Test-takers' calibration and strategy use in IELTS listening tasks

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To date, little remains unknown about an 'optimal condition' in which appropriate and desirable strategy use results in significantly better test performance. Language testing researchers and test developers do not have a sufficient empirical understanding about test-takers' metacognitive judgments about their current test performance and factors affecting their judgment accuracy. This presentation reports on an empirical study that investigates test-takers' calibration and its relationship to reported strategy use in an IELTS listening test. Test-taker calibration denotes a perfect relationship between confidence in performance success and actual performance outcome. In other words, a study of calibration aims to evaluate an alignment between test-takers' perceived confidence and their actual performance. Calibration or miscalibration thus indicates the nature of test-takers' metacognitive judgment, monitoring accuracy and/or self-appraisal. 388 English as a second language (ESL) test-takers in Australia took part in this study. Before they took the listening test, they were asked to report on their general strategy use in IELTS listening tests. While completing each of the IELTS test questions, they were asked to report on the level of their confidence in the correctness of their answer (e.g., 0% to 100%) and at the end of the test, they were asked to report their cognitive and metacognitive strategy use during this listening test. Their calibration, confidence, and reported strategy use scores were analyzed together using serval statistical tests and in particular a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach. It was found that on average the test takers were not well calibrated and had a tendency to be overconfident across the listening test sections. Their calibration scores and confidence ratings in performance were positively, yet marginally related to their cognitive and metacognitive strategy use. The present study helps us advance our knowledge of strategic processes including calibration and strategy use that are part of or affect listening test performance (IELTS). Implications of the study and recommendations for future research will be articulated.

Keywords: calibration, miscalibration, IELTS listening test, structural equation modeling

Biography

Aek Phakiti is Senior Lecturer in TESOL at The University of Sydney. His research focuses on language testing and assessment, second language acquisition, and research methods in language learning. He is an author of *Strategic Competence and EFL Reading Test Performance* (Peter Lang, 2007), *Experimental Research Methods in Language Learning* (Bloomsbury, 2014), with Carsten Roever, *Quantitative Methods for Second Language Research: A problem-solving Approach* (Routledge, 2015). With Brian Paltridge, he edited *Continuum Companion to Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* (2010, Continuum) and *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics* (2015, Bloomsbury). He is Associate Editor of *Language Assessment Quarterly* and *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL*. In 2010, he was a recipient of the TOEFL Outstanding Young Scholar, and Faculty of Education and Social Work Teaching Excellence Award. He is Vice President of ALTAANZ (Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand).