Some considerations on

STANAG 6001 Tester Training

Gerard Seinhorst
Netherlands Defence Language Centre

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Outline

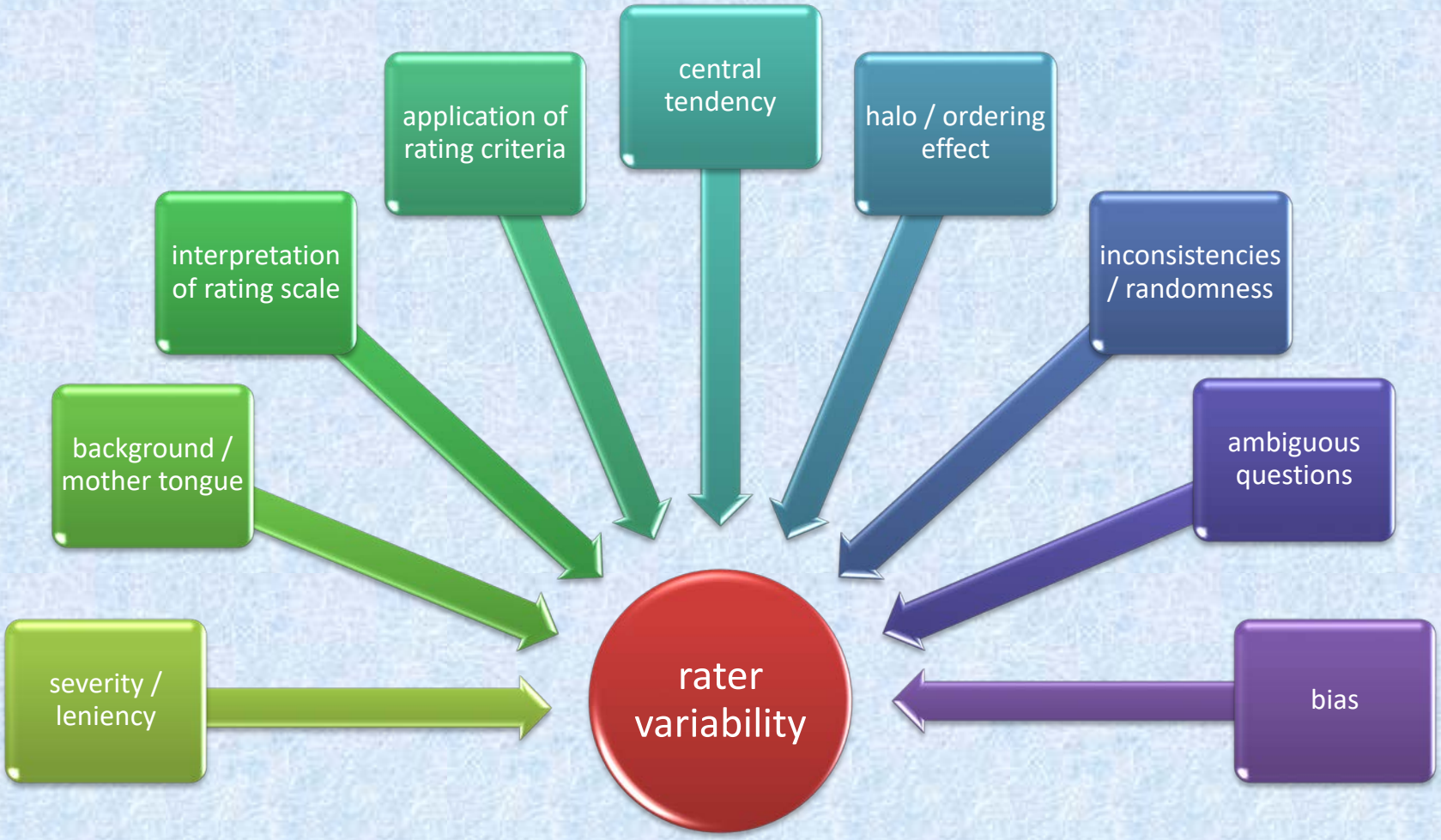
- The importance of tester training
- The effects of training - *Research findings*
- General and role-specific tester training
- References

Introduction

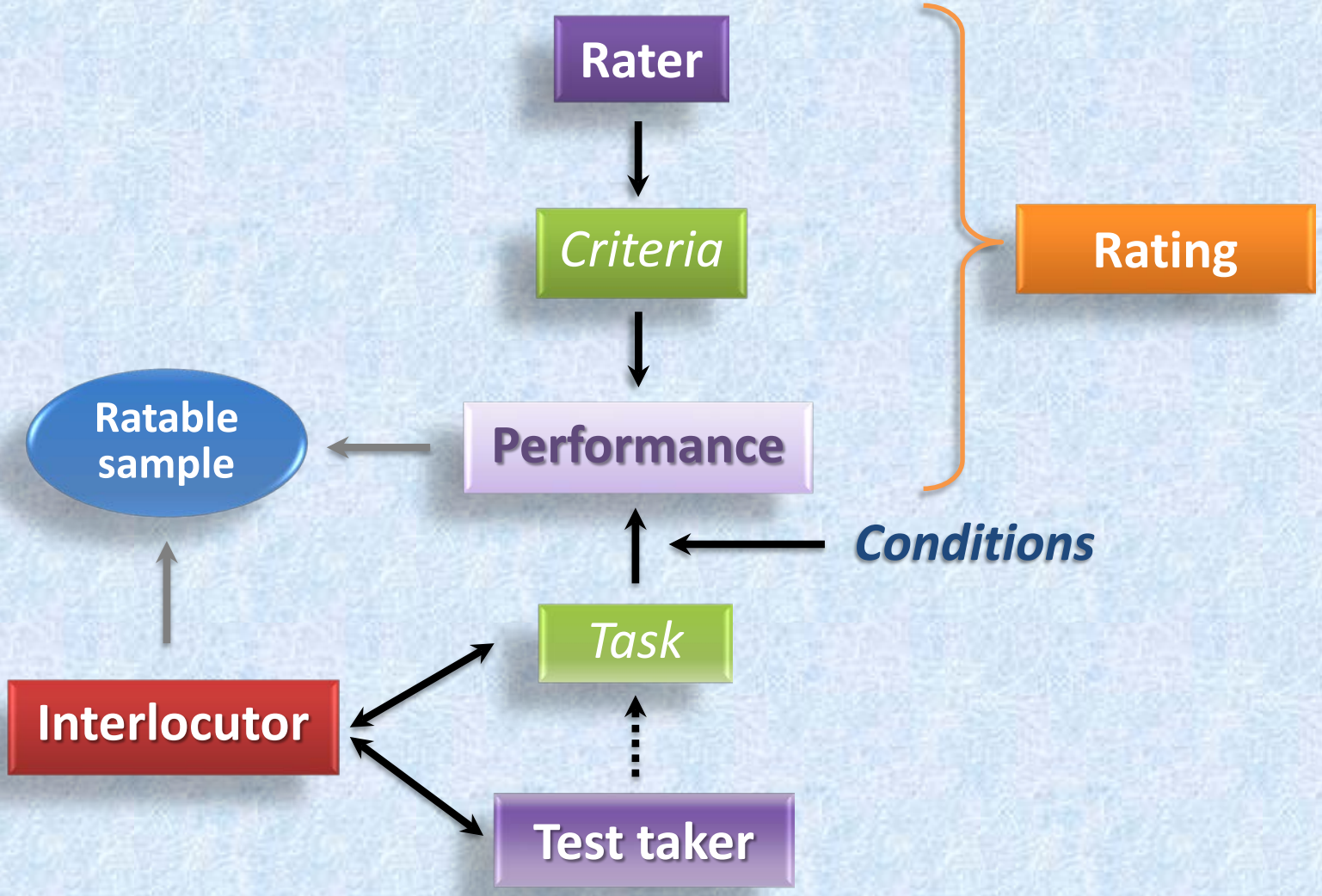
'If we do not know what raters are doing, then we do not know what their ratings mean'

Connor-Linton (1995)

Causes of rater variability



Interaction in assessment



Adapted from McNamara (1997)

The role of the interlocutor

- Shift of focus in language testing – from maximizing reliability to optimizing validity
- Potential of the interlocutor to affect the quality of the test taker's performance
  - differences in the way that interlocutors interact with test takers
  - tester personality - bias
  - tester stance
  - different elicitation techniques
- Impact on the quality of test taker's performance
  - affecting the validity and fairness of tests and the rating given

The importance of training

- Perform the required task to a **common standard**
  - gain knowledge of assessment methodology and testing principles
  - reach a common understanding/interpretation of rating scale
  - achieve consistency in the application of the rating criteria
  - minimize tester idiosyncrasies and construct-irrelevant variance
  - follow standardized testing procedures
  - enhance alignment of ratings
- Increase/maintain **professionalism** and **quality**
  - make informed decisions
  - selection and qualification/certification of testers

Ensure that the **inferences** made on the basis of the test results are **valid**, **accurate**, and **fair**

Research findings

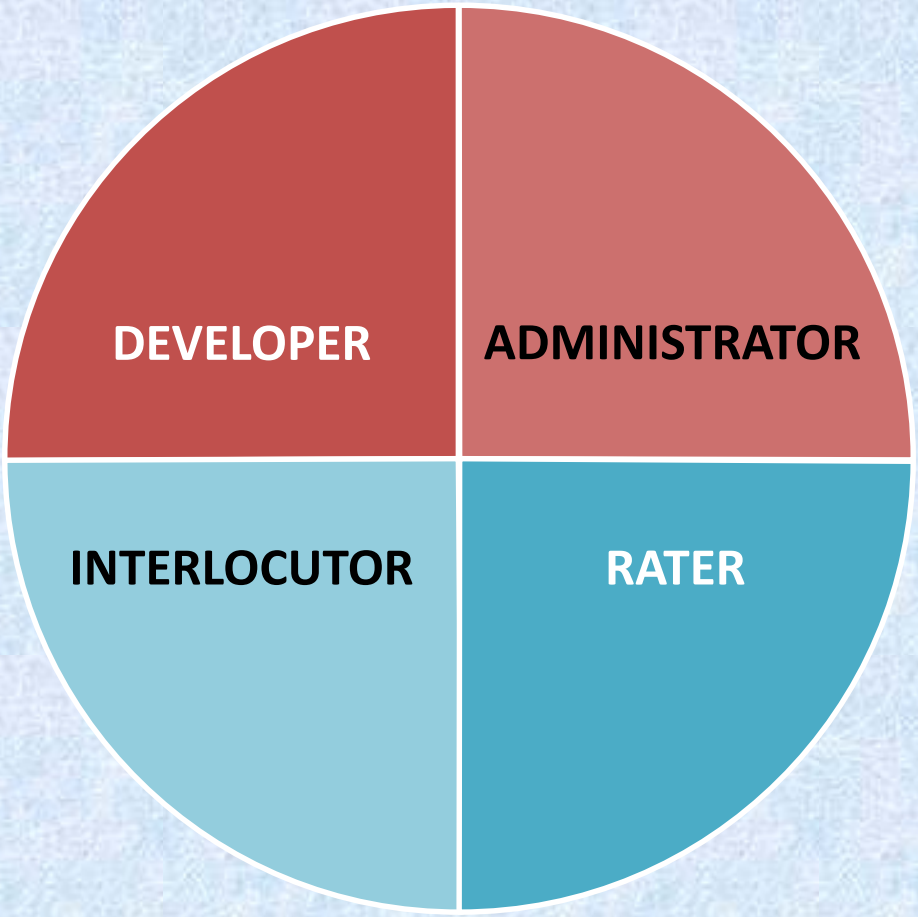
- Tester training leads to higher *inter-rater reliability*, but not necessarily to higher *intra-rater reliability*
- Tester training effects do not persist; raters tend to become more lenient over time
- NNS raters tend to be more severe re. grammar/vocab errors, but more lenient re. interference of L1 accent
- Experience is no guarantee for accurate ratings
- Rating criteria are applied more reliably when they are accompanied by benchmark performances
- Item writing guidelines are more effective when they are supported by examples of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ items and statistical data

Research findings

Implications

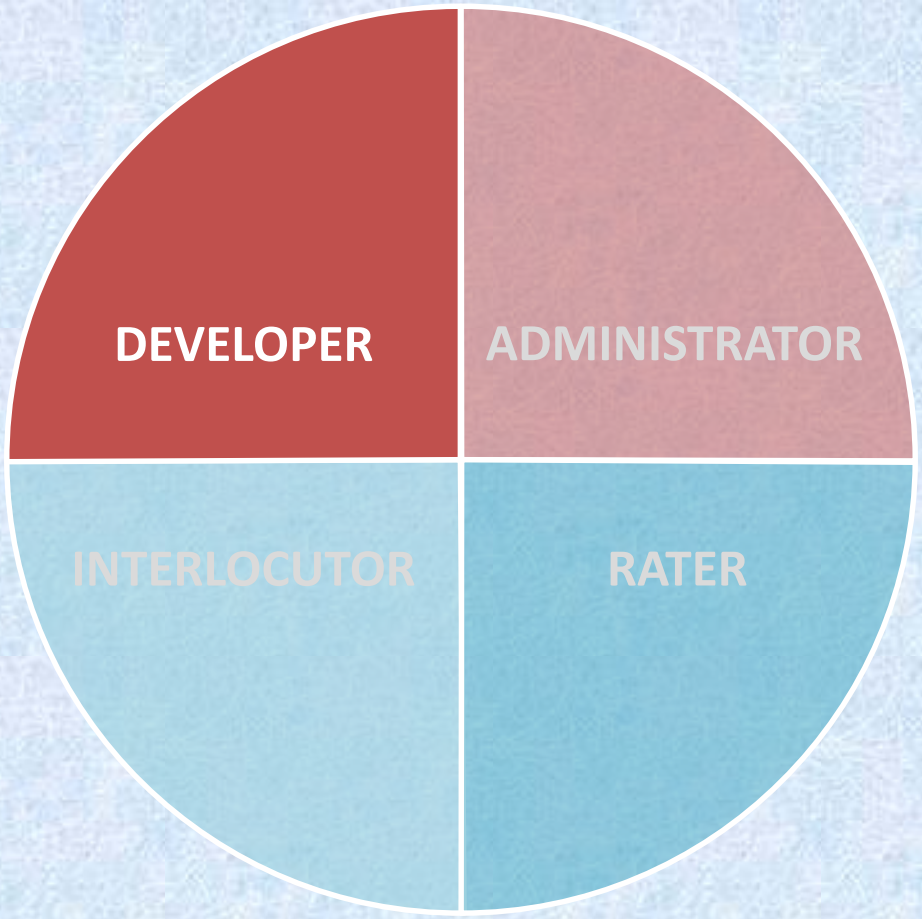
- Tester background (mother tongue, gender, teaching experience) does not play a decisive role in becoming a good examiner
- Training needs to be followed up at regular intervals to ensure that standards are maintained. Ideally, each testing session should be preceded by a renorming/recalibration session to reduce interlocutor idiosyncrasies and rater variability
- Training cannot be expected to remove all variability. The **number of test occasions** has a far greater impact on reliability than tester training or employing multiple raters
- **Practice** is the key to becoming proficient in item writing, conducting speaking tests and rating performances

Language Tester Roles

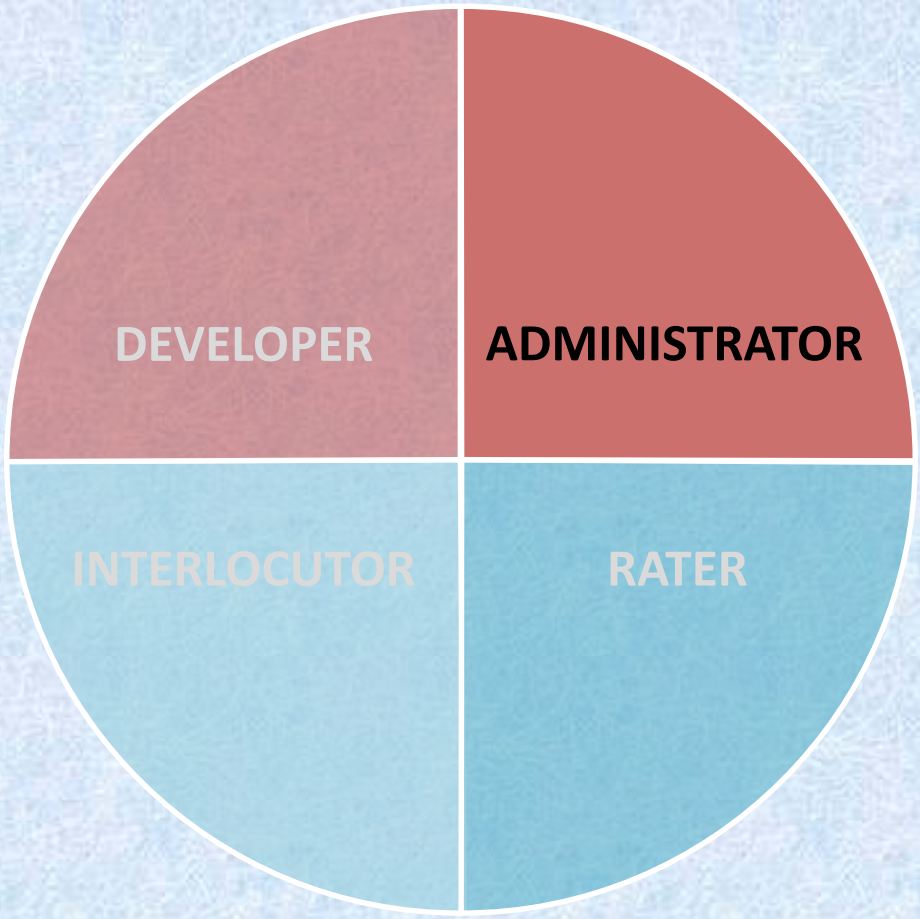


Language Tester Roles

- test specs
- CTA alignment
- item/prompt writing
- moderation
- pretesting
- test/item analysis
- validation

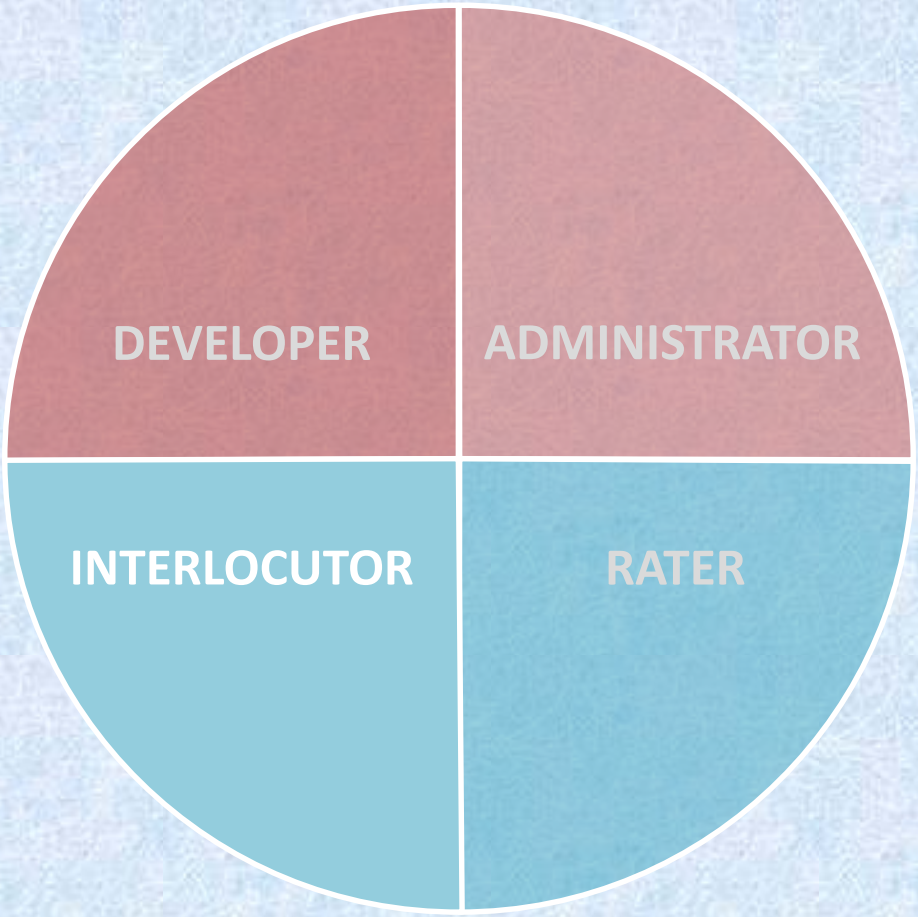


Language Tester Roles



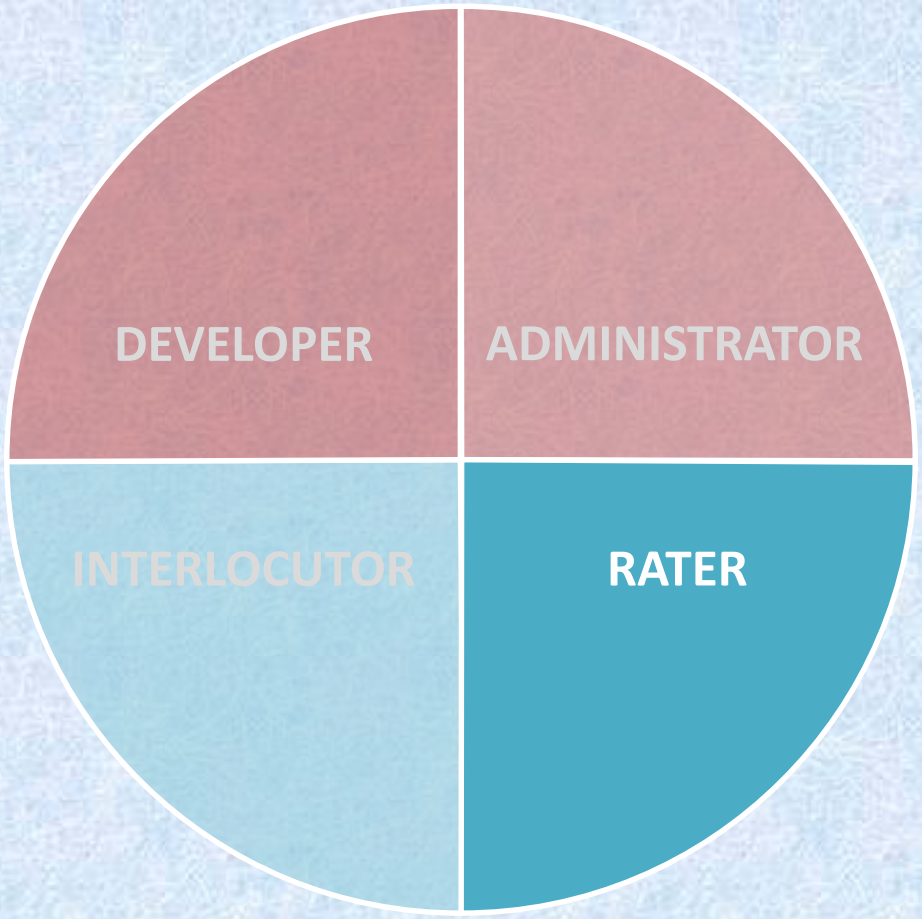
- scheduling
- scoring procedures
- test admin protocols
- test security
- retesting policy
- reporting test results
- test certificates
- reproduction/storage

Language Tester Roles



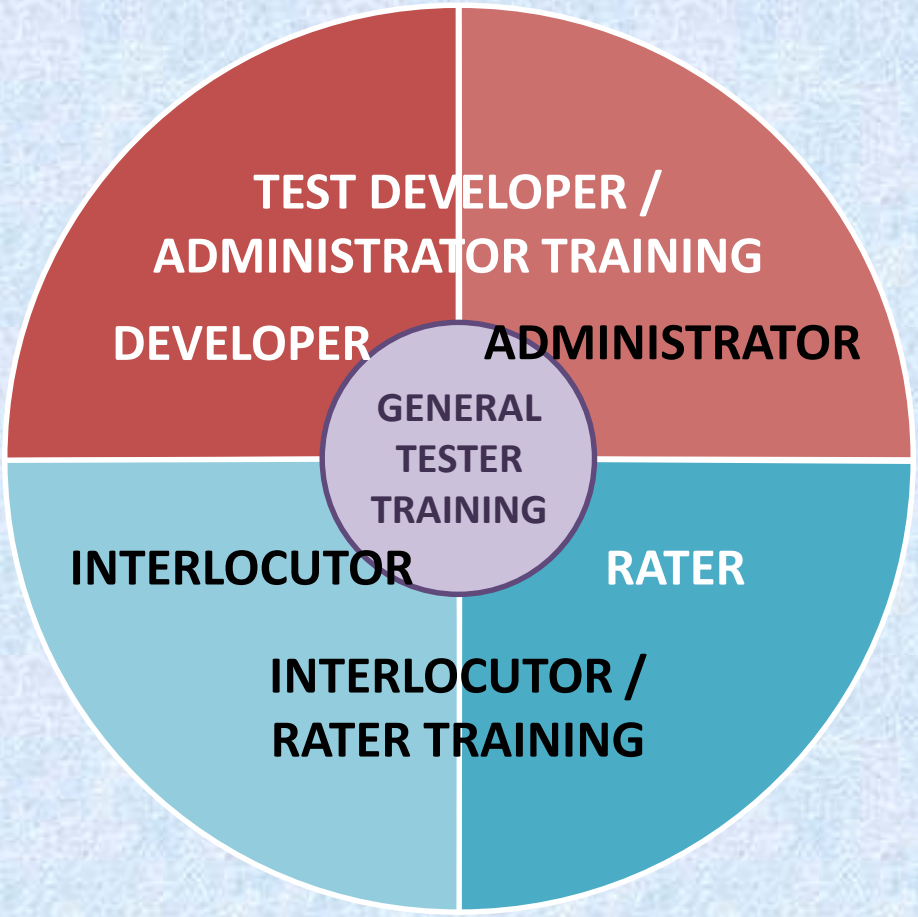
- speaking test protocol
- elicitation techniques
- ratable speech sample
- tester behaviour
- dealing with non-standard performances

Language Tester Roles



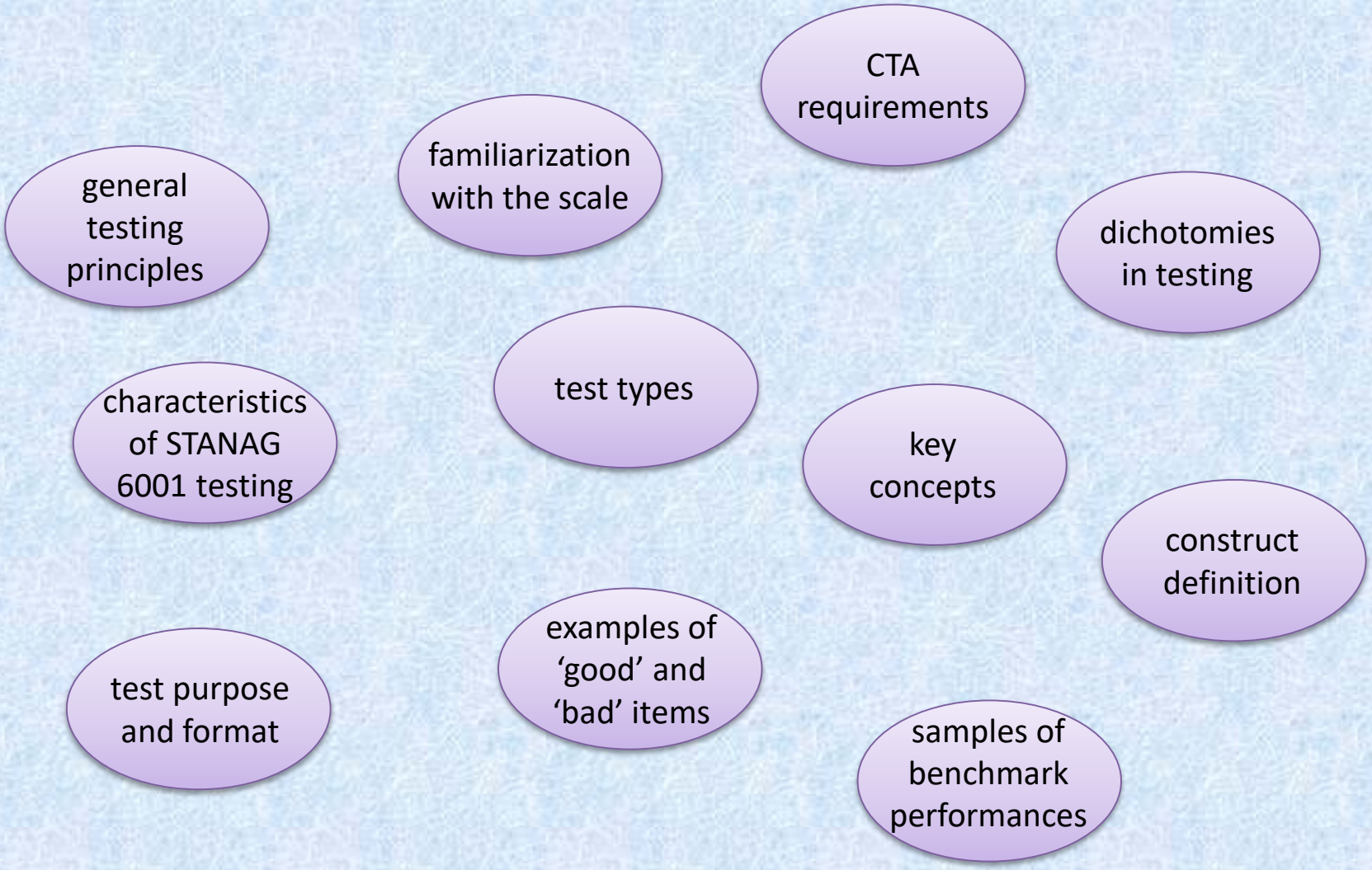
- norming/benchmarks
- rating criteria
- consistency/reliability
- analytic and holistic rating
- adjudication

Types of Tester Training



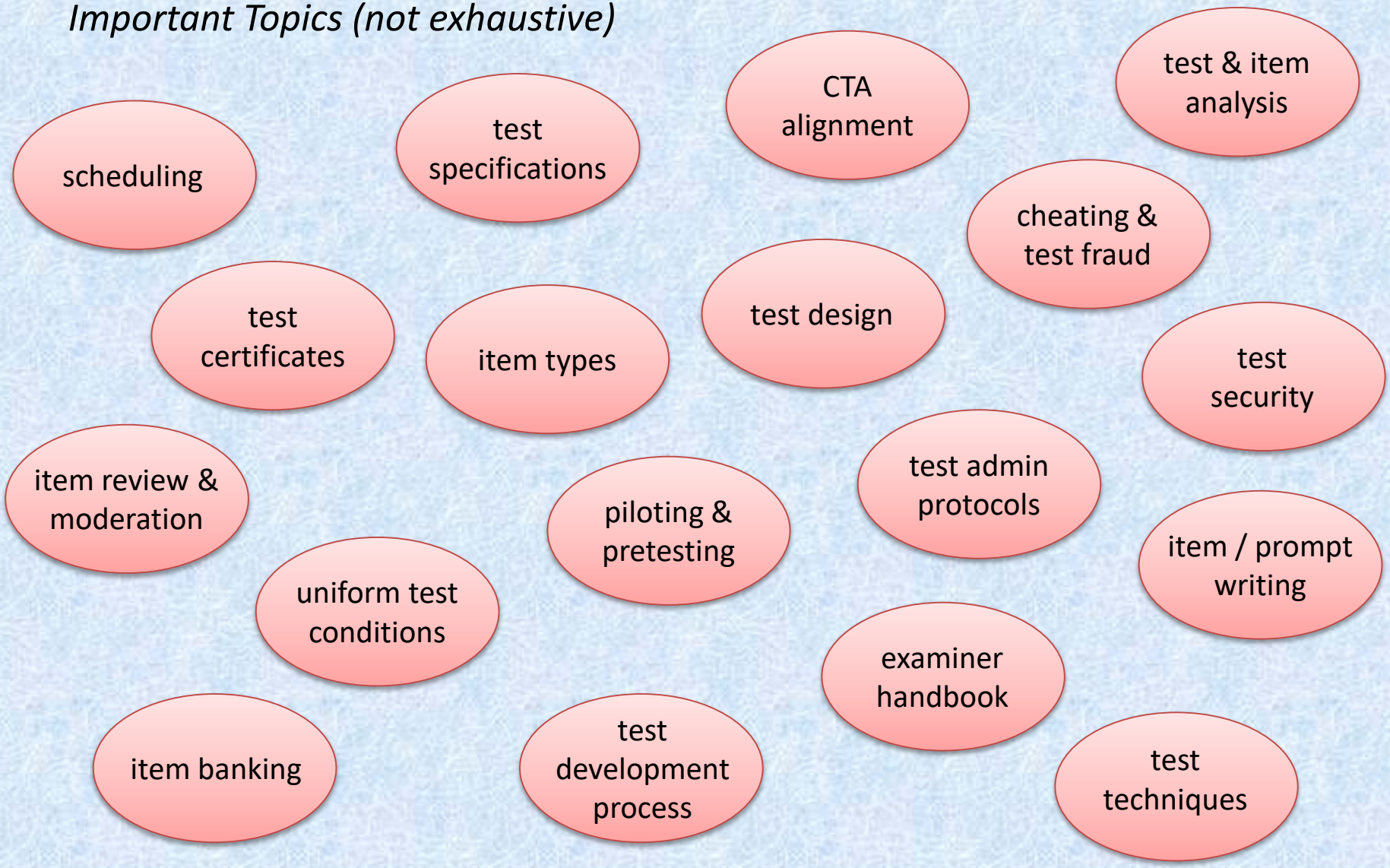
General Tester Training

Important Topics (not exhaustive)



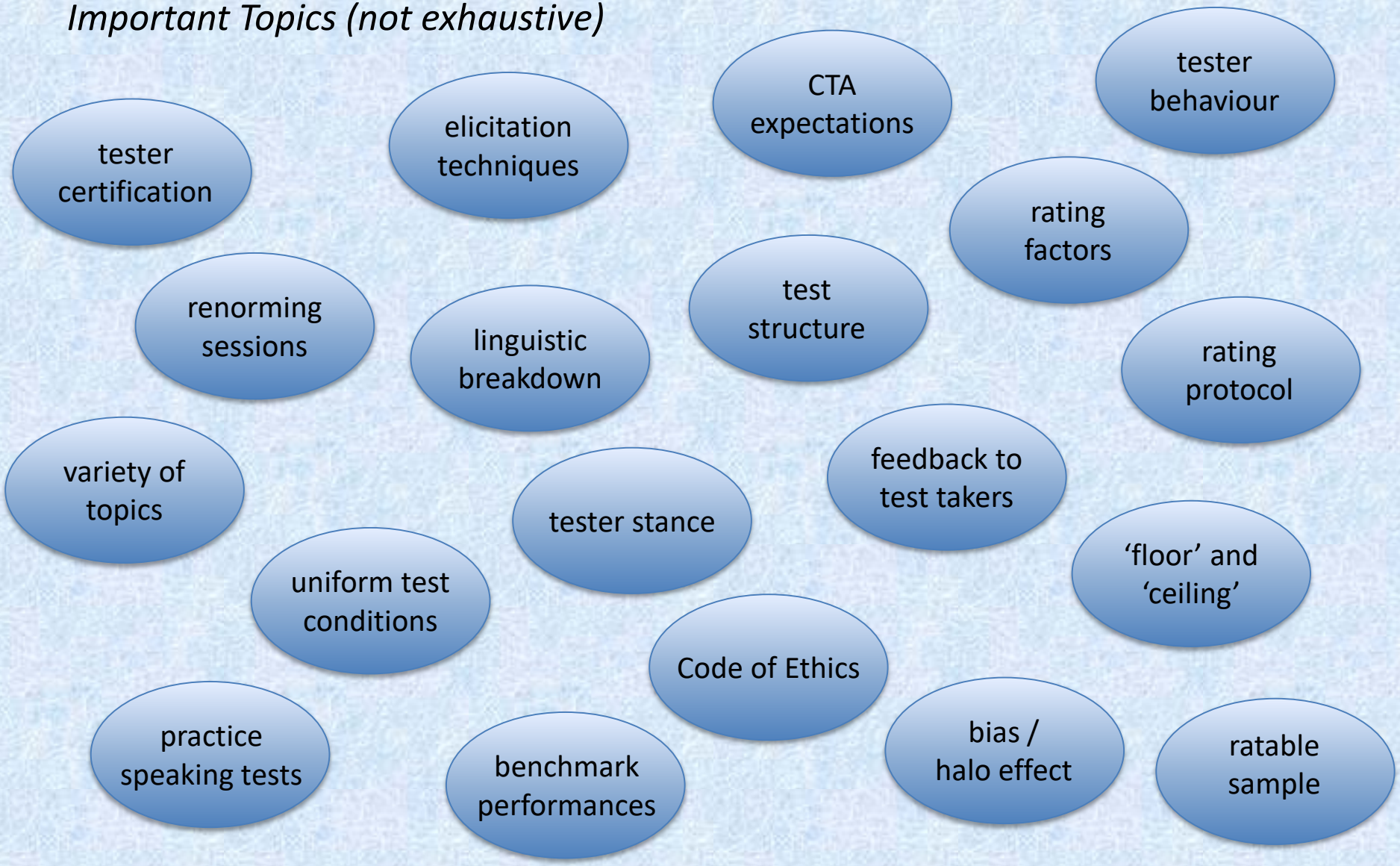
Test Developer/Administrator Training

Important Topics (not exhaustive)



Interlocutor/Rater Training

Important Topics (not exhaustive)



References / Further reading

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