Testing the foundations

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Introduction

- Outline

- + general purpose statement …

- Explore what kinds of reading/listening test items would be most suitable for foundation

The Foundation Course (4')

- Nationalities, age etc.
- The Foundation Course (modules, subjects etc.)

Constraints

- Specific, non-integrated
- General, not subject/discipline specific
- Non-IELTS
- Input factual/information-based + limited by Flesch Reading Ease Scale
- External examiner comments (thank you!)
- 4 weeks!

Data collection analysis

Practice test (but not a true pilot)

2 basic data analysis measures:

- **Facility Index (FI)** – measures item difficulty (1 = too easy / 0 = impossible! Ideally FI of .5)
- **Discrimination Index (DI) –** how well item discriminates (difference between FI of top/bottom bands). DI 0.3, needs replacing.
- Both these used with individual items, but (Fulcher, 2010) suggests can be used to measure performance of certain sections and/or same question types – we have tried this

Reading test (7')

- Specifications (hand out)
- Brief make up of test/questions/tasks
- Analyse **some** question types/sections and see how successful they are – try to relate to Foundation students generally?

Listening Test (1)

- Specifications (hand out)
- Overview of test inputs and task types
- Brief overview of results
- Analyse 2 sections using FI and DI

Listening Test (2)

- Overview of test inputs and task types:
- 3 sections:

- **Section 1**
- Short extracts – space for notes, short answers (1-4 words) – overall/general meaning

Listening Test (3)

Section 2

- Short lecture style – Ppt slides with main information, short answers (usually specific data) – **intensive/detail**

Section 3

- Short lecture style – Listen first, make own notes. Hand out given, SS use notes to complete the diagram/answer questions – **note taking skills**

Listening Test (4)

Brief overview of results:

- Total marks – 35 No. of students - 30
- Mean score – 15.9
- Mode – 17
- Median – 17
- Range – 24
- (40% score to pass - success rate 63%)

Listening Test (5)

Section 2

- FI – range for section .06 to .8
- mean for whole section .41

- DI – range for section .2 – 1 (!)
- mean for whole section .55

Listening Test (6)

Section 3 (focus on diagram element only)

- FI – range for section .1 to .73

- mean for whole section .43

- DI – range for section .2 – .7

- mean for whole section .48

Conclusions

- Limited sample – be careful
- Statistical methods quite crude (– use of means over a section can hide variations?)
- However, results suggest that these test task types seem to be appropriate and reasonably effective for testing Foundation SS academic reading and listening skills.

References

Fulcher

Alderson, Clapham