Asking the Right Questions

Assessing Language Skills

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Definitions:

Evaluation – in general the systematic gathering of information for purposes of decision making

Assessment – measure of a person's ability, that is what the person knows or can do

Test – the actual procedure for measuring ability, for example the performance of a written or oral task; means of examination

Consider the role of the test? Is it a tool for formative or summative assessment?

• Placement Tests • Diagnostic Tests • Progress or Achievement Tests • Proficiency Tests • Portfolio Assessments	Validity Does it test what we want it to test? Reliability Are the results of the test consistent?

Perhaps the essential insight of a quarter of a century of language testing (both research and practice) is that good teaching and testing are, or ought to be, nearly indistinguishable." (Oller 1991)

Discrete	Integrative

Indirect	Direct
Multiple Choice **Gap-Fill and Cloze** **Transformation** **Sentence Re-ordering** **Error Correction** **Match**	

Reading	Listening	Speaking	Writing	Grammar and Vocabulary

Marking Indirect vs. Direct Assessment items

Steps in Test Design (Harmer, 2007)

1. **List the things you want to test.**

2. **Decide how important each item is.**

   - **Give them more time or space on the test**

   - **Weight the marks to reflect the importance**

3. **Consider the test situation.**

4. **Write the test.**

5. **Consult and share.**

6. **Test the test. (the trial)**

7. **Reflect and refine.**

Another List to Consider (Brown and Hudson)

1. **Require students to perform, create, produce, or do something**

2. **Use real-world contexts or simulations**

3. **Allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day**

4. **Use tasks that present meaningful instructional activities**

5. **Focus on processes as well as products**

6. **Tap into higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills**

7. **Provide information about both the strength and weaknesses of students**

8. **Are multi-culturally sensitive when properly administered**

9. **Ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring using human judgment**

10. **Encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria**

11. **Call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles**