EFL Multiple-Choice Vocabulary
Test-Taking Strategies and
Construct Validity

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Over the past two and a half decades, numerous studies have detailed the role of learners’ strategies in a variety of L₂ domains. However, research on strategies in the process of test-taking, TTS, has been rather scant, though such strategies might influence test scores and consequently test validity. That has motivated this work to explore TTS and their impact on test construct validity. To accomplish its objectives, this research operated within the sequence framework hypothesised by the PPP model, in which a number of variables represent Presage factors, which are likely to influence the test Process embodied in the TTS. These variables, in turn, may affect the test Product, i.e. the test scores obtained.

A process-oriented methodology via triangulated verbal data collection was exploited to gain insight into test-takers' mental processes when tackling an EFL multiple-choice vocabulary test. To collect the data required, eight different instruments were utilised with English major university students in two English departments at KSU and UQU in Saudi Arabia. The study contrasted two sources of test item stimuli: one made by professionals at Michigan and Cambridge universities, in USA and UK, and the other locally by EFL instructors at two Saudi Arabian universities. The investigation also explored the influence on the dependent variable of two other independent variables: size of EFL lexicon as determined by Nation’s vocabulary test and general level of EFL proficiency as measured by TOEFL.

The analysis revealed sixty-two different TTS of six types: managing the test as a whole, reading the stem, handling the gap, examining the alternatives, selecting a response and strategies after choosing an answer. It also revealed that test-takers with lower L₂ proficiency were more active TTS users than the higher proficiency testees. There was a clear difference between the two types of test stimuli, mainly in some of the TTS used to select a response. It was also found that there was a marked effect of the TTS on the test product and, in turn, the test construct. Approximately 40% of test items testing an unknown lexical item were answered correctly based on rational linguistic and non-linguistic strategies rather than on random promising choice.
DEDICATION

To one whose cheerful companionship I have constantly missed .... My late father, may Allah almighty bless him ....
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPE    Certificate of Proficiency in English
ECCE   Examination for the Certificate of Competency in English
EFL    English as a Foreign (or Second) Language
EPT    English Placement Test
IELTS  International English Language Testing Service
KSU    King Saud University
L₁     First Language
L₂     Second (or Foreign) Language
LTM    Long Term Memory
MCFGV  Multiple-Choice Filling-in-the-Gap Vocabulary
ML     Mental Lexicon
MTELP  Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency
NVLT   Nation’s Vocabulary Levels Test
PMT    Professionally-Made Tests
PPP    Presage Process Product Model
VP     Verbal Protocol
STM    Short Term Memory
TMT    Teacher-Made Test
TOEFL  Test of English as a Foreign Language
TTS    Test-Taking Strategies
UCLES  University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate
UQU    Umm al-Qura University