RELANG

ΚΥΠΡΙΑΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑΣ, ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ,
ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΝΕΟΛΑΙΑΣ

EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR MODERN LANGUAGES
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Constructing valid language tests and examinations on the CEFR and its Companion Volume

Nicosia, 10-12 November 2021

Validity and the CEFR

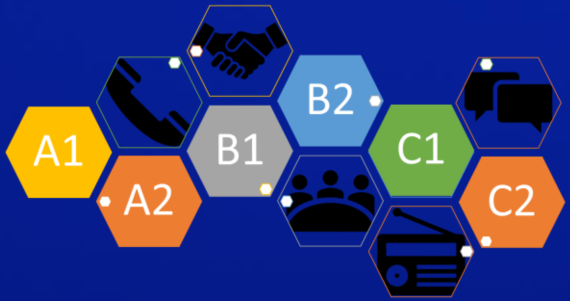
- A test is valid if it measures what we intend it to measure.
- Demonstrating that a learner reported to be at B1 actually *is* at B1 according to the evidence
- Consequential validity refers to the positive or negative social consequences of a particular test (see fairness)
- If focus is on *use:* validity evidence relates to language used for communicative purposes

Reliability in Testing

- **Consistency**
  - Same or similar results on repeated use
  - High reliability does not mean the test is valid
- **Minimising likely sources of error**
- **Using statistics to estimate reliability of test scores**
- **Reliability figures depend on task type and way of marking**

Introduction to the CEFR Companion Volume (CV) with New Descriptors

- Highlighting CEFR areas for which no descriptor scales had yet been provided, especially mediation and plurilingual / pluricultural competence.
- Extended definition of ‘plus levels’ and a new ‘Pre-A1’ level.
- More elaborate description of listening and reading in existing scales.
- Enriching the description at A1, and at the C levels, particularly C2.



Focus on the CV project

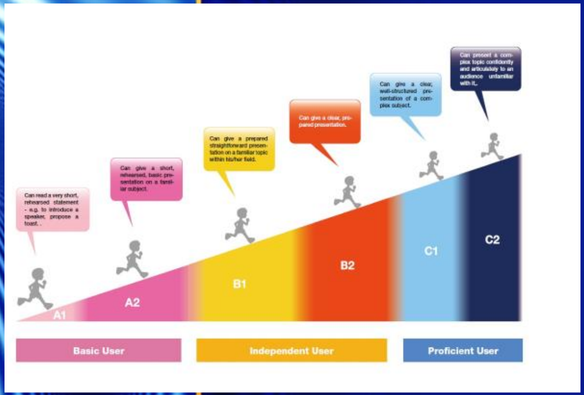
- **Pre-A1 level descriptors** - relate to simple, general tasks, which were scaled below Level A1 (Pre-A1), but can constitute useful objectives for beginners.

- **Mediation -** Treatment of mediation in the CEFR is not limited to cross-linguistic mediation, passing on information in another language:

  Mediating a text

  Mediating concepts

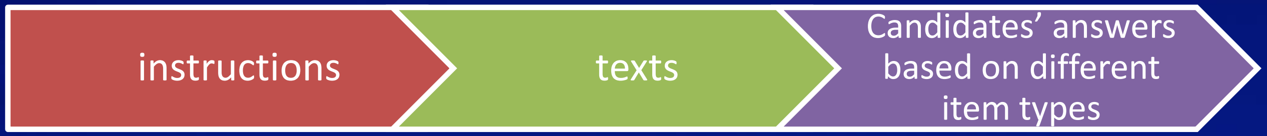
  Mediating communication


Can read a very short, rehearsed statement - e.g. to introduce a speaker, propose a toast. .
Can give a short, rehearsed, basic presentation on a familiar subject.
Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within his/her field.
Can give a clear, prepared presentation.
Can give a clear, well-structured presentation of a complex subject.
Can present a complex topic confidently and articulately to an audience unfamiliar with it..
A1
A2
B1
B2
C1
C2
Basic User
Independent User
Proficient User

Testing Receptive Skills

Tasks and items

- Certain number of tasks
- Tasks composed of

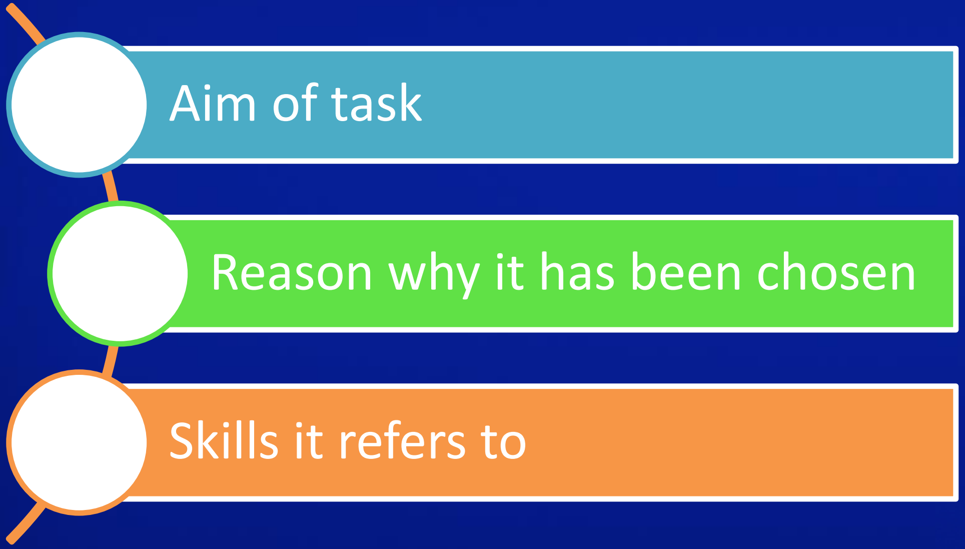


instructions

texts

Candidates’ answers based on different item types

- Tasks assessed using making grid/rating scale
- Test developers to have clear idea about:



Aim of task

Reason why it has been chosen

Skills it refers to

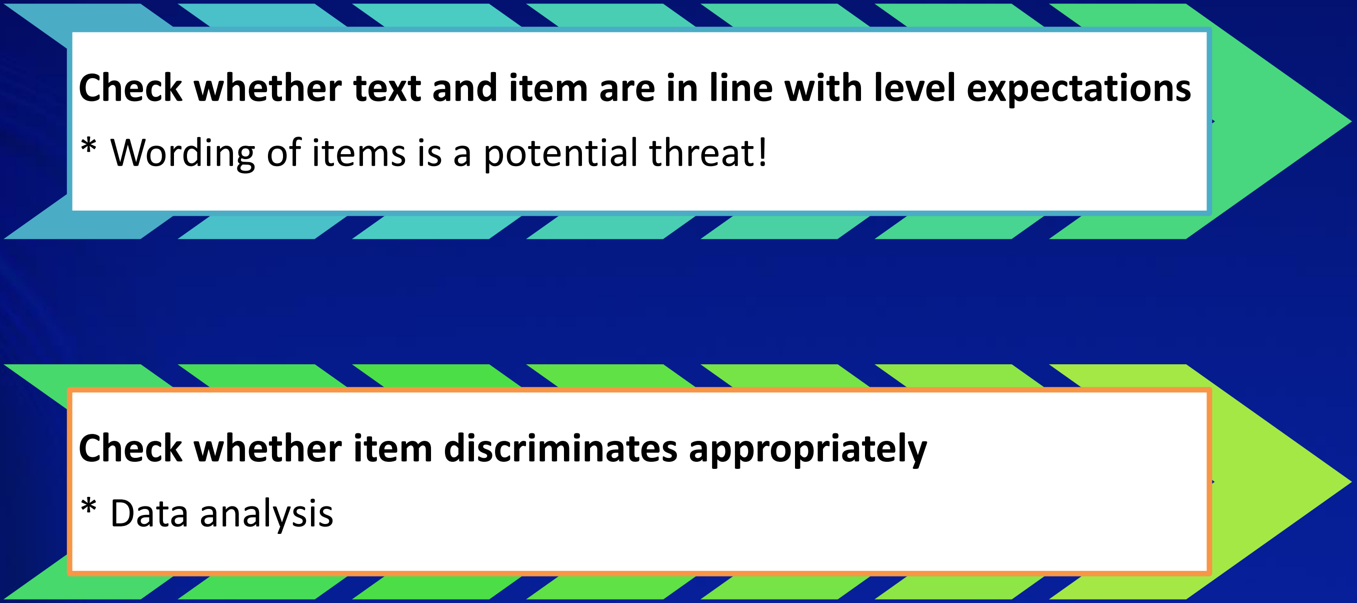
Quality criteria: Relevance

Check whether item focuses on targeted construct

* Authenticity

Check whether item does **not** focus on elements outside of targeted construct

Quality criteria: Level



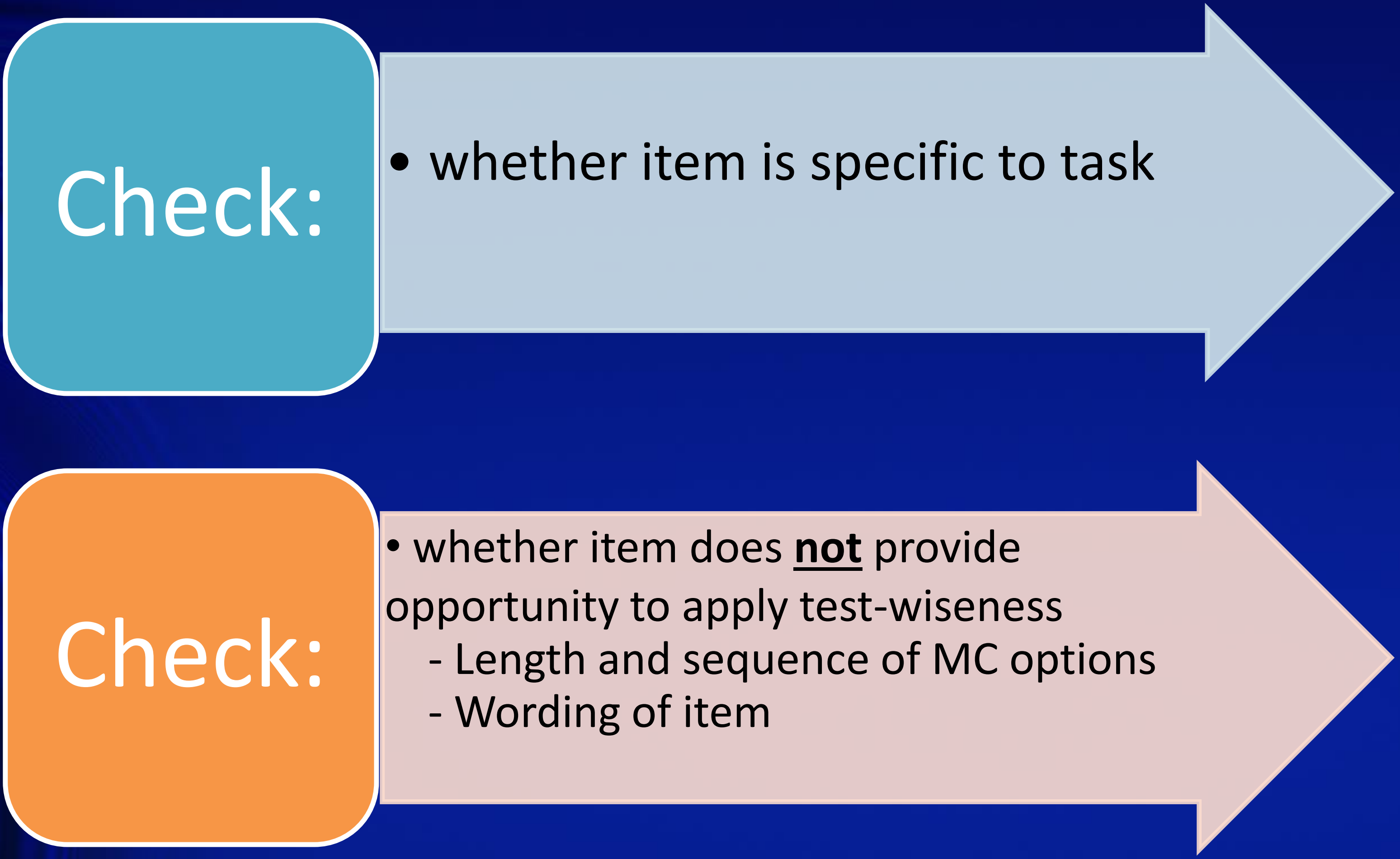
Check whether text and item are in line with level expectations

* Wording of items is a potential threat!

Check whether item discriminates appropriately

* Data analysis

Quality criteria: Specificity



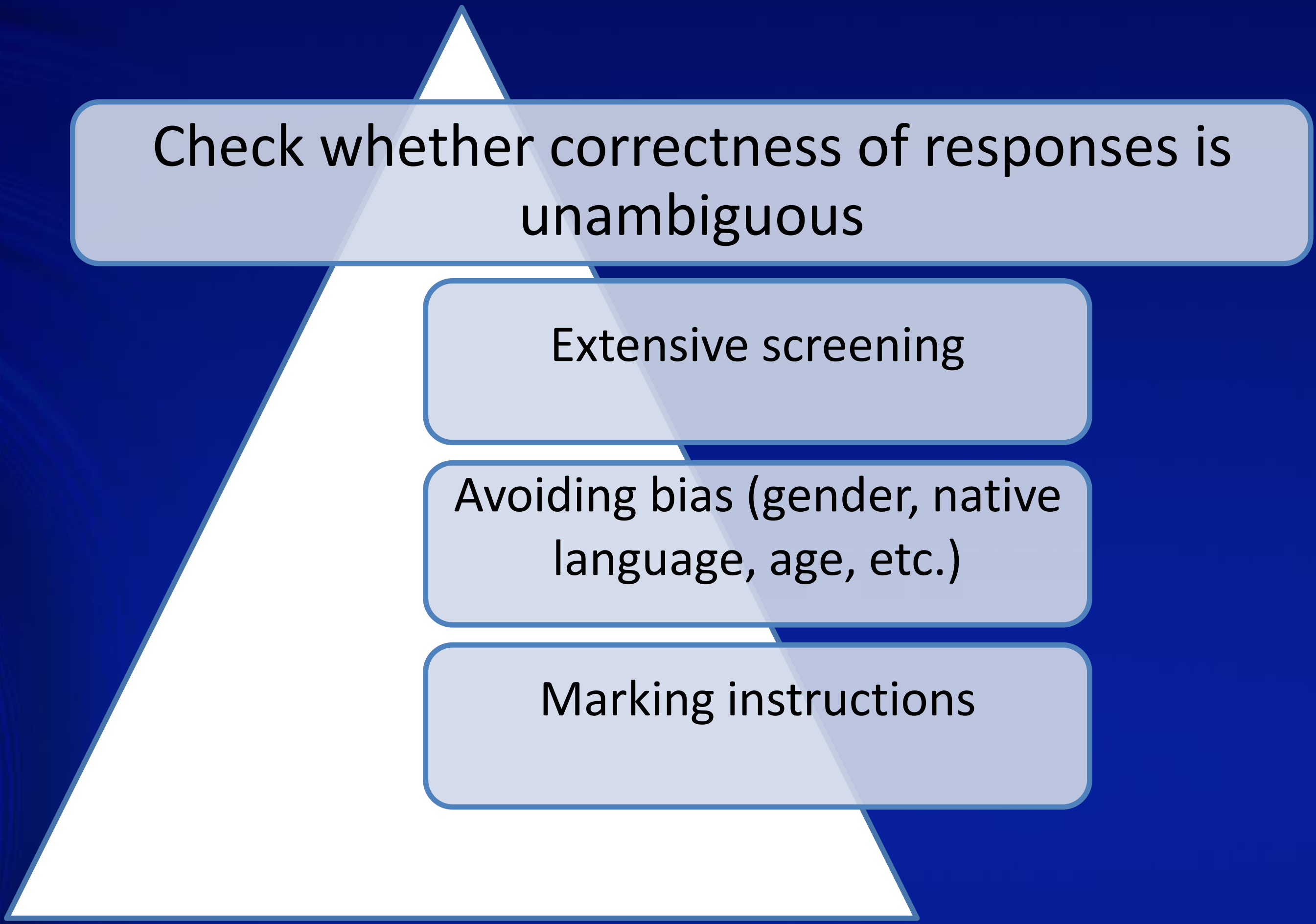
Check:

- whether item is specific to task

Check:

- whether item does **not** provide opportunity to apply test-wiseness
  - Length and sequence of MC options
  - Wording of item

Quality criteria: Objectivity



Check whether correctness of responses is unambiguous

Extensive screening

Avoiding bias (gender, native language, age, etc.)

Marking instructions

Quality criteria: Acceptability

Check whether instructions are clear

Check whether item does **not** deliberately mislead candidates (Instructions for item writers)

Quality criteria: Transparency

Check whether response specifics are clearly indicated

Check whether item is in line with candidate expectations

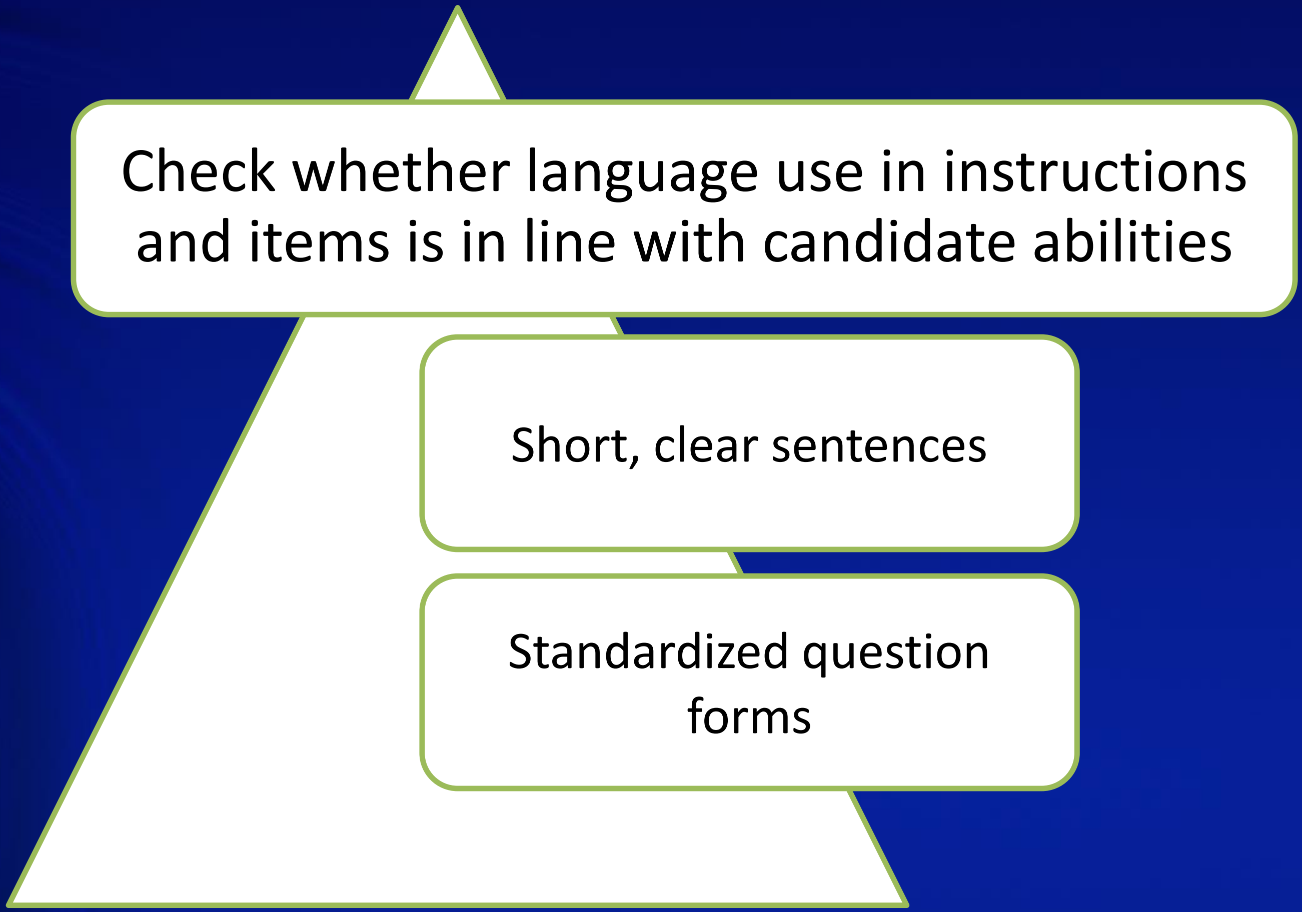
Check whether item type is familiar to candidates - specifications

Quality criteria: Efficiency

Check whether information is presented in the most efficient way to candidates

- Time
- Length/complexity of responses

Quality criteria: Language use

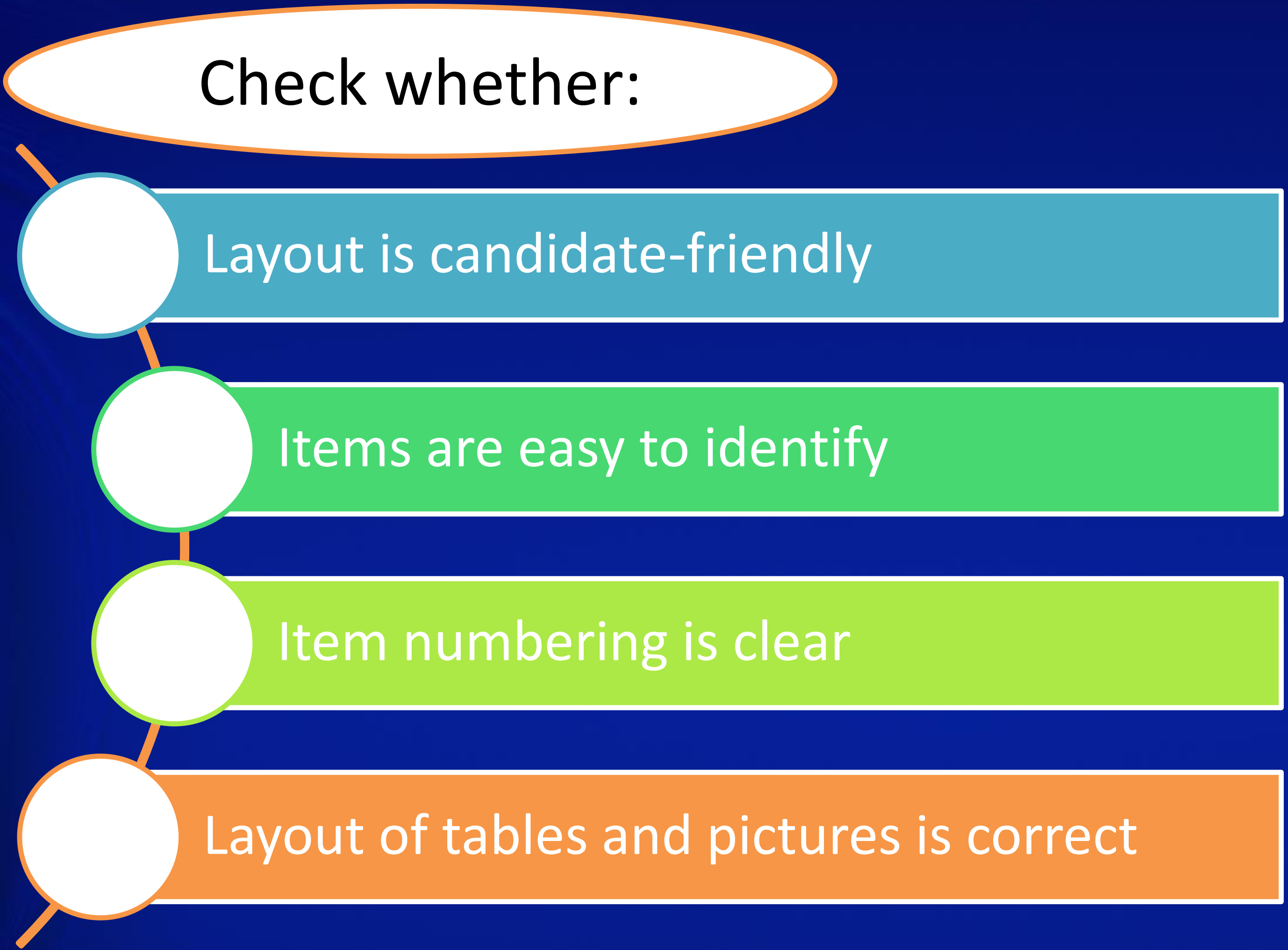


Check whether language use in instructions and items is in line with candidate abilities

Short, clear sentences

Standardized question forms

Quality criteria: Layout



Check whether:

- Layout is candidate-friendly
- Items are easy to identify
- Item numbering is clear
- Layout of tables and pictures is correct

Testing Productive Skills speaking and writing

Speaking & Writing in the CEFR

- **Actions performed by persons**

- **Illustrative scales for:**
  - Spoken/Written production
  - Spoken/Written interaction

- **Various contexts**

- **Communicative competences**
  - Linguistic competence
  - Sociolinguistic competence
  - Pragmatic competence

Production Activities (CV)

ORAL PRODUCTION

- Overall oral production
- Sustained monologue: giving information
- Sustained monologue: describing experience
- Sustained monologue: putting a case
- Public announcements
- Addressing audiences

WRITTEN PRODUCTION

- Overall written production
- Creative writing
- Reports and essays

Production Strategies

- **Planning**

rehearsing, locating resources, considering audience, task adjustment, message adjustment

- **Compensating**

building on previous knowledge, trying out

- **Monitoring and repair**

monitoring success and self-correction

Interaction Activities (CV)

Oral interaction

- Overall oral interaction
- Understanding an interlocutor
- Conversation
- Informal discussion
- Formal discussion
- Goal-oriented co-operation
- Obtaining goods and services
- Information exchange
- Interviewing and being interviewed
- Using telecommunications

Written interaction

- Overall written interaction
- Correspondence
- Notes, messages and forms

Interaction Strategies (CV)

- Turntaking
- Co-operating
- Asking for clarification

Task Characteristics

Stimulus as short and clear as possible

- Providing an adequate framework for candidates’ speaking/writing performance

Pictures/visual material can be used as stimulus

- Difficulties of interpretation

Candidates to know who they are speaking/writing to and how this will affect what they speak/write about

Checklist for speaking/writing tasks

- □ Is topic of text to be produced accessible to candidates?
- □ Is context realistic?
- □ Is language in rubrics accessible to candidates at target level?
- □ Is purpose of task clearly indicated?
- □ Does task provide opportunity for candidates to show their range?
- □ Is marking scheme provided?

Standardization & Benchmarking

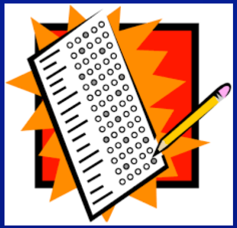
Steps in the standardization phase

1. Adequate familiarisation with the CEFR.
2. Training in rating productive skills
   - tables and scales in the CEFR or the Manual & scales or specific rating scales
3. Training in rating receptive tasks
   - tables in the Manual & specifications developed for the examinations or tests in question
4. Benchmarking performance samples
5. Standard setting of receptive tasks

Benchmarking in Direct Tests

- In tests of productive skills the judgment on the CEFR level is direct
  - Assistance needed for raters in giving valid judgments
  - Main tool used for this special type of standard setting: ***benchmarking***
- Benchmarking: providing one (or more) typical sample(s) to illustrate performance at a given level

** ***Benchmarking*** and ***standard setting*** are procedures requiring group decisions



Standard Setting

Standard Setting in Indirect Tests

- For tests with numerical score, performance standards to be set
  - Receptive skills (reading, listening)
  - Underlying competences (grammar, vocabulary)
- Performance standard
  - Boundary (cut-off score) between two levels on the scale
- Process to arrive at cut-off score: **standard setting**

How to arrive at standards?

- Group decisions (panel)
- Group is familiar with CEFR
- Test content specified in terms of the CEFR
- Standard setting procedures formalized
- Careful selection and training of panel members

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