

# Language Assessment and Languages for Specific Purposes

**A match made in heaven?**

Prof. Dr. Christian Krekeler  
Hochschule Konstanz HTWG

# ➔ Lost in translation

Video clip *Lost in translation*, CNN news report on communication difficulties between air traffic controllers and pilots.

Link to video: Fulcher, G. *Language Testing Resources*.  
[languagetesting.info](http://languagetesting.info)

<http://languagetesting.info/whatis/scenarios/aviation.php>

Link to transcript: CNN, online:

<http://archives.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0707/06/ywt.01.html>



# Arguments

a bit crowded!



**language competence**

characteristics of the language user

**Validity of language assessments**

future performance /  
language use



language competence

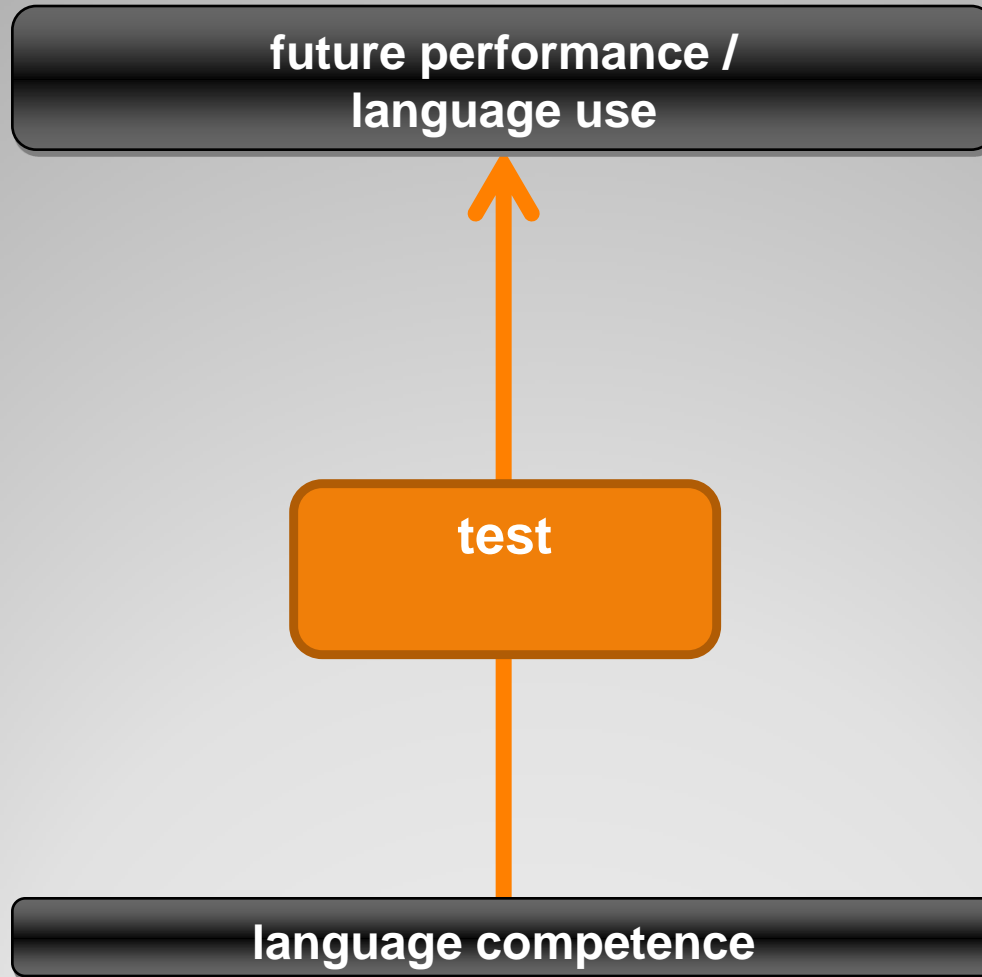
**Validity of language assessments**

future performance /  
language use

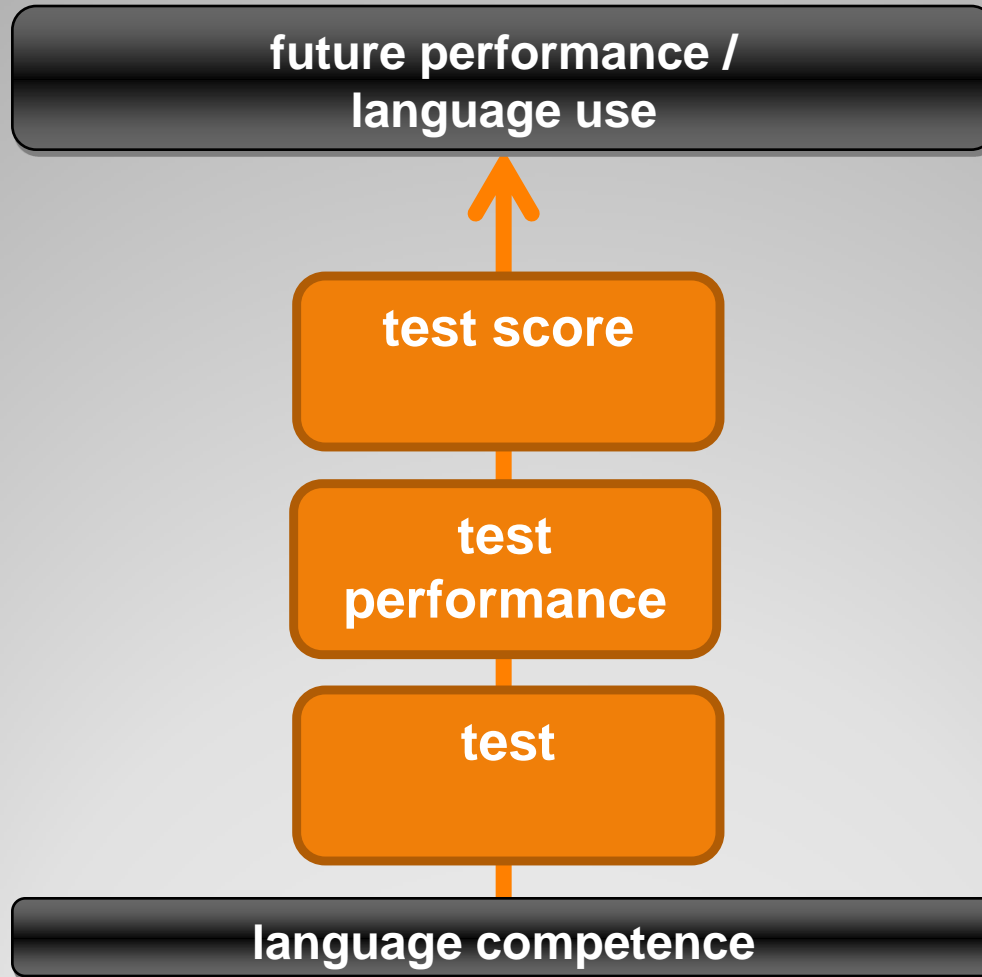


language competence

**Validity of language assessments**

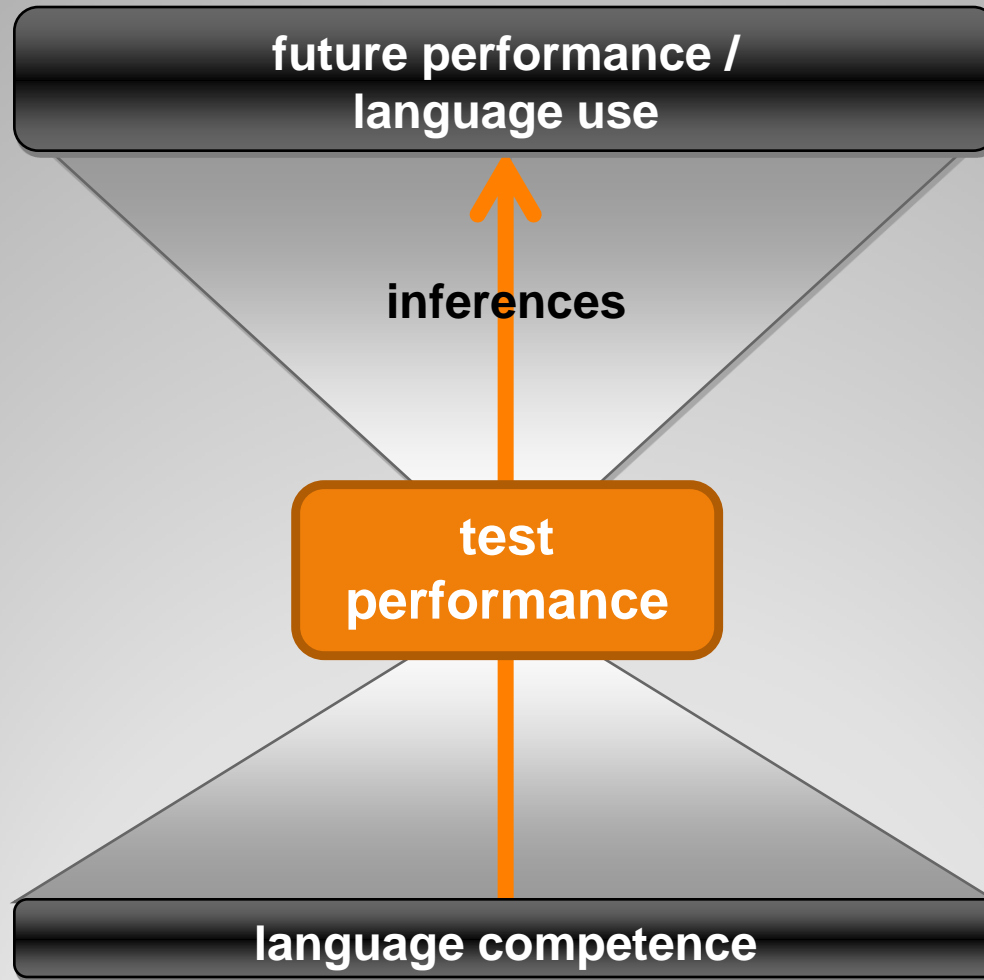


**Validity of language assessments**

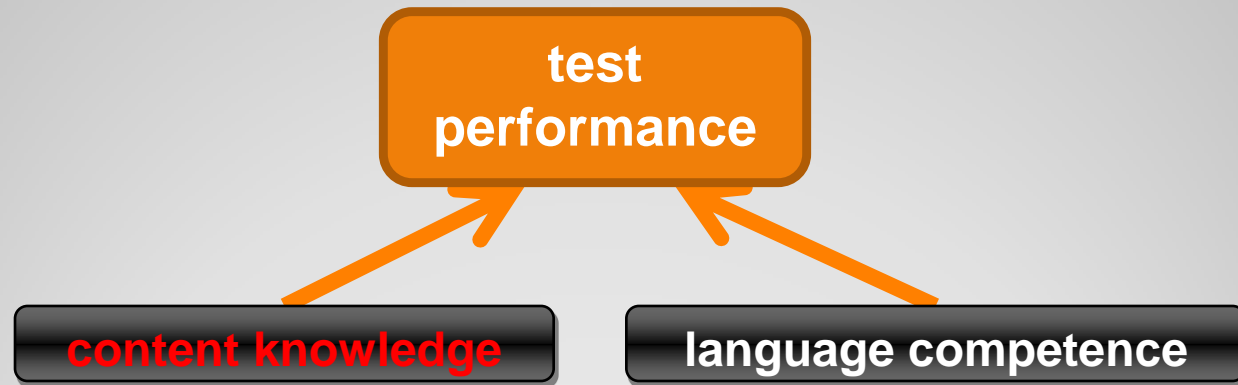


**Validity of language assessments**



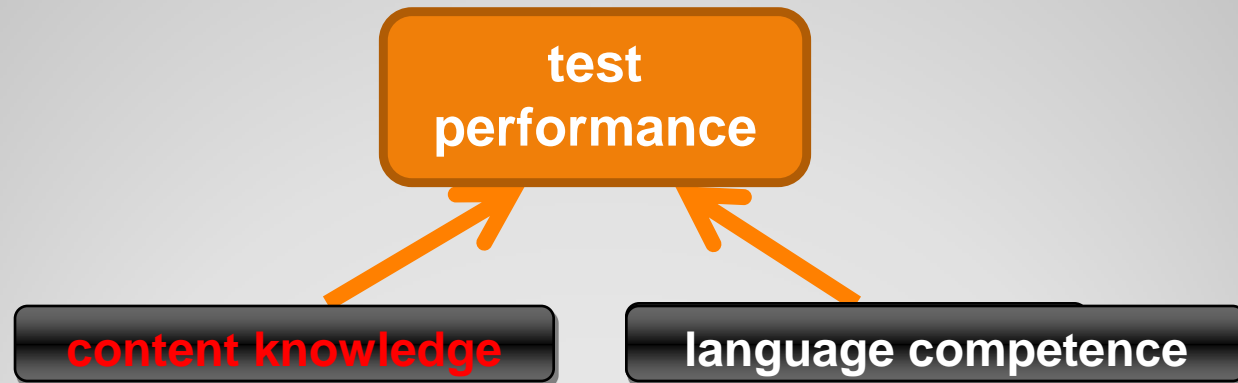


**Validity of language assessments**



**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

# construct irrelevant variance



**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

# → Sample test

- English for mechanical engineering
- writing

Write a text (200 to 250 words) on „Gears and backlash“. Address the following questions:

- What is backlash?
- Why does backlash exist?
- How can backlash be minimized?

future performance  
on **specific**  
tasks/jobs

future performance  
language use

test  
performance

**content knowledge**

language competence

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

- Content knowledge is **irrelevant** for the construct „language use performance“.
- Valid interpretations of test scores of LSP tests are impossible  
because it is impossible  
to distinguish between the influences of  
language knowledge and  
background knowledge  
on the performance on the test.

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

# → Sample test

- ◉ German for Business, Level 4 (LCCI)

Sie arbeiten in der Produktionsabteilung von *MüllerSoft*, einer Firma, die Erfrischungsgetränke herstellt. Der Leiter Ihrer Abteilung, Herr Thomas, zeigt Ihnen folgendes Fax, das er gerade bekommen hat, und gibt Ihnen weitere Anweisungen.

# → Sample test

## German for Business, Level 4 (LCCI)

### Qualitätskontrolle Müllersaft

Pelzer, Abteilungsleiter

AN Herrn Thomas, Produktionsabteilung

FAX NUMMER 0232 8350233

DATUM 18. Oktober

ANZAHL DER SEITEN 1

Betrifft: Probleme mit Serie AW/4030

Wie wir bei der regelmäßigen Qualitätskontrolle festgestellt haben, ist in alle Flaschen der Reihe "Orangenfizz" Reinigungsmittel gelangt, und zwar in der Serie AW/4030. Diese Ladung ist leider bereits an Supermärkte und Lebensmittelgeschäfte ausgeliefert worden. Die betreffenden Flaschen müssen nun schnellstens vom Verkauf zurückgezogen werden. Bitte benachrichtigen Sie die Supermärkte so schnell wie möglich.



future performance  
on **specific**  
tasks/jobs

future performance  
language use

test  
performance

**content knowledge**

language competence

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

future performance  
on **specific**  
tasks/jobs

future performance  
language use

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain



**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain

“**Specific purpose language ability**  
results from the interaction  
between **specific purpose background knowledge**  
and **language ability**.”

(Douglas, 2000: 40)

**specific purpose** language ability

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain

specific purpose  
language test

**specific purpose** language ability

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain

A **specific purpose language test** is one in which test content and methods are derived from an analysis of a specific purpose target language use situation, so that test tasks and content are authentically representative of tasks in the target situation [...].

Such a test allows us to make inferences about a test taker's capacity to use language in the specific purpose domain (Douglas, 2000: 19).

**specific purpose** language ability

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain

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**specific purpose** language ability

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

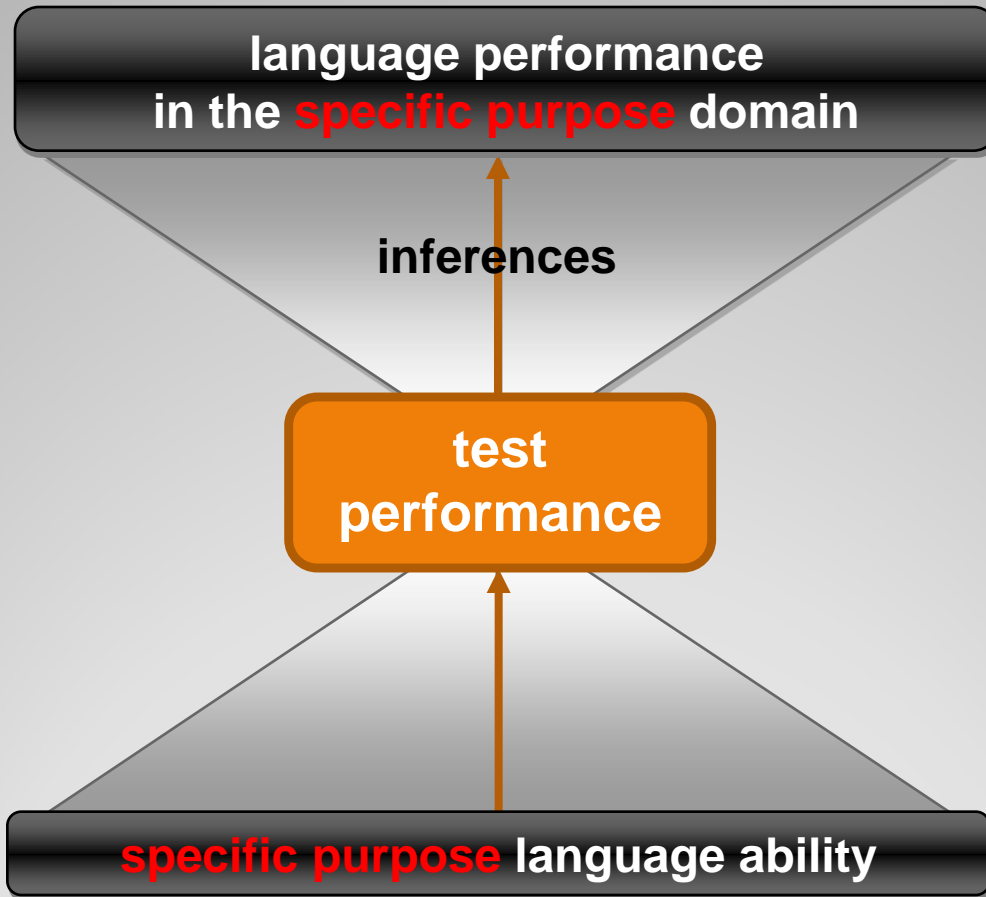
language performance  
in the **specific purpose** domain

specific purpose  
language test

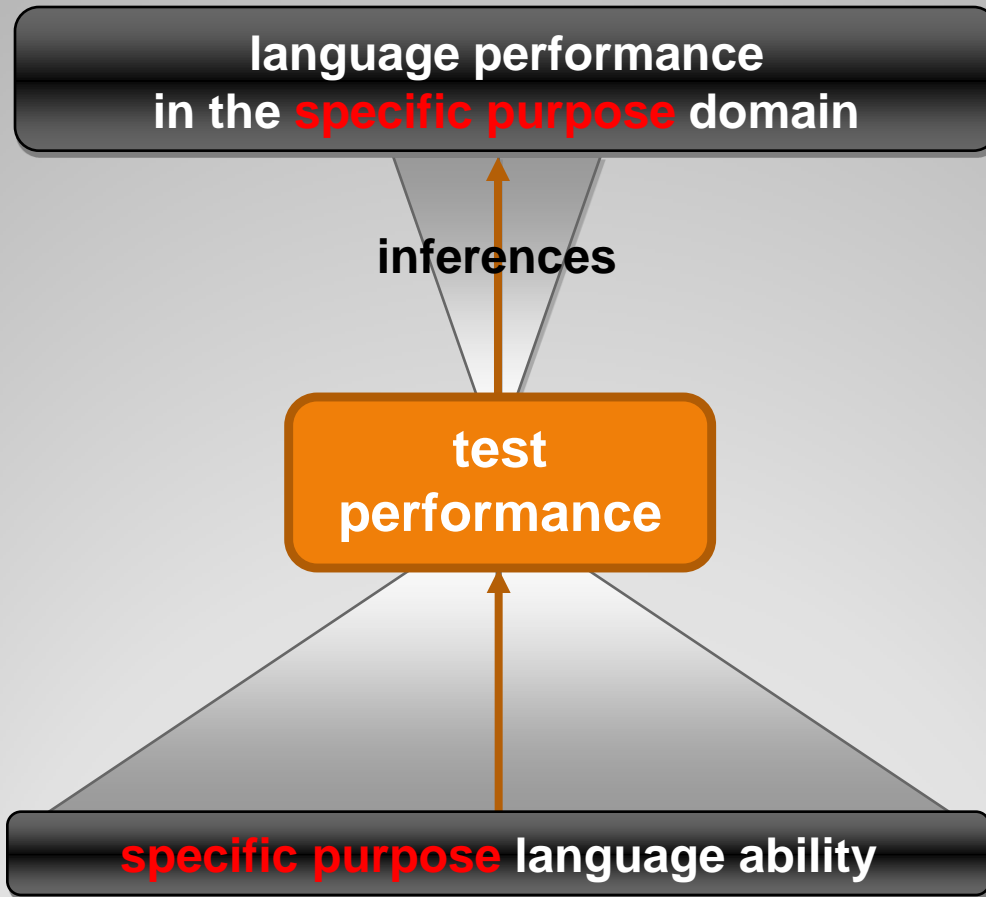
**specific purpose** language ability

**Validity of specific purpose  
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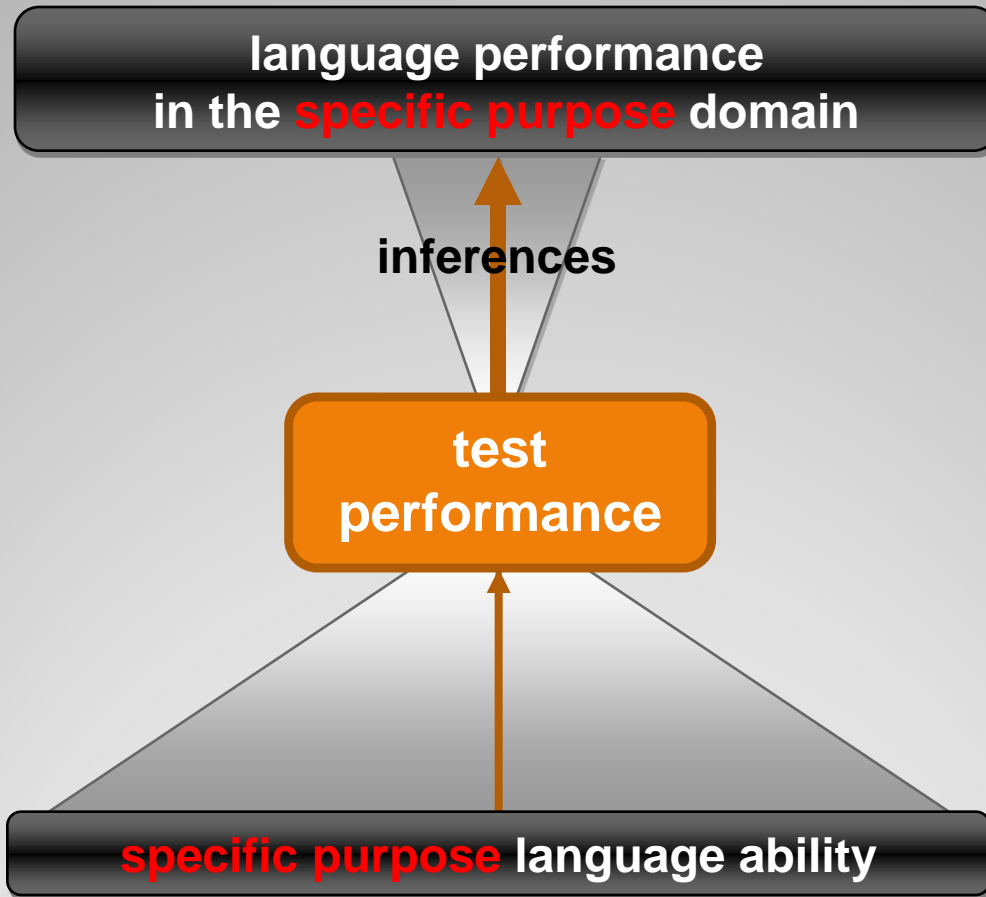




**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**



**Validity of specific purpose  
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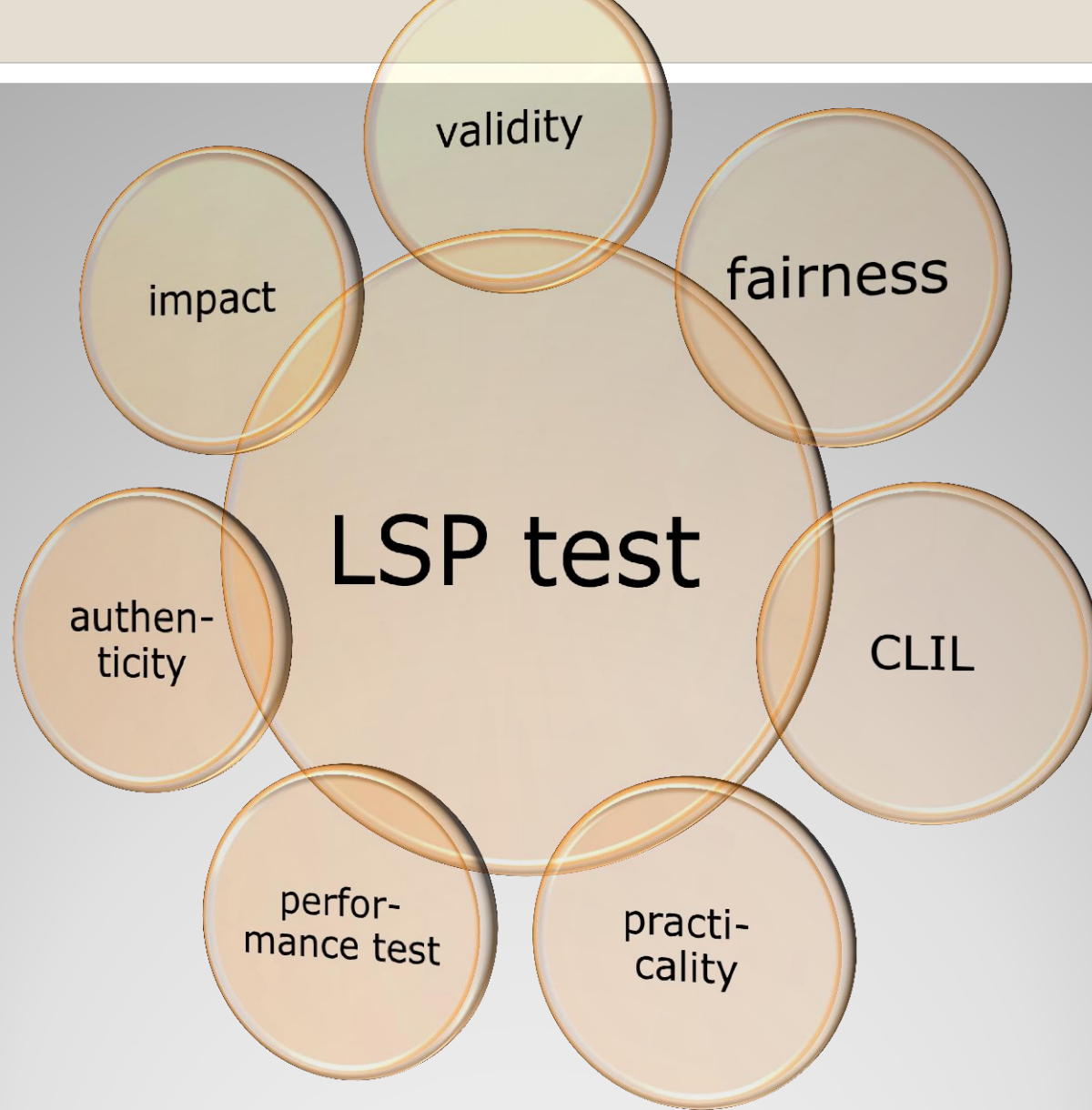


**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**

- Content knowledge is an aspect of the construct of LSP ability, because language performance varies with context and because academic and vocational contexts often require specific language use.
- LSP tests may be useful if the construct is based on the interaction between specific purpose background knowledge and language ability.

(see also Douglas, 2000)

**Validity of specific purpose  
language tests**



**Arguments**



# Investigating LSP tests

Visualizing the position of LSP tests in a positioning matrix

# → Sample test

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# → Sample test

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**register** (input and response)



influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**

# → Sample test

◎ Test of Legal English skills  
(TOLES)  
[www.toles.co.uk](http://www.toles.co.uk)

Richards and Morgan  
Chartered Surveyors  
43 High Street  
Brighton  
BR1 5FD

26 January 2001

Ref: TOLES 43

Dear Richards & Morgan

We are working for Mr and Mrs Jacobson. They bought a house (19 Wilson Close, Hove, Brighton) 1 and a half years ago. Before they decided to buy it, they asked you examine the house and do an in-depth survey paper on it.

We think that we have a good case for a claim against you for bad work and we are going to sue you for this. You must send us the name and address of your insurers so that we can write to them as well.

Regards  
Thomas Bedford

# → Sample test

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(TOLES)  
[www.toles.co.uk](http://www.toles.co.uk)

Dear Sirs

Mr and Mrs Jacobson – 19 Wilson Close, Hove, Brighton

We act on behalf of Mr and Mrs Jacobson who purchased the above property 18 months ago. Prior to the purchase our clients instructed your firm to inspect the property and provide a detailed survey report.

In our opinion our clients have a very strong case against your firm on the grounds that the survey report you provided to them was negligent. We have advised my clients to seek damages for professional negligence and legal proceedings will be issued in the near future. We ask that you kindly provide us with the name and address of your insurer as we will need to contact them in connection with this matter.

Yours faithfully

Thomas Bedford.

**register** (input and response)

LE1

GB

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

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Yours faithfully

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**register** (input and response)

LE1

GB

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**



# → Sample test

## ◎ Test of Legal English skills (TOLES)

L1 OK, so how shall we approach this meeting tomorrow? We've got to remember that speed is of the essence, the deal has to be struck quickly before other firms try to move in. At the moment we are in danger of getting (\*)bogged down with the finer details rather than seeing the big picture.

L2 Yes, that's true. Who's going to be at the meeting on Thursday?

L1 Dan Hawthorne and Jack Glass. Haven't had much to do with Dan, but I know Jack pretty well. We'll have to watch him – he's a (54)hard nut to crack once he gets his mind made up about something. I was on his team once a couple of years ago and the other side really got (55)taken to the cleaners – I almost felt sorry for them!

L2 Sounds like we could be in for a (56)rough ride.

**register** (input and response)

LE1

GB

LE2

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**

# → Sample test

- English for mechanical engineering
- writing

Write a text (200 to 250 words) on „Gears and backlash“. Address the following questions:

- What is backlash?
- Why does backlash exist?
- How can backlash be obtained?
- How can backlash be minimized?

**register** (input and response)

LE1

M1

GB

LE2

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**

# → Sample test

- English for mechanical engineering
- writing

**Listen** to the lecture of Professor Overdrive on „Gears and backlash“. **Write** a short text summarizing the following aspects:

- What is backlash?
- Why does backlash exist?
- How can backlash be minimized?

**register** (input and response)

LE1

M2

M1

GB

LE2

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**

# → Sample test

## English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication (EUROCONTROL)



English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication



### Part 3 Example

Answer the questions in the space provided.

**0 a:** What does the controller ask **Air France 370** to repeat?

**b:** What does the controller instruct **Air France 370** to do?

# → Sample test

- English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication (EUROCONTROL)

## Listening:

*Controller: Air France 370 good morning, identified. Say again your flight level.*

*Pilot: We are flight level 370. Air France 370.*

*C: Air France 370, roger. Be advised no SSR readout.*

*P: Roger Air France 370. Apparently we have some problems with our transponder. And we just recycled already.*

*C: Air France 370 roger. Try your second transponder on code 6263.*

*P: We tried that already and it doesn't seem to work. Air France 370.*

*C: Air France 370 roger.*



# → Sample test

## English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication (EUROCONTROL)



English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication



### Part 3 Example

Answer the questions in the space provided.

**0 a:** What does the controller ask **Air France 370** to repeat?

**b:** What does the controller instruct **Air France 370** to do?

**register** (input and response)

LE1

AE1

M2

M1

AE2

GB

LE2

influence of  
**background  
knowledge** on  
test performance

**Investigating LSP tests**

**Investigating LSP tests**



# Constructing LSP assessments

Teaching LSP

1. CLIL
2. Purpose
3. Analysis of a specific purpose language use situation
  - Authenticity
  - Performance testing
  - Complex tasks
4. Consider general language use situations

**Constructing LSP assessments**

**Vielen Dank!**

Prof. Dr. Christian Krekeler  
Hochschule Konstanz HTWG

- **Douglas, D.** (2000). *Assessing language for specific purposes*. Cambridge: CUP.
- **Fulcher, G.** *Language Testing Resources*. [languagetesting.info](http://languagetesting.info)
- **Test of Legal English Skills, TOLES**, [www.toles.co.uk](http://www.toles.co.uk)
- **German for Business, LCCI**, [www.lccieb-germany.com](http://www.lccieb-germany.com)
- **English Language Proficiency for Aeronautical Communication, EUROCONTROL**, [www.elpac.info](http://www.elpac.info)

## References