

## **ASSESSING AND SCORING FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

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### **Abstract**

Communicative competence plays a vital role in the effective and appropriate communication of foreign language learners (FLLs). Nevertheless, scrutiny of the English language curriculum in Saudi Arabia as regards the development of FLLs' communicative competence will reveal a shortage of valid and reliable test and scoring scales designed to measure this development. Therefore, this study aims to provide a valid and reliable written test for measuring the development of some of the components of FLLs' communicative competence. In addition, it compares two scoring scales, in order to reach a conclusion about some of the characteristics required in a scoring scale for communicative competence. A test was therefore administered to 49 Saudi students at the University of Dammam and scored by three raters using the same scoring scales. The study found that both Holistic and 'Correct Sentences' Scales had a high level of inter-reliability, although neither produced variations in all questions. Ultimately, the Correct Sentences Scale was chosen to score the test, because it categorised the test questions into suitable components. Another important finding was that the test questions measuring the learners' grammatical and discourse competence were reliable and valid, while the questions measuring the learners' sociolinguistic competence were valid, but had low reliability. Therefore, to conclude, the study recommends amending the Correct Sentences Scale, by being more specific about scoring the components in each response. The scale would then be suitable for scoring tests of communicative competence, as well as redefining the test instructions for greater clarity and precision.

**Keywords:** Communicative competence, validity, reliability, assessment, inter-rater.