



Assessment of what...? – Revisiting the issue of construct(s)

One of the central concerns in delivering valid assessments is the question of *what* is being assessed. In order to develop and implement valid assessment instruments and procedures we need to define the construct, i.e. the ability we set out to measure in an assessment. The construct has to be specified for its intended purpose and the particular individuals whose proficiency will be assessed. Questions about what is assessed, how it is assessed, and what inferences are made from the observed behaviour have to be addressed to avoid construct irrelevant variance as well as under-representation in performances, and to ensure valid and reliable assessment procedures and score interpretations.

Theoretical orientations in construct definition have been the subject of discussion in the field, which, for example, focused on the degree to which construct definitions should maintain psycholinguistic and cognitive orientations or interactional orientations, and to what degree contextual, social, and topical dimensions should be considered.

It is, however, not only theoretical discussions that pose a challenge to the field. Practical decisions about which abilities to include and which to exclude in the construct definition, what procedures and conditions are appropriate to observe and elicit targeted performances, and what kinds of inferences about the observed behaviour are to be made, have also been demanding for language testers.

Given these challenges, we invite proposals for papers, work-in-progress, and posters discussing theoretical and practical considerations in construct definition, operationalization, and validation, as well as the pedagogical and social implications of its use.

We also welcome proposals discussing the difficulties met in relation to selecting appropriate methods and approaches to define, operationalize, and validate construct(s) in testing and assessment, including:

- Construct components and definition(s) (syllabus-based, competence-based etc.)
- Constructs in assessment, test or task specifications
- Constructs in classroom-based assessment
- Construct validation
- Comparison of construct(s)
- Interfaces between constructs in language assessment and second language acquisition
- Capturing complex constructs with psychometric measurement models
- Applying constructs to a heterogeneous population (e.g. a population with many different L1 backgrounds): approaches to analysing DIF and ensuring fairness.

You can find information about the vetting process [here](#)