

How can statistical analysis prove the existence of an independent foreign language skill?

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Is foreign language mediation an independent language skill? Is it part of our conception of language proficiency and a segment of the language learners'/users' language competence? There have been heated debates in professional circles on the role and function of mediation and the debates have not been settled yet.

The aim of my research was to prove that foreign language mediation is an independent language skill that can be measured by specific criteria and as part of a foreign language examination it contributes to a more complex assessment of the test-takers' language knowledge. Besides other methods the most important part of the research was the descriptive and mathematical statistical analysis of the results of the 18 examination periods covering more than 27000 test results from Budapest Business School Examination Centre. In order to reveal the construct validity of the written mediation task I calculated the intersubtest and the subtest-final test scores correlation coefficients of the examination tasks. As a result of the analysis it was observable that the written mediation task does not behave in a different way when compared with the other examination tasks, and does not show such a high common proportion of variance with them that would indicate that the mediation task measures the same skills as the other examination tasks (subtests). It was obvious that neither the written mediation task nor the other examination tasks can be omitted from the test battery. In all examination periods the reliability analysis of the subtests proved that the omission of the written mediation task would reduce the reliability of the whole test battery. The results of the factor analysis show that foreign language mediation skill represented by written mediation tasks is one of the components of general language ability. It can be clearly separated from other language skills with its high loading of variance and on average it explains 17% of the variance of the language skills in the test battery so it represents an important part of language knowledge. Cluster analyses also confirm that foreign language mediation is an independent language skill as mediation tasks are sharply separated from other examination tasks forming an independent cluster. Multiple regression analyses revealed the common subskills (the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the regression model) between mediation tasks and other tasks. On average 54% of the variance of the mediation task is not explained by other examination tasks so it represents subskills that can be attributed only to foreign language mediation skills. My research verified my hypothesis that written mediation examination task measures a segment of language knowledge independently; skills (subskills) appearing in it are not present in other examination tasks. Foreign language mediation is an independent language skill; therefore bilingual language examinations can measure skills that are not measureable by monolingual examination systems.

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