas which need to be researched into.

## **Validity and Reliability of Tests**

Validity is about whether tests are assessing what they intend to assess while reliability concerns the trust worthiness of tests. Since there is continuous innovation in language tests, equally, research to ascertain their validity and reliability is necessary.

### **Item Tests Analysis**

Item tests analysis is another area which requires research to assess their difficulties and discrimination power especially tests which use multiple choice questions. The process involves assessing candidates' answers to each test question to determine the quality of the questions.

### **Role of Language in the Educational System**

What is the principle role of language tests in the educational system? Is this role being fulfilled by the current tests? This is a task test researchers can delve into.

### **Impact of Language Tests**

In this area of study, researchers should try to assess the kind of impact the tests are making on the whole educational system and whether the impact is positive or negative.

### **Evaluation of Testing Techniques**

Many testing techniques are being developed in the area of language. The question one would want to ask is, how effective are they? Are they effectively testing the candidates' knowledge? The answers to these questions, require empirical evidence.

### **Test Takers and Examiners**

Not so much has been done to describe both the candidates' and examiners' minds, work and behaviour (or attitudes) regarding tests. This is one area worth investigating, including the marking of transcripts by Examiners.

### **Innovation**

There is need to continuously conduct studies in Language testing in order to come up with new and appropriate testing techniques. This is so because, teaching techniques are continuously changing. The two must move together.

## **Teacher Training**

Most of the people who prepare tests are teachers. It is, therefore, imperative to find out whether institutions preparing teachers (pre-service training) are 'arming' the trainees with necessary and appropriate training in Language testing. This can only be done through studies.

## **Computer and Paper-Based Tests**

Studies are required in this area to compare and contrast the two if schools are to benefit from them and also to improve upon them. Computer-based tests also known as e-assessment, computer assisted assessment employ information technology to assess learners. Paper-based tests are the traditional or classic tests we are used to.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, we have defined research and presented research areas in Language testing. The list above, is not exhaustive. Some study areas might have been left out. The purpose of including this chapter in this book, was to encourage language experts to conduct research in the field of language testing.



## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it should be noted that communicative language testing seeks to assess learners' ability to use language in real-life situations. Equally, we should note that communicative language testing can be realised through the use of techniques such as; simulation and role play. This is what we have tried to do in Chapter three. The tests we have proposed should be treated as mere guides and stimuli to the teacher/examiner to create his/her own.

Furthermore, it should be noted here that testing techniques should always be in tandem with the teaching methodology in use at a given time. For now, it is the communicative language teaching approach which emphasises on communication. The two, teaching and testing techniques should move together.

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