***Testing***

**6.1 Definition**

Test is defined as “a method of measuring a person’s ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain” (Douglas, 2004, P. 03). In other words, a test is a technique used to examine learners’ language capacities.

In order to evaluate learners, many decisions should be made

**6.2 Purposes of Testing**

**6.2.1 Proficiency**

It involves how much of a language the students have learned. The focus is on the overall language ability without reference to any particular programme (its objectives, content and material). Such information is necessary to get a general notion of how much of the language the students know, for example to make admission, decisions and analyse the right level for programme objectives: whether too difficult or easy for the target group to meet in order to adjust the level of objectives to the true abilities of the students.

* + 1. **Placement**

Placement decisions are necessary when the aim is grouping students of similar ability levels together in the same classes. Placement tests are designed to facilitate the grouping of students according to their general level of ability. The purpose of this test is to show which of the students in the programme have more of or less of a particular ability, knowledge or skill (BAC).

If a given programme has a wide range of levels, a general proficiency test could serve as a placement instrument as well (ENS).

* + 1. **Achievement**

Decisions about students’ achievements require an idea of the amount of language that each student is learning in a given period of time with reference to a particular content. This requires tests directly linked to the programme objectives.

The information gathered in achievement testing can be used for re-examining the needs analysis, selecting or creating materials and teaching strategies, and evaluate programme effectiveness.

* + 1. **Diagnosis**

Diagnostic decisions are concerned with diagnosing problemsthat students may have during the learning process. They are related to achievement decisions with concerning of obtaining detailed information about individual students’ areas of strength and weaknesses in relation to the objectives in order to correct deficiencies before it is too late. The purpose is to help students and their teachers focus their efforts on the needed issues.

**6.3 Types of Tests**

**6.3.1 Criterion-referenced versus Test Norm-referenced Test**

Richards, Platt and Platt (1985, p.68) define a criterion reference test (CRT) as a test which measures a student’ s performance according to a particular standard or criterion agreed upon the students much reach to pass the test. They define a norm reference test (NRT) as a test which is designed to measure how the performance of a particular student compares with the performance of another student whose scores are given as the norm, and not according to an agreed criterion score. CRTs are designed to examine the amount of material known by each individual student, NRTs is designed to examine the relationship of a given students’ performance to the scores of all the other students.

**6.3.2 Differences between the Two Types of Testing**

* CRT assesses the amount of knowledge of each student, but NRT assesses the difference between students.
* CRT is likely to be made up of several short subtests usually representing a different objective with one subtest for each subjective. A NRT relatively long and made up of a wide variety of different item types usually consisting of a few subtests on rather general language skills.
* In a CRT, it is acceptable for all the students to score 100% if they have all learned all the material. In a NRT, we normally have a relatively wide distribution of scores, so that differences among students is revealed, with very low, very high and everywhere in between scores.
* CRTs are viewed in absolute terms: a student’s performance is interpreted in terms of the amount of material known by that student. The Scores in NRTs are interpreted in relative terms: a student’s score is interpreted in relation to scores of all the students.

**6.4 Different Tests for Different Purposes**

 A test can be very effective in one situation with one particular group of students and useless in another situation or another group of learners. For this reason, it is possible to adopt, adapt or develop language test for a particular language programme.

**6.4.1 Adopting Language Tests**

 Tests sometimes adopted from other language programme. In this process, it is important that:

* The test matches in your programme goals.
* The types of test items reflect the types of techniques or exercises included in the programme.
* The test is reliable, valid and practical.

**6.4.2 Adapting Language Tests**

The process of adapting a test to a specific situation involves selecting the items that appear to be suitable for spreading the students’ for NRT or measuring the learning of the objective for CRT.

**6.4.3 Developing Language Tests**

Develop a language test is very difficult. However, proficiency, placement, diagnostic and achievement can be developed in relation to the specific students’ population if other tests developed in other programmes are not suitable.