

Criterion-referenced Tests: Roles and Functions in the Chinese Context

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- **What is a criterion-referenced test (CR test)?**

- DEFINITION

a framework of score-referencing, **OR**
“a measurement approach that is concerned with determining the absolute standing of examinees in reference to a specific ability or behaviour” (Lynch and Davidson, 1994:729).

- **CHARACTERISTICS**

Measurement: To measure specific objectives – based language knowledge or performance

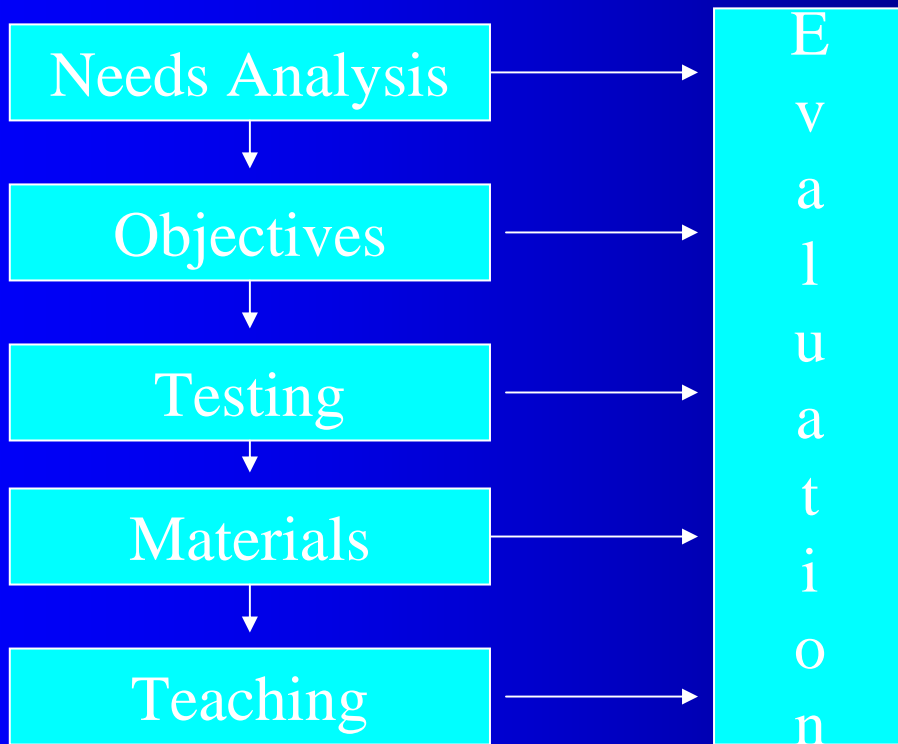
Purpose: To assess the amount of material known or learned by each student

Score distribution: Students who know the material should score 100.

Test design: Test is designed before the instruction itself is designed.

Test content: Test content is determined and selected on the basis of course objectives, course materials, etc.

- **How are criterion-referenced tests related to curriculum development?**



Brown (1995: 29)

- **What is the relationship between criterion-referenced tests and test impact?**

- **TEST IMPACT**

**Narrow definition:
backwash effect**

Broad definition:

Bachman and Palmer's Framework

(1996: 29-35)

- micro level

- macro level

Shohamy (2001):

the concept of *critical testing*: the need to develop critical strategies to examine the uses and consequences of tests, to monitor their power, and to minimize their detrimental force.

Some of the questions addressed by
Critical Testing:

Why is the test being given?

Who is going to benefit from the test?

What will its results be used for?

What are the testing methods?

What kind of decisions are reached based on the test?

What type of feedback is being provided based on the test, and to whom?

What ideology is delivered through the test?

What are its backwash effects?

- HOW TO PROMOTE POSITIVE BACKWASH EFFECTS

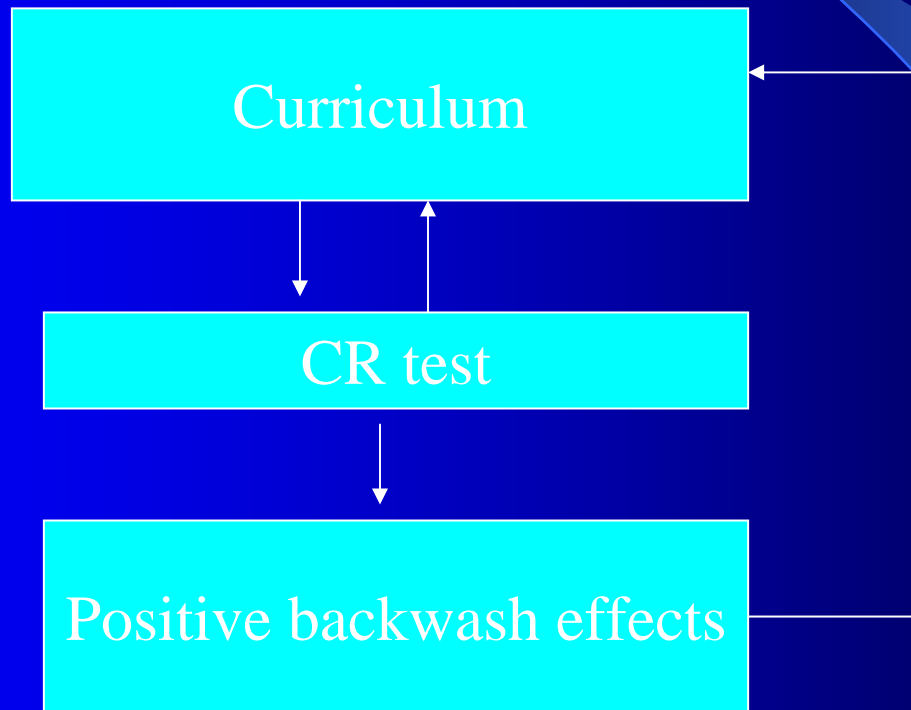
Hughes (1989):

.....

make tests criterion-referenced;
base achievement tests on course objectives;

...

Brown and Hudson (2002):
emphasizing the relationship between
curriculum/course objectives and tests



CR tests should

- have a clearly defined ability domain in relation to the curriculum;
- have an appropriately defined content domain;
- devise test methods or tasks in conformity with the objectives of the curriculum;

- decide on the weighting of its components in relation to the goals or objectives of the curriculum, and
- design score reporting that matches test purpose

- **Is standards-setting important in criterion-referenced tests?**

- **TYPES OF STANDARDS**

Bahavioural standards

Skills-based standards

Functions-based standards

Knowledge-based standards

- HOW TO SET THE CUT POINT
 - referring to the curriculum
 - using the conventional pass mark
 - adopting institution-centred or student-centred practice

- **What are the roles of criterion-referenced tests in language teaching and assessment?**

- PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO TEACHING
- PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

- **HELPING TEACHERS TO EVALUATE LEARNING PROGRESS OR ACHIEVEMENT**

- CR diagnostic tests

- CR progress tests

- CR achievement tests

- (Brown and Hudson, 2002: 31-2)

- ESTABLISHING A CLOSE AND STRONG LINK BETWEEN TESTING AND TEACHING

- **What can we do?**

- A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR CR TEST DEVELOPMENT

A TEACHER-CENTRED APPROACH

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graph TD; A[A TEACHER-CENTRED APPROACH] --> B[COLLABORATION]; A --> C[REFLECTION]; A --> D[NEGOTIATION]; B <--> C; C <--> D;
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COLLABORATION

REFLECTION

NEGOTIATION

Collaboration:

collaboration among teachers, and between teachers and testing professionals in the writing of the test blueprint or test specifications.

Reflection:

match in the following three aspects:

--between course/learning objectives and test methods in specifications;

(the issue of how to operationalize the evaluation of the attainment of objectives)

--between learning content and test content;

(the issue of content relevance and content coverage)

--between tests and their impact on teaching;

(the issue of promoting positive backwash effects)

Negotiation:

The need to exercise flexibility and use judgment in the process of test construction

-- search for more appropriate test methods to operationalize teaching objectives;

--define and redefine the criterion or
criteria all along

What are the prospects for CR tests?

CR tests can strengthen the linkage between teaching / curriculum and testing.

CR tests offer us a solution to address the issue of backwash effects.

*Thank you
for your
attention.*