Response patterns in the testing of receptive language skills

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This is an analysis of the historical (2000-2007) data from the Listening and Reading components of the CanTEST, a test of English language proficiency. In the first analysis, subscores of individuals are compared for consistency across prompt and question types – in effect, an examination of the internal consistency of the Reading and Listening tests. In the second analysis, subscores are examined as a function of two demographic variables, age and first language.

Findings

• In listening, when the short and long prompt passage scores (tapping different skills) are used separately to identify test takers as beginner, intermediate or advanced, there is agreement in just over half the cases.

• In reading, when the three subtests (reading passages, skim-and-scan items, and cloze) are used individually to categorize test takers, the level of agreement is about the same, just over half of test takers.

• By gender, women are slightly but consistently better on all reading and listening subtests.

• By age, the 25-30 years group is consistently better than those young or older on all subtests in both listening and reading. The difference between younger and older groups varies by subtest.

• By geographic origin, different subtests in both reading and listening show different rankings of the six regional groups.