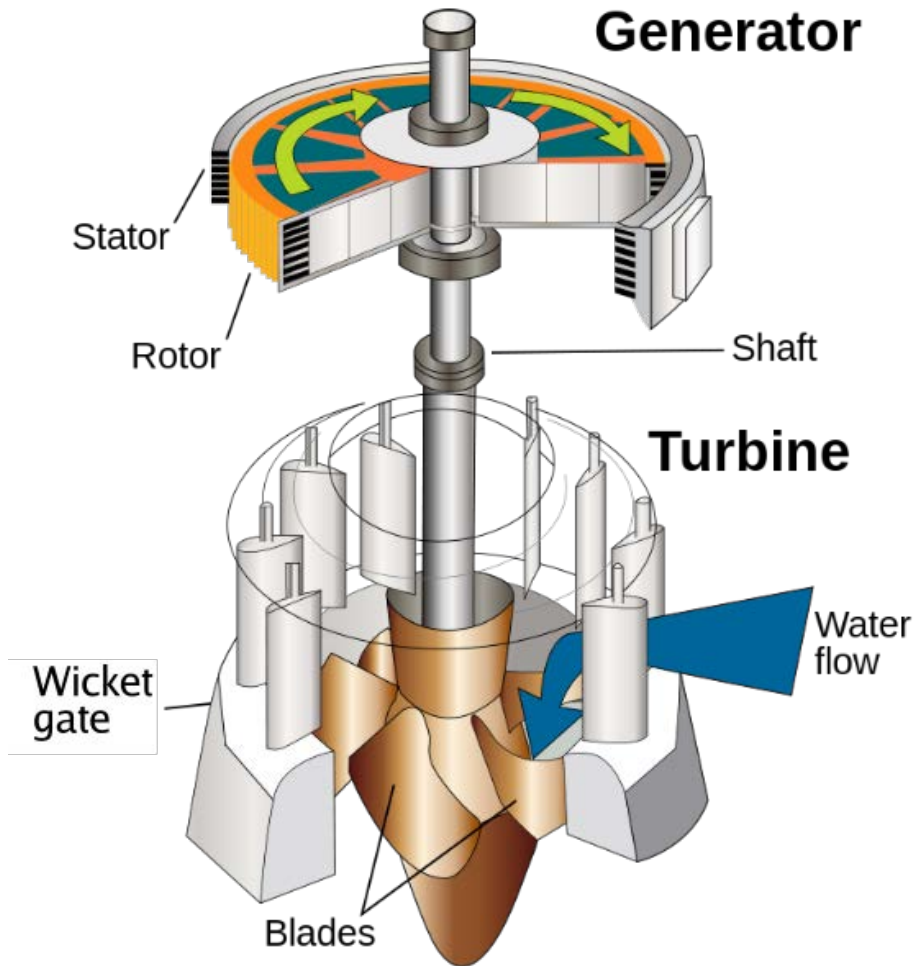


Assessing language for specific purposes — The role of background knowledge



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Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Assessing language for specific purposes — The role of background knowledge

1. The validity argument
2. Strategies
3. Conclusion

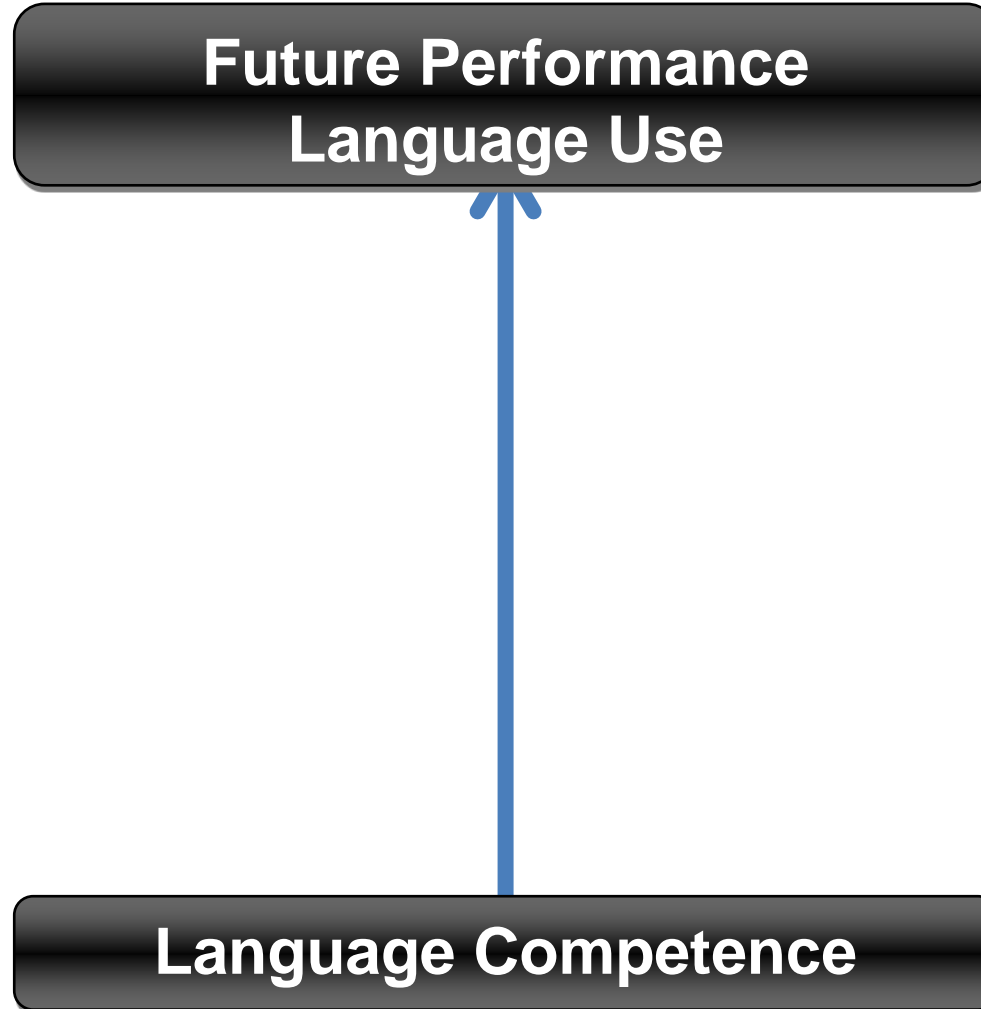
The validity argument



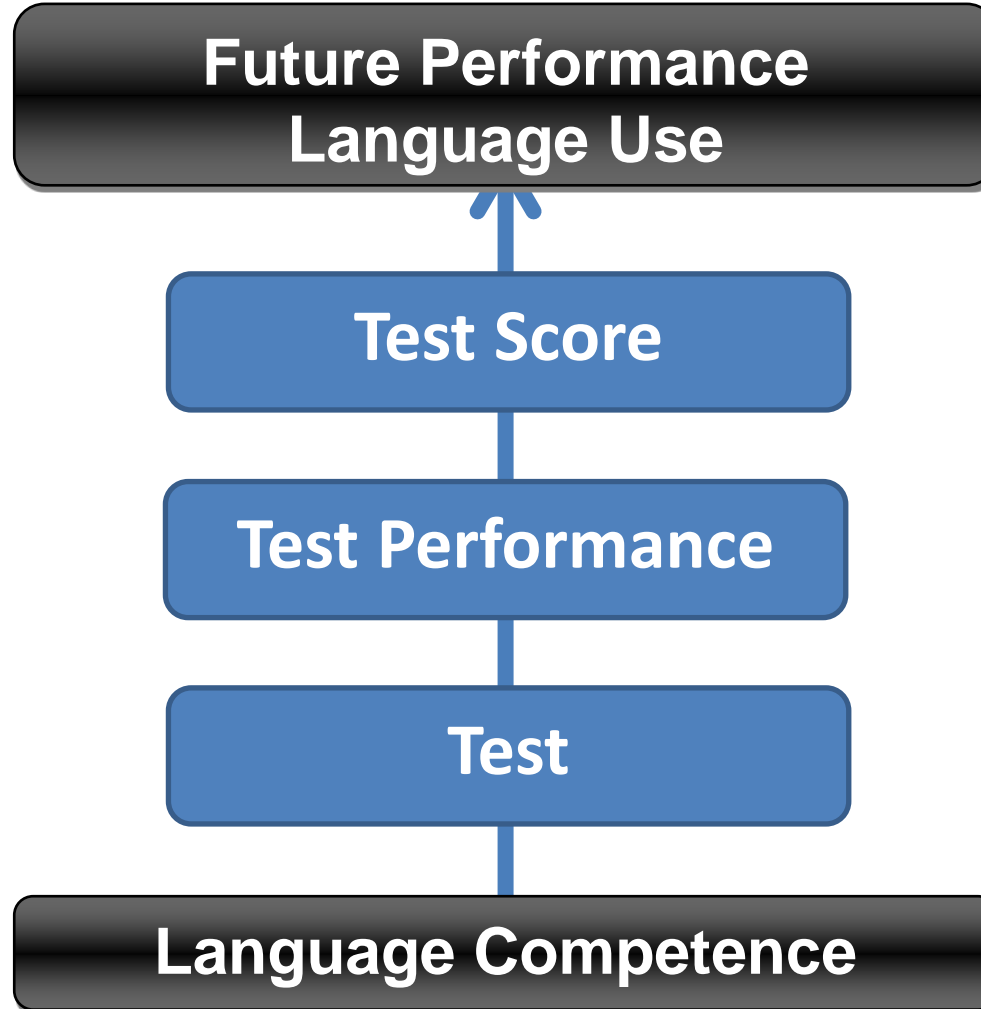
Validity of Language Tests

Language Competence

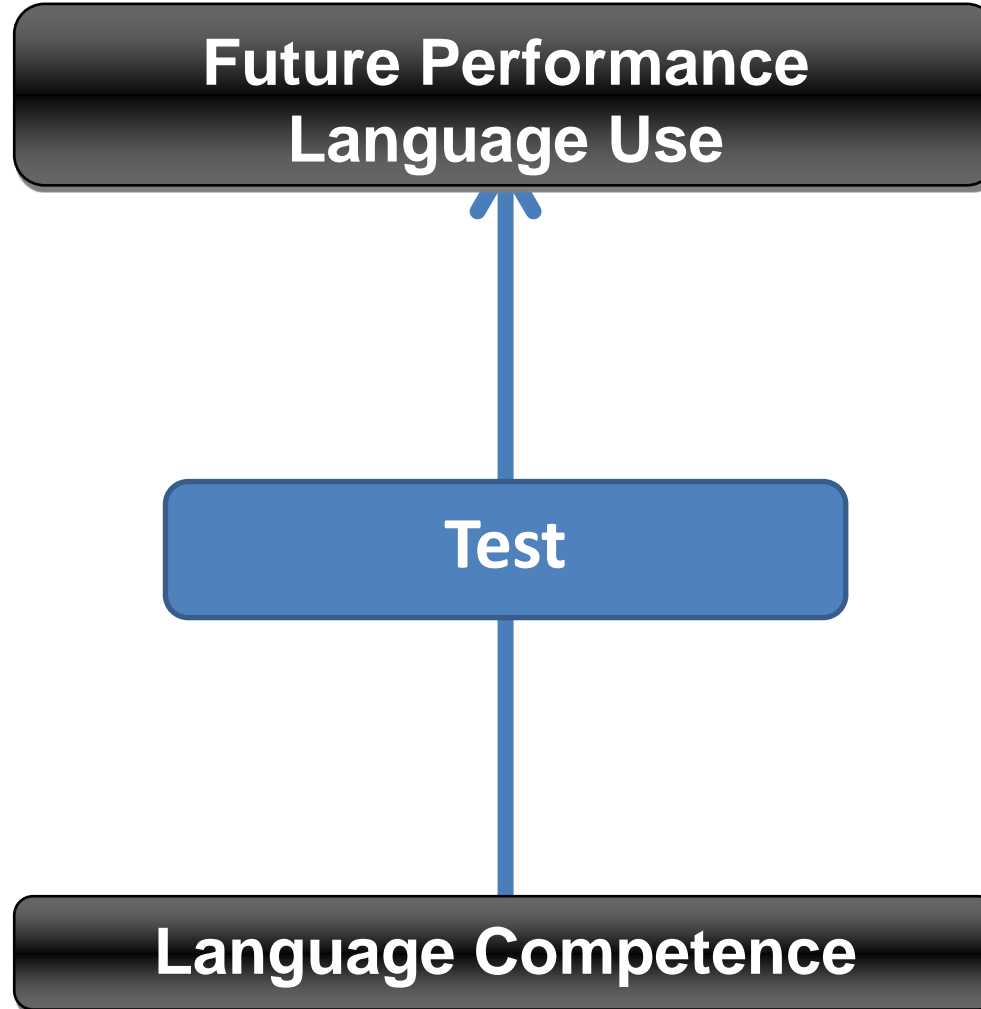
Validity of Language Tests



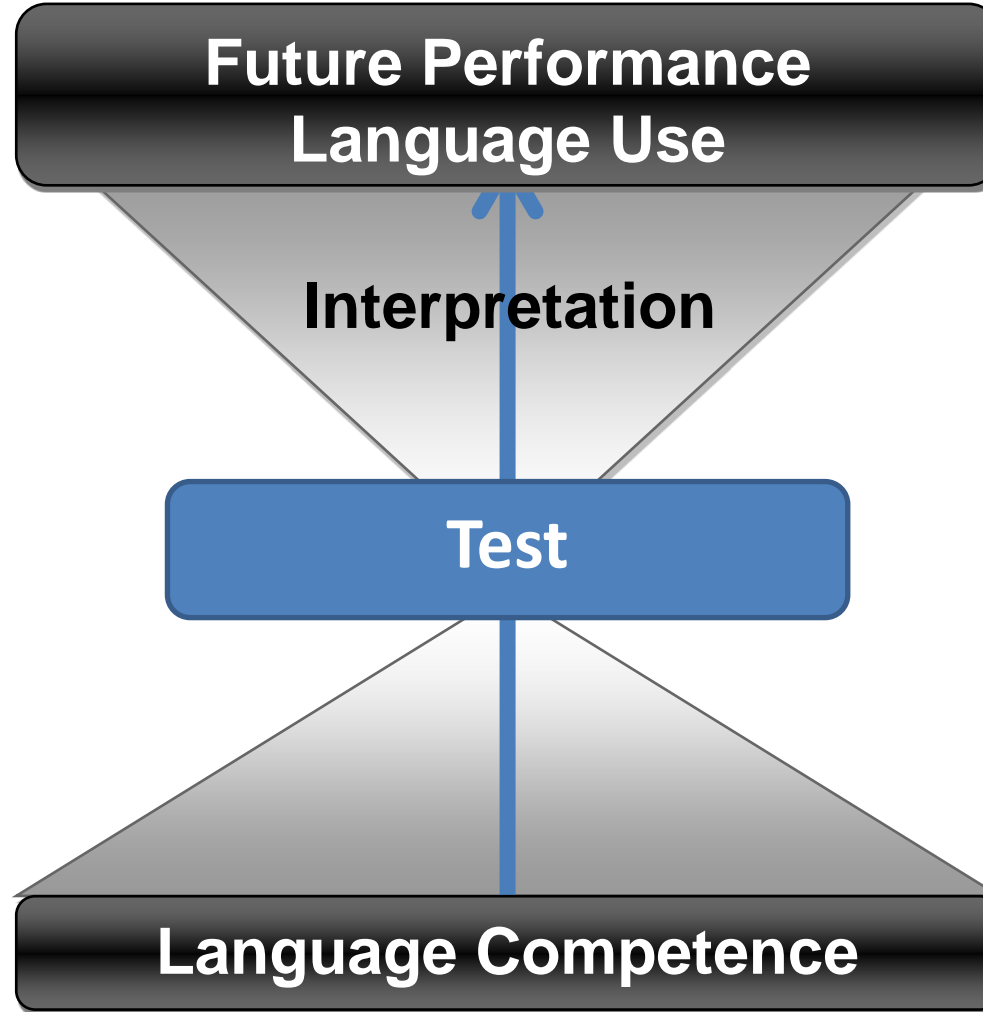
Validity of Language Tests



Validity of Language Tests



Validity of Language Tests



Validity

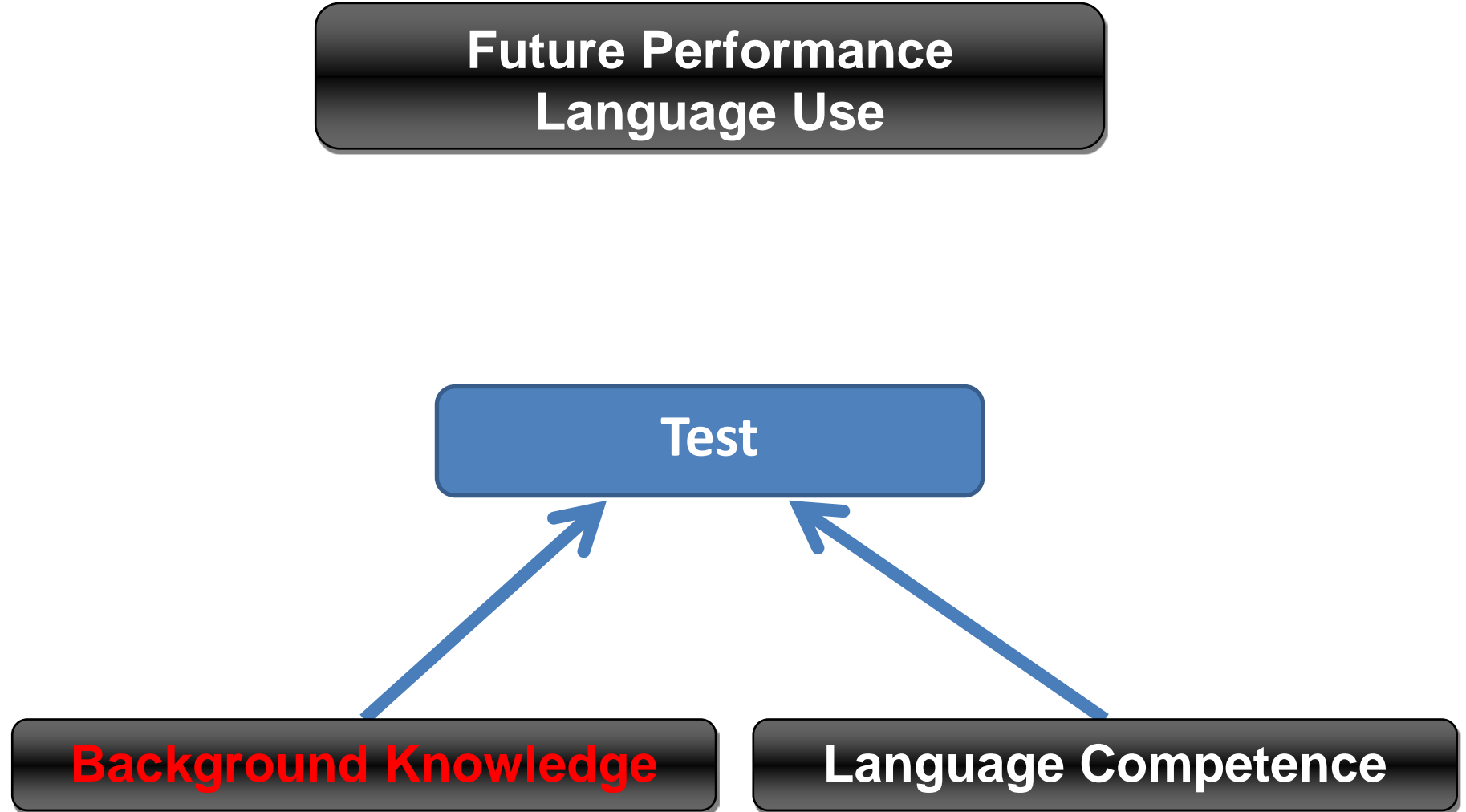
Strategies

Conclusion

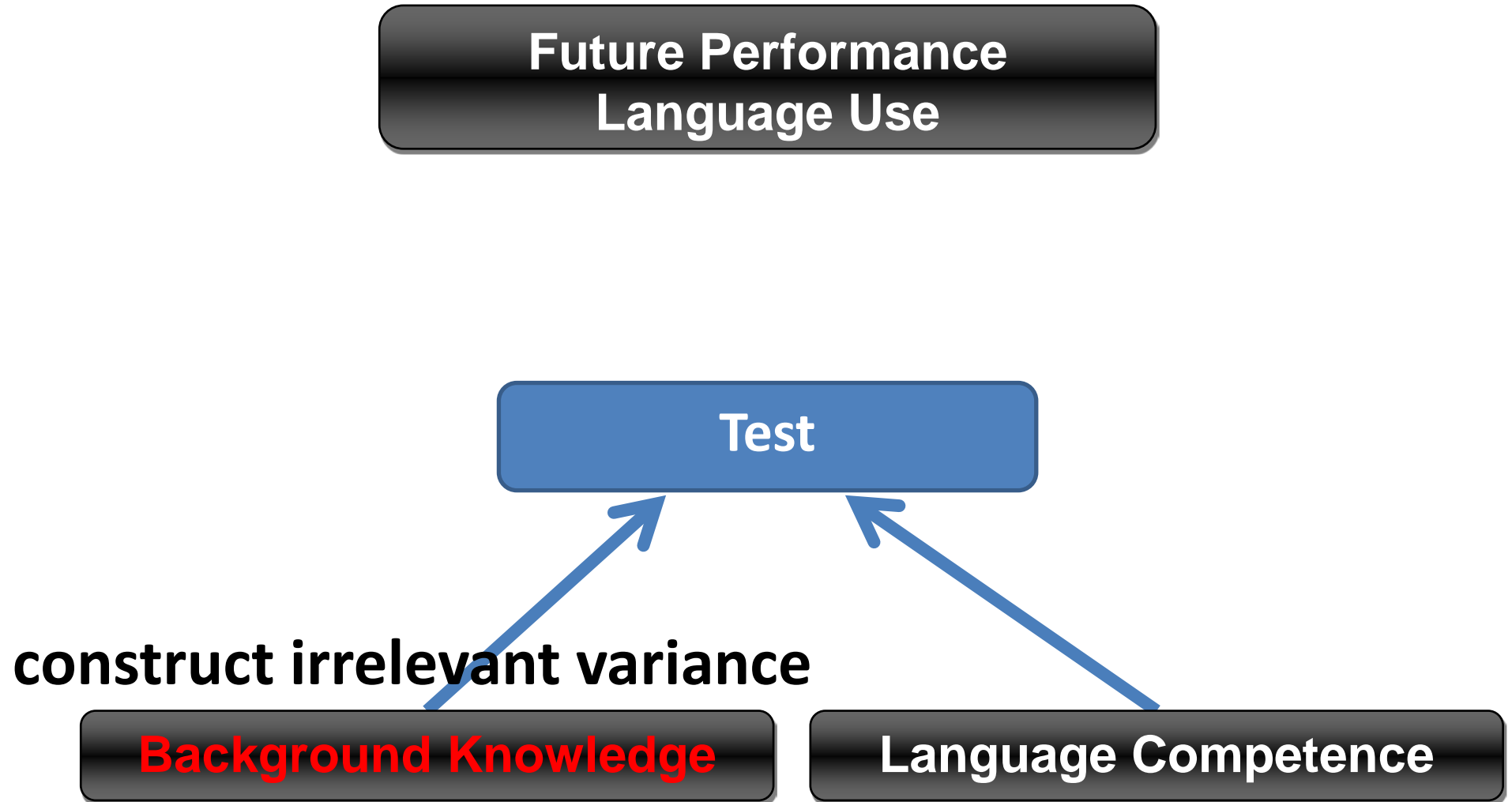
Mechanical Engineering 1 (ME1)

Describe the design of the Kaplan turbine.
Give examples of typical uses and give reasons for the selection of the Kaplan turbine.

Validity of Language Tests



Validity of Language Tests





Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests

Specific Purpose
Language Use

Background Knowledge

Language Competence



Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests

Specific Purpose
Language Use

“**Specific purpose language ability** results from the interaction between **specific purpose background knowledge** and **language ability**.” (Douglas, 2000: 40)

Specific Purpose
Language Ability

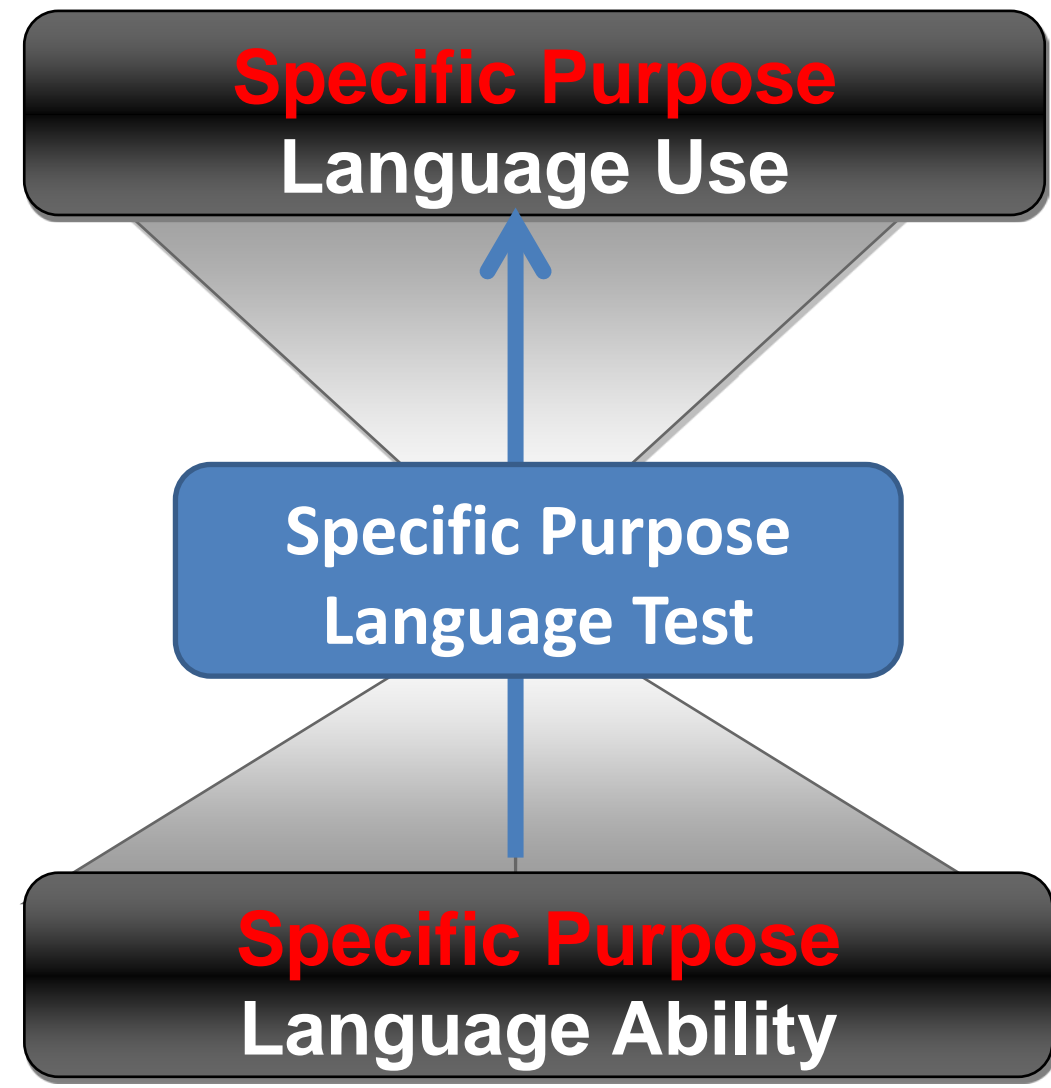
Background Knowledge

Language Competence



Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests





Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests

Specific Purpose
Language Use

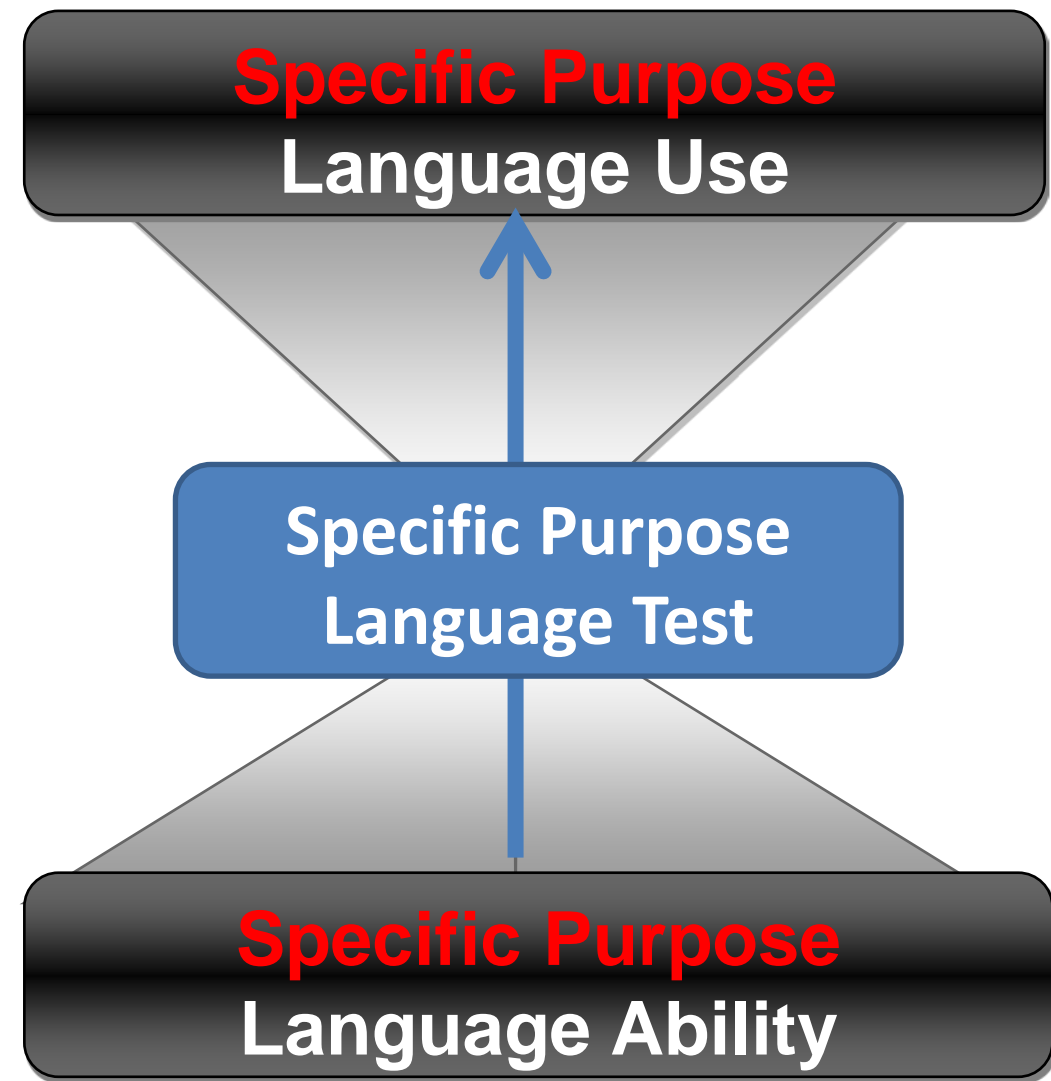
A **specific purpose language test** is one in which test content and methods are derived from an analysis of a specific purpose target language use situation, so that test tasks and content are authentically representative of tasks in the target situation [...]. Such a test allows us to make **inferences about a test taker's capacity to use language in the specific purpose domain** (Douglas, 2000: 19).

Specific Purpose
Language Ability



Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

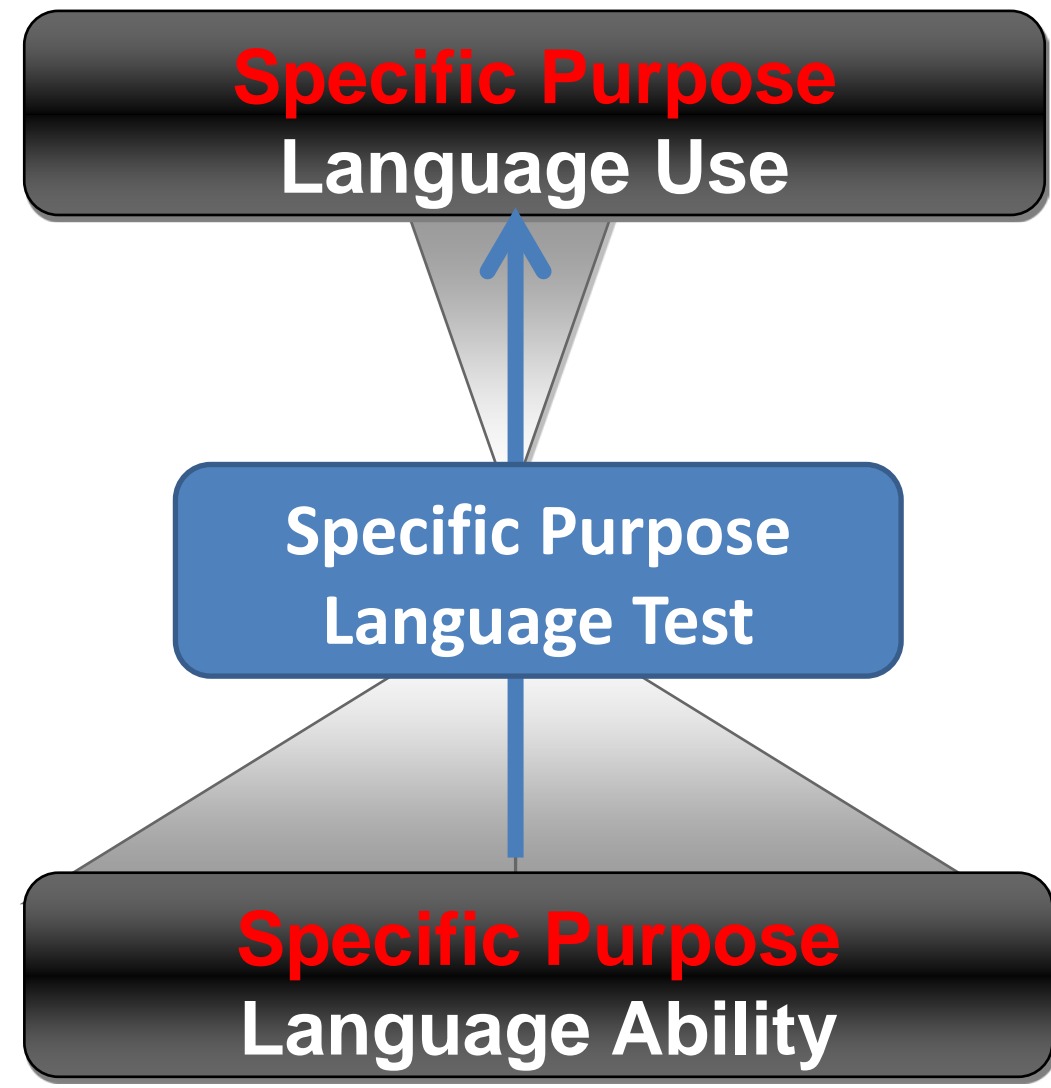
Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests





Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests



Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Validity of **Specific Purpose** Language Tests

background knowledge

- contaminates the validity argument
- is regarded as construct irrelevant variance

background knowledge

- is part of specific purpose language ability
- the validity of specific purpose language tests is limited to a specific language use domain

Strategies for writing task design in language for specific purposes tests

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Language for specific purposes testing

- general language tests
- language for general academic purposes tests
- language for business purposes tests

background knowledge =
contamination of construct =
threat to validity

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having a car.

You should write at least 250 words.
Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Strategy: Avoid specificity

- avoiding subject specificity altogether
- minimise the role of background knowledge
- using general tests
- creating the atmosphere of specificity



**Role of
Background
Knowledge**







Language for specific purposes testing

- law
- engineering
- aviation

Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Strategy: Avoid writing tasks

- reading tasks
- gap filling tasks
- listening tasks

Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Strategy: Provide subject specific input

- instructions
- prompts
- charts
- pictures
- texts
- video clips with subject specific information

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Mechanical Engineering 1 (ME1)

Describe the design of the Kaplan turbine.
Give examples of typical uses and give reasons for the selection of the Kaplan turbine.

Validity

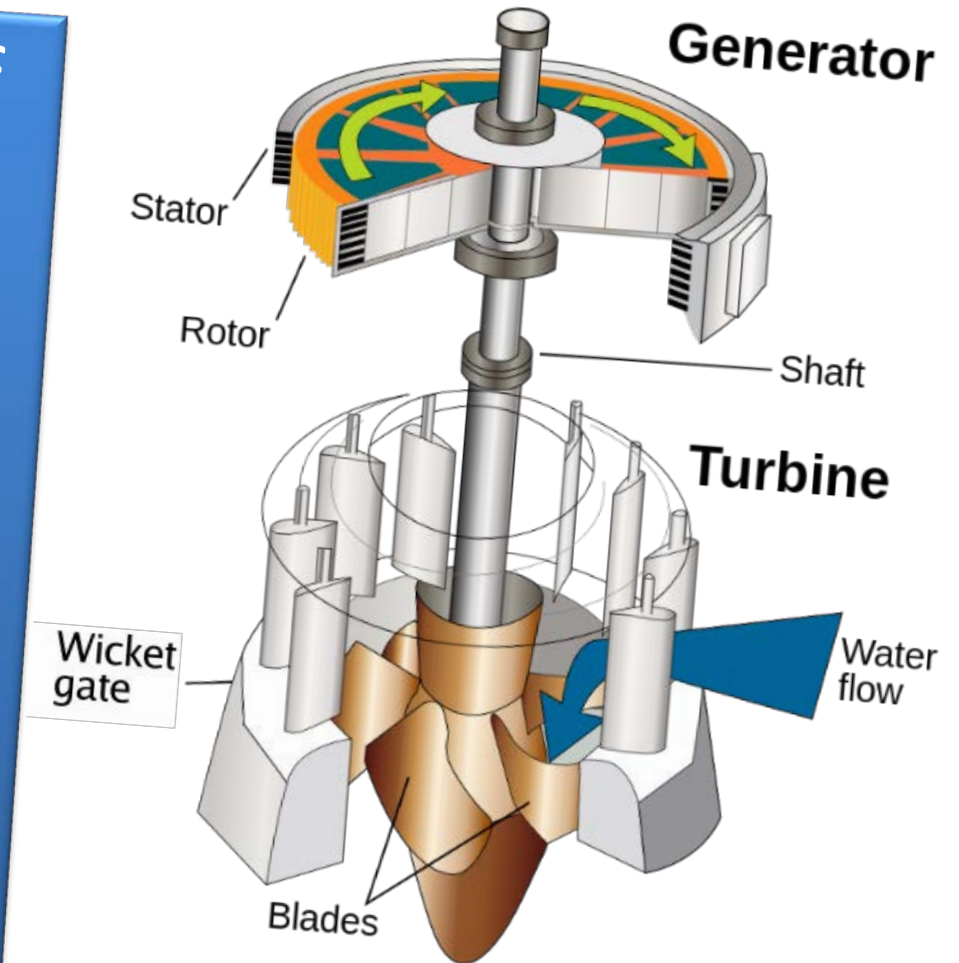
Strategies

Conclusion

Mechanical Engineering 2 (ME2)

Describe the design of the Kaplan turbine.

Give examples of typical uses and give reasons for the selection of the Kaplan turbine.



Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Mechanical Engineering 3 (ME3)

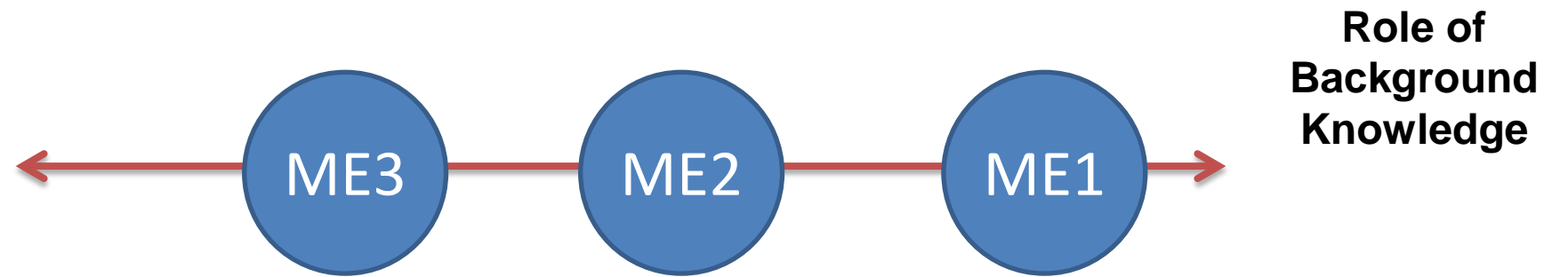
- Watch the video "Kaplan Turbine Working and Design".
- Describe the design of the Kaplan turbine.
- Give examples of typical uses and give reasons for the selection of the Kaplan Turbine.





**Role of
Background
Knowledge**





Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Strategy: Control expected response

- Guided writing tasks

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

ILEC/Cambridge English: Legal (CL1)

Your law firm is planning a staff training seminar on the law relating to Mergers and Acquisitions. The partner in charge of the seminar has asked you to help him prepare the material for the seminar.

Write a memorandum to the partner. Your memorandum should:

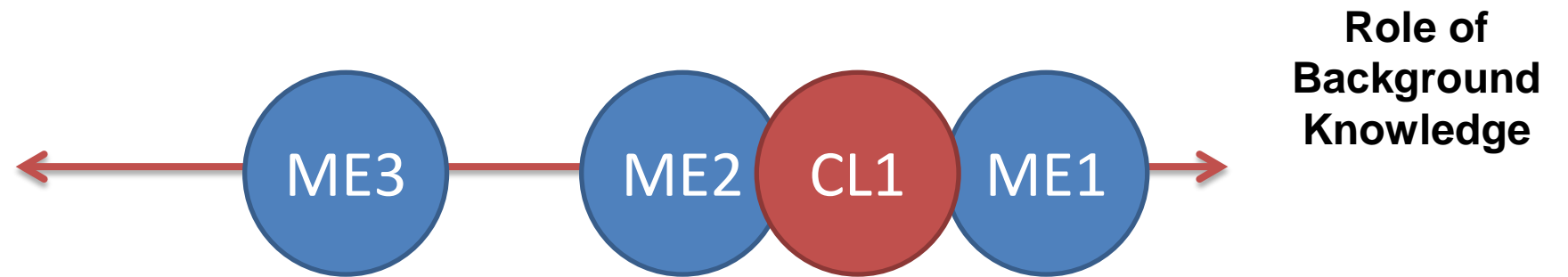
- outline reasons why companies may want to merge
- consider the implications for employees
- explain the issues regarding supplier contracts
- mention relevant legislation in your country

Write your answer in 200-250 words in an appropriate style on the opposite page.

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion



Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

ILEC/Cambridge English: Legal (CL2)

For the past six years your client, United Wheat Shippers, has signed annual agreements with the National Farmers' Association of Canada to purchase all the wheat planted each year by the Association's farmers at a fixed price.

Now the President of the National Farmers' Association, William LeFleur, has sent a letter to your client.

Read Mr LeFleur's letter, on which you have made some notes. Then using all the information in the notes, write a letter to Mr LeFleur on behalf of your client, United Wheat Shippers.

- Validity
- Strategies
- Conclusion

As you are aware, the price of wheat has suddenly doubled over the past month. This puts the Association in a very difficult position. Our contract with you states a fixed price, regardless of the market price of the wheat at harvest. However, when we signed this year's contract, we could not foresee this extreme rise in the price of wheat.

Confirm this is correct

Neither could we!

Not always - explain

No - make proposal for next year

We have always valued our business relationship over the years and that business relationship has been profitable on both sides. However, the current agreement will cause extreme financial difficulties for us and so we ask United Wheat Shippers to release us from this agreement and re-negotiate the deal based on current conditions.

Agreement is binding

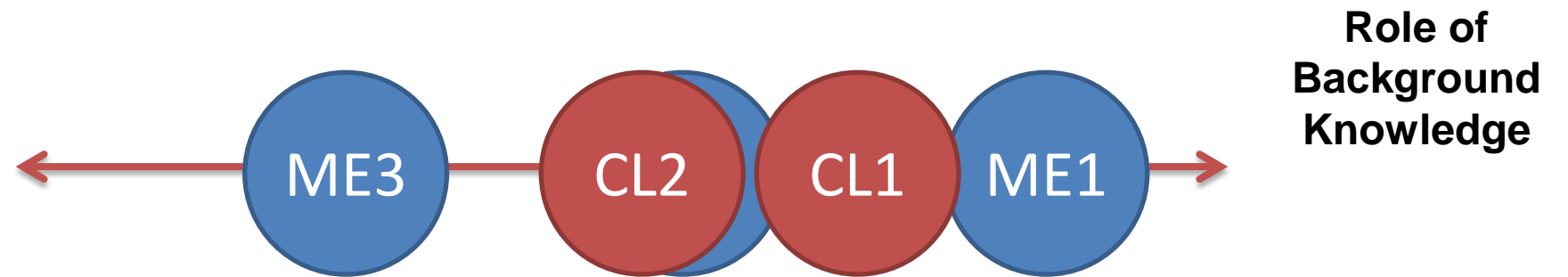
Yours sincerely
William LeFleur

William LeFleur
President
National Farmers' Association

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion



Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Strategy: Use different registers

- "translations" into a more subject specific register

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

TOLES/Test of Legal English Skills (LE1)

Read the letter below that a solicitor has written on behalf of a client. The letter is too informal in style and vocabulary.

Rewrite the letter in a more appropriate way. Do not change the meaning or lose any of the information it contains.

Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

TOLES/Test of Legal English Skills (LE1)

Dear Richards & Morgan

We are working for Mr and Mrs Jacobson. They bought a house (19 Wilson Close, Hove, Brighton) 1 and a half years ago. Before they decided to buy it, they asked you examine the house and do an in-depth survey paper on it.

We think that we have a good case for a claim against you for bad work and we are going to sue you for this. You must send us the name and address of your insurers so that we can write to them as well.

Regards
Thomas Bedford

TOLES/Test of Legal English Skills (LE1)

Dear Sirs

Mr and Mrs Jacobson – 19 Wilson Close, Hove, Brighton

We act on behalf of Mr and Mrs Jacobson who purchased the above property 18 months ago. Prior to the purchase our clients instructed your firm to inspect the property and provide a detailed survey report.

In our opinion our clients have a very strong case against your firm on the grounds that the survey report you provided to them was negligent. We have advised my clients to seek damages for professional negligence and legal proceedings will be issued in the near future. We ask that you kindly provide us with the name and address of your insurer as we will need to contact them in connection with this matter.

Yours faithfully

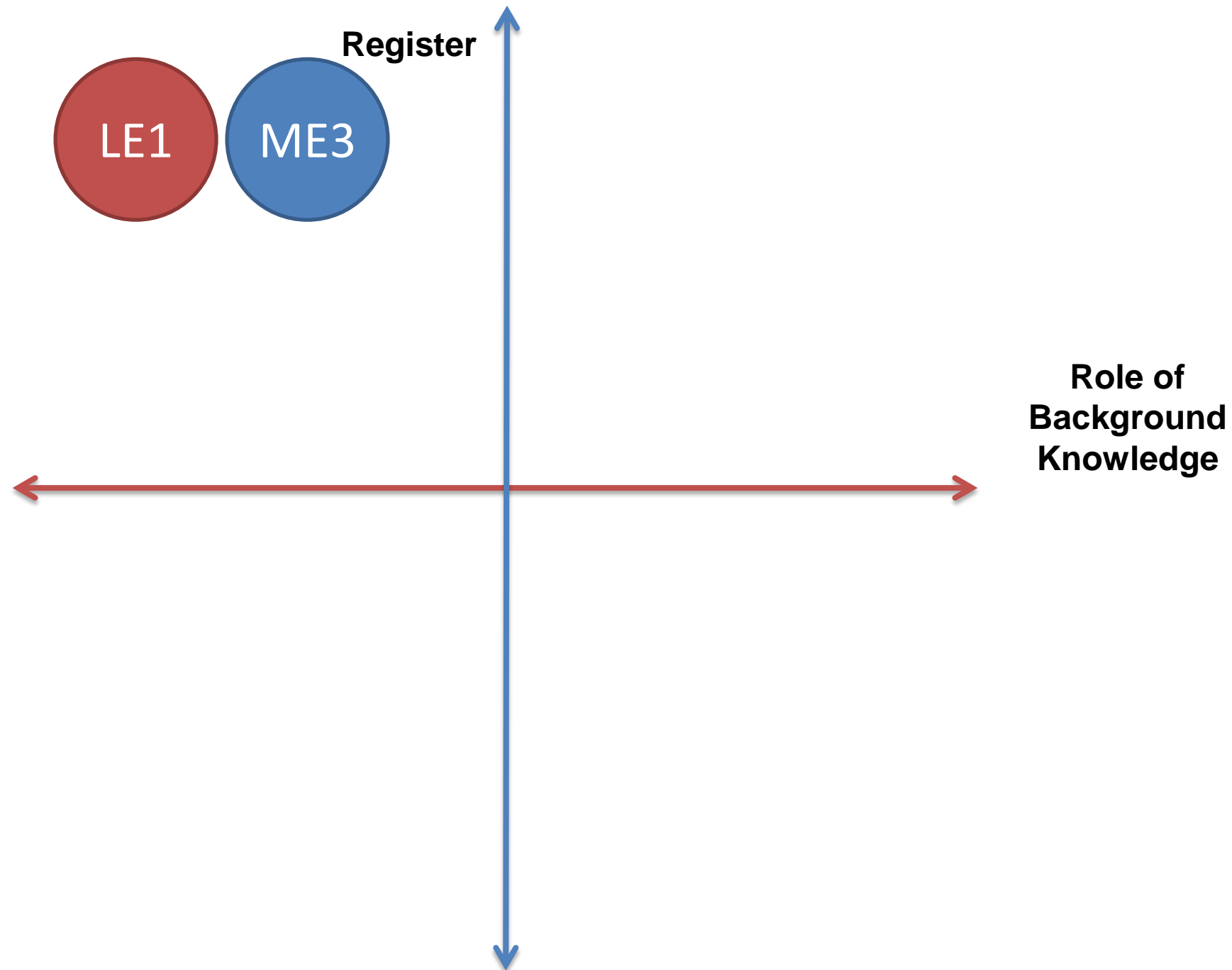
Thomas Bedford.

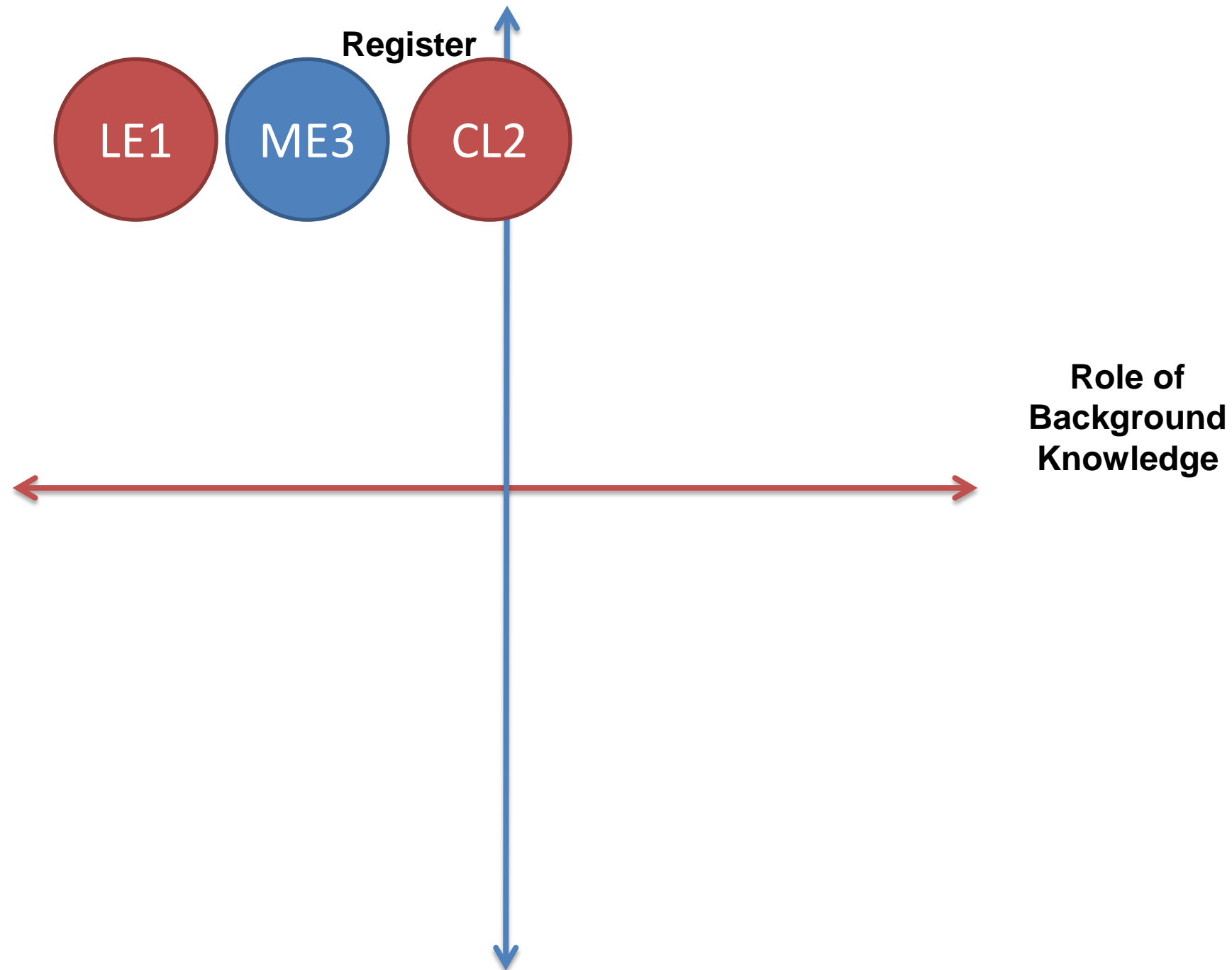




Register

Role of
Background
Knowledge

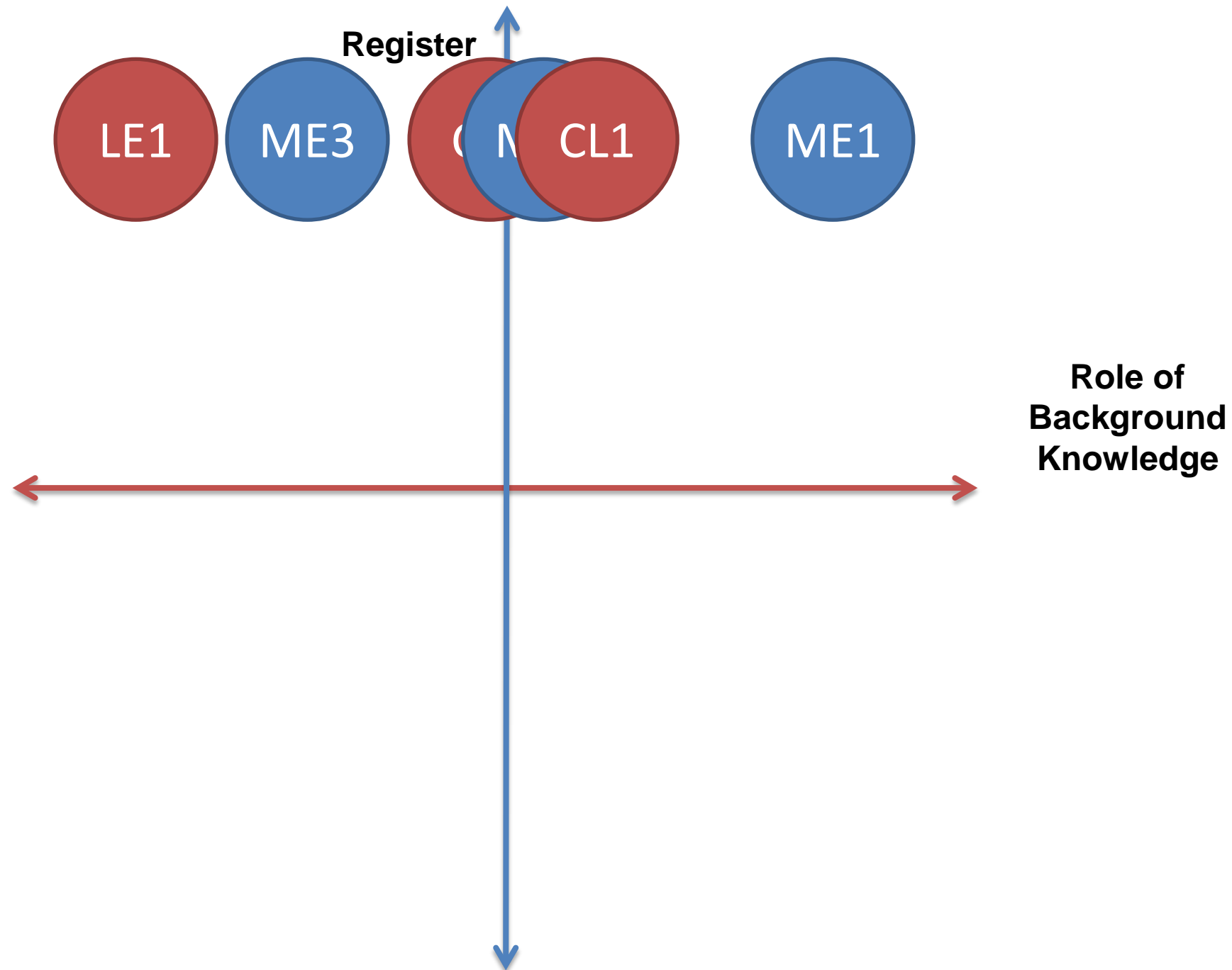




Validity

Strategies

Conclusion



Validity

Strategies

Conclusion

Strategies for task design in language for specific purposes tests

1. Avoid specificity
2. Avoid writing tasks
3. Provide subject specific input
4. Control expected response
5. Use different registers

Conclusion

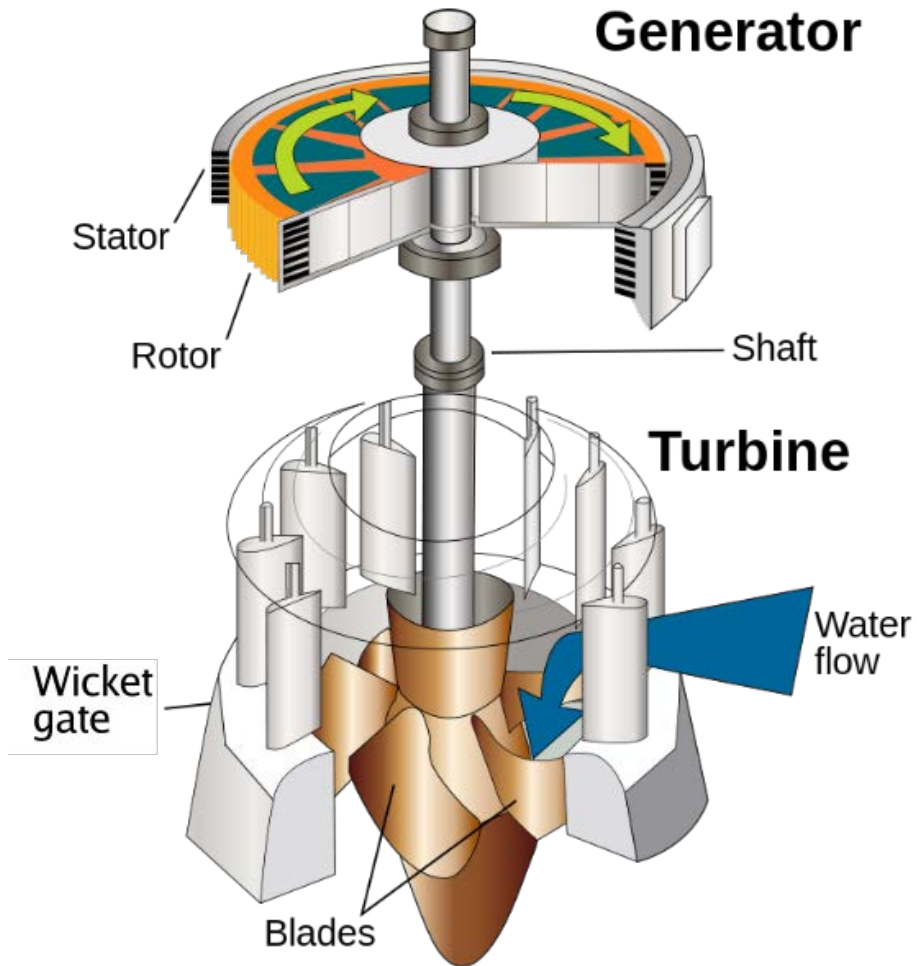


Validity
Strategies
Conclusion

Conclusion

- role of background knowledge
- strategies

Assessing language for specific purposes — The role of background knowledge



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