

The International English Language Testing System

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Abstract— The research will be focusing on International English Language Testing System the research paper analyses the test in terms of principles of language assessments. The five principles include the practicality, reliability, validity as well as the authenticity of such tests. These principles are very important in determining the effectiveness of the language tests that one may be subjected.



1 INTRODUCTION

IELTS is an abbreviation that stands for the International English Language Testing System. This is one of the world's most famous or popular language proficiency tests that is always accorded to the higher education as well as global migrations (U.S.News.com). It is of crucial significance to note that the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is very critical in the assessments of nearly all the English skills. These include the skills evident in reading, writing, listening skills as well as the speaking skills. Relevant to the above, it is of critical significance to note that the International English Language Testing System is always very important in designing as well as reflecting on the manner in which one may be able to use English in the future for studying, working, playing as well as other engagements in the future activities.

2 Overview and Description

The International English Language Testing System comprises a number of tests that are developed or established by a number of world's leading experts in the field of language assessment. As such, it is critical to highlight that IELTS tests have a credible international reputation. Furthermore, IELTS tests have been massively accepted worldwide by a myriad of employees, immigration authorities as well as several key professional bodies (IELTS.org). It is of crucial significance to underscore the fact that the International English Language Testing System tests is one of a kind of English language tests that employs the use of face-to-face speaking or conversation tests that gear towards the assessment of an individual's English communication skills (IELTS.org). As such, it implies that the individual always gets assessed by having real-life conversation involving the person being interviewed as well as the real interviewer.

The International English Language Testing System tests are designed for certain particular audience. The major audience involves the non-native English speakers (IELTS.org). In connection to the above, it is important to note that IELTS test accommodates those people who may be in need of enrolling into certain institutions of higher education where English is most commonly used, but are originating from the countries where English is not used, or is used as a second language. In addition, IELTS test also accommodates the audiences like those individuals who may be in need of practicing their English skills but rather not through pursuing academics, but rather as a requirement for working environ-

ments or meeting certain immigration requirements.

The major purpose of the International English Language Testing System is to aide in the assessment of the English language proficiency of individuals who use English as a second language, or non-native English speakers (ELTS.org). This test is always designed to examine a considerably wide range of skills in English language. The ILETS has been designed to test the users of English language in four paramount areas that include listening, reading, speaking and writing. For a person to claim to have mastered the art of fluently using the English language, he or she should learn to listen to it effectively, be able to read it and even write. Using the English language requires one to be able to communicate well, both in written and spoken language.

IELTS test compromises of four sections that measure integrated skills. Listening part consists of four sections that test different fields of knowledge as well as including integrative skills. Each section of the test comprises of ten simple questions that the student is supposed to listen and answer. Student is measured for listening, recalling and spelling skills. The questions revolve around library knowledge, as well as general knowledge on events like music festivals. The topics covered in this section are authentic that would be used in real world.

Reading, writing and speaking sections contain different sets of tests that the students are expected to read and extract information necessary for answering the questions. In addition, the students are also expected to write and speak in some of the tests. The passage tests the knowledge of the students relevant to time keeping skills. This section also contains short answer questions that the students are supposed to attempt answering within a given duration of time. on the other hand, writing tests the student's general knowledge on a number of social issues like causes of land degradation. In addition, it also examines the abilities of the students to articulate and express their ideas on a number of issues relating to being responsible society members. Relevant to speaking, the test examines the student based on their personal experiences as well as the general knowledge on a number of set topics.

These tests employ the use of criterion reference tests that would enable the interviewer to have a better understanding of the student based on the set standards. At the end of each section, the examiner assesses the student's outcomes and

interprets the results. Wrong scores by the student shows some limitations on the depths of knowledge tested on the side of the exam taker. These take the form of criterion referenced tests whereby the students performances are measured and determined by the use of fixed and standard set criteria. These define what the students are expected to know relevant to some fields in education.

3 Evaluation of the IELTS test

It is of critical significance to note that the principles of language assessments should always be applied to formal tests in a number of ways. The five major principles of language assessments that should always form the basis of all English tests include the practicality of the test, the reliability of the tests, the validity as well as the authenticity of such tests. The wash backs also form part of the principles that should always be observed by all the language proficiency tests. These principles are very important in determining the effectiveness of the language tests that one may be subjected. The goodness of any test depends on how appropriate that test seems relevant to the principles of language assessment detailed above. It is of crucial significance to note that a good language test should always be very dependable, show the ability to measure what needs to be measured or examined, must be precise and depict the ability to be administered within the most appropriate administrative constraints. In this respect, it is noteworthy to highlight that a good language assessment should always adhere to the five cardinal criteria of practicality, reliability, validity as well as wash-back and authenticity.

Practicality of the language tests should always focus on the logicity as well as the logistical aspects. These put into consideration the administrative issues relevant to the tests, the amount of time needed for the students to effectively complete the tests, the total costs associated with the tests among others (Brown,26). Any language test should always be considered impractical if it can consume more than five hours of the person being examined. This means that such a language test consumes more time than may be required to fully accomplish all the objectives of the test. Thus, the issue of practicality of such test is compromised. In addition, the practicality of the test is also determined by the availability of the resources needed to fully accomplish the test. In this regard, any language test that may require that the examiner uses computers to score the assessments is highly considered impractical. Thus, a practical language test should always provide the examiner with the ability to score the assessments using the readily available resources. In addition to the above, the practicality of any language test is also determined by the duration taken by the examinee to take the test as well as the duration taken by the examiner to complete the marking. Any test that takes the examinees a few hours to complete, and on the other side demands a considerably long time for the examiner to complete marking is highly impractical (Brown, 26).

With relevance to practicality, it is important to note that the sample test provided is very practical. This is because it has very clear directions for administration. For example, figure one below illustrates the practicality of the listening section in the test given.

Test 1
SECTION 2 Questions 11–20
Questions 11–15
Complete the sentences below.
Write NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER for each answer.

The Dinosaur Museum

11 The museum closes at p.m. on Mondays.
12 The museum is not open on
13 School groups are met by tour guides in the
14 The whole visit takes 90 minutes, including minutes for the guided tour.
15 There are behind the museum where students can have lunch.

Questions 16–18
Choose THREE letters, A–G.
Which THREE things can students have with them in the museum?

A food
B water
C sunscreen
D books
E bags
F pens
G worksheets

Figure 1: Example of the IELTS Test depicting practicality

The students will find it very easy to understand the questions and answer them effectively. The sample test provided is very practical because students must complete the task with giving time instruction. It also considers the time as well as effort that are required by the examinee for the scoring purposes. From the design of the questions, it is very easy for the examiner to score the assessment using the available resources, but not necessarily need other resources like computers to aide in the scoring. This makes the test become very practical. Moreover, the assessment can also be completed by the examiner within the most appropriate time. This means that the task may not consume a lot of time of the examinee, thereby making it very practical. As such, the examiner may also find it easy to finalize marking the assessment by employing little efforts within the most appropriate time.

The other principle of language assessment that should always be observed by all language tests is the reliability of the test. Reliability of the language tests is always determined by its consistency, dependability as well as the clarity of evaluation directions. A reliable test is always consistent in all its conditions across a number of administrations. In addition, a reliable language assessment should always have uniform rubrics for evaluation, alongside ensuring that the directions given for evaluation are succinctly clear (Brown, 27). Moreover, it is always very important to note that the language assessment given to the examinees are always devoid of ambiguous items and tasks to the examinees. In case such language tests contain such ambiguous items, they are considered unreliable.

Relevant to reliability, it is critical to highlight that the sample language test provided is very reliable. The figure 2 below can illustrate the reliability of the test given.



Figure 2: Example of the IELTS Test depicting reliability

The above example of the reading section depicts that the test is reliable because it gives clear directions for scoring, as well as lacks ambiguous items that the examinees may not understand. Moreover, the provided sample test is very reliable since it is very consistent in its conditions and has uniform rubrics that are necessary for scoring or evaluation. The tests within the provided sample are also very organized and are well written.

Validity of the test is one of the principles of language assessment in any test. The validity of any language proficiency test is always a subject of the level of appropriateness, meaningfulness as well as the purpose of the inferences that the assessment aims to establish. As such, it is critical to underscore the fact that a valid English proficiency test should always depict the ability to measure exactly what it intends to evaluate. As such, a valid language test should always adhere to relevant variables. This means that a language test that measures irrelevant variables should be termed invalid. Moreover, a valid language test should always depend entirely on empirical evidences. A valid language proficiency test should always be backed up by theoretical rationales and arguments (Brown,29). Furthermore, it is significant to note that a valid proficiency test should always offer useful information relevant to the abilities of the examinees.

In consideration to the provided test sample, it is important to note that the test is very valid. This is because it observes and adheres to all the criteria of validity of any language proficiency test. The example below (figure 3) depicts some of the reasons why the test is considered valid.

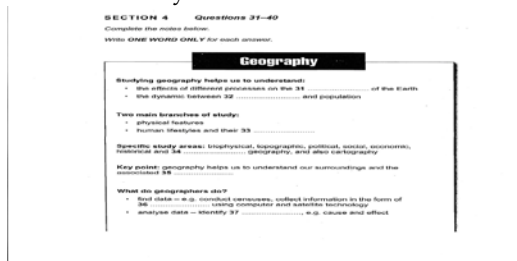


Figure 3: Example of the IELTS Test depicting the validity of the sample test given

The sample test provided incorporates useful and meaningful information relevant to the examinee. Moreover, the provided sample language test is keen on relying on empirical evidence and measures exactly what it intends to measure from the test-taker or the examinee.

A language proficiency test should always be authentic. The principle of authenticity of the language test is always

determined by the nature in which the language tasks corresponds or compares to the target features of the same task. In connection to the above, authenticity of a language test may be evident through the topics covered, their relevance and meaningfulness. In addition, an authentic test must always contain language that is natural as much as possible and provide thematic design and organization to the items covered (Brown, 26). These are evident in the sample language proficiency test provided. The example below of the speaking section (figure 4) shows very real authentic topics that the students use in their real life.



Figure 4: Example of the IELTS Test depicting the authenticity

The sample test contains language that is as natural as is required, covers real-world tasks as well as provides thematic organization of topics as well as items covered. Furthermore, authenticity of the sample test provided is evident relevant to the interesting topic covered; the meaningfulness as well as relevance of the specific items tested (Brown, 26).

Other than authenticity, it is also important to note that the sample language test provides beneficial washback. Washback is another principle of language assessment that denotes the effect of testing as observed on teaching and learning activities relevant to the assessment provided. Relevant to the above, it is important to note that the sample language test commands positive influences on how the teachers deliver lectures to the students, the contents of their lessons as well as have positive impacts on the learning outcomes from the students (Brown, 28). This is because the tests have been designed in such a way that they provide the learners with the abilities to enhance their language developments based on the assessment questions.

4 conclusion

The main aim of the International English Language Testing System is to aide in the assessment of the English language proficiency. The test is always designed for those who use English as a second language. The test examines four paramount areas that include listening, reading, speaking and writing. In addition, the test also focuses on five major principles of language assessments. These always form the basis of all English tests. The five principles include the practicality, reliability, validity as well as the authenticity of such tests. These principles are very important in determining the effectiveness of the language tests that one may be subjected. It is of critical significance to note that the sample language test

provided meets all the principles of language assessment.

References

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