

Communicative language testing in ESP context

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Abstract

Language tests have always been important to people. Language is the most important means of communication, and only through it we can convey and receive messages, as well as test our cognitive abilities in different fields of knowledge. But while testing other cognitive areas of human knowledge is considered relatively easy, testing language itself has resulted rather difficult. Language testing theory has undergone several phases of development, from being completely uninterested in reliability and validity, to becoming obsessed with statistical formulae, which would have catered for the much wanted reliability. Swaying from one extreme to the other, communicative language testing seems to have found a balance between reliability through statistical analyses on the one hand, and validity through closely observing elements of language competence and performance, as well as ethical issues which bring tests closer to the social dimension. This article will give a general overview of how communicative language testing came in place, the theory and pertaining elements of such tests, as well as issues that have yet to be answered.

Keywords: communicative competence, communicative testing, real-life situations, specific purpose test, target language use.

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