The Impact of Test-Taking Strategies on construct validity.

EFL Learners consciously select some strategies during tests.” Cohen (1998b p.92, Nikolov (2006). These strategies are used either to facilitate the process of answering even if there is no problem, or in order to solve a problem but not necessarily lead to success. Sometimes is used a compensation of a deficit in the learner’s knowledge.

Franssons (1984) asserts that respondents may not proceed via the test but rather around it, which causes variations between those who can maximize their scores exploiting the characteristics of test formats or weaknesses in the composition of particular items (Brow, Schemlzer and Spries 1984) and those who are only using their own knowledge to complete the task. Cohen (1998b, 2006) Cohen & Upton (2006, 2007) note that learners may only be using surface matching between words in the stem and the alternatives in a four alternative MC reading comprehension test, without processing the stem for meaning which the task is supposed to be testing. Sometimes students use other “not-so wise strategies” (Cohen 1998a, p. 220) which are counterproductive and may lead to a change of answer from correct to wrong (called in this study unwise- strategies). These two types are seen as harmful to the construct validity.

20 English language major students from KFU produced 40 think aloud protocols in additional to introspective interviews while taking two vocabulary tests. These protocols, after transcribed, were analysed for strategies and a new classification of test-taking strategies have been proposed showing the place of a new category called “unwise-strategies”. The investigation shows also the impact of all kinds of TTS strategies on construct validity.