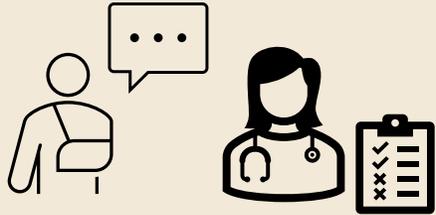


Considerations for setting language proficiency score requirements for healthcare professionals

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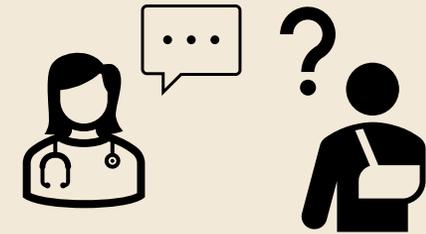
Communication skills are needed for safe and effective healthcare



Comprehension skills
(reading, listening) for
understanding medication
dosages, patient histories, etc.



Speaking skills to
communicate instructions and
information to patients and
colleagues

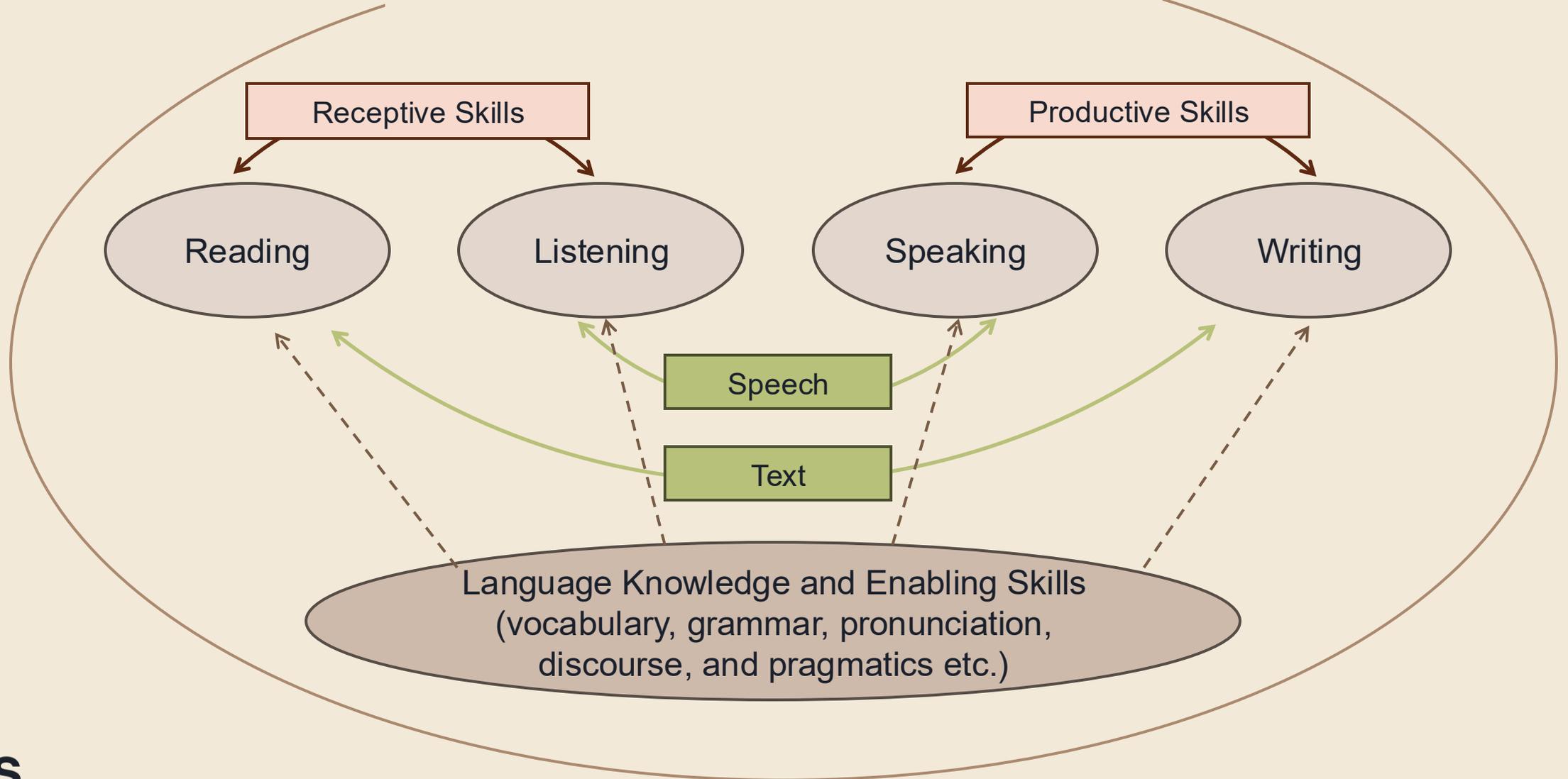


Poor communication skills
can lead to patient anxiety,
mistrust, noncompliance

Language proficiency tests can provide reliable, fair, and valid measures of communication skills

- Most language proficiency tests adopt a similar “4-skills” (reading, listening, speaking, writing) model of **communicative language proficiency**

Holistic Communicative Competence



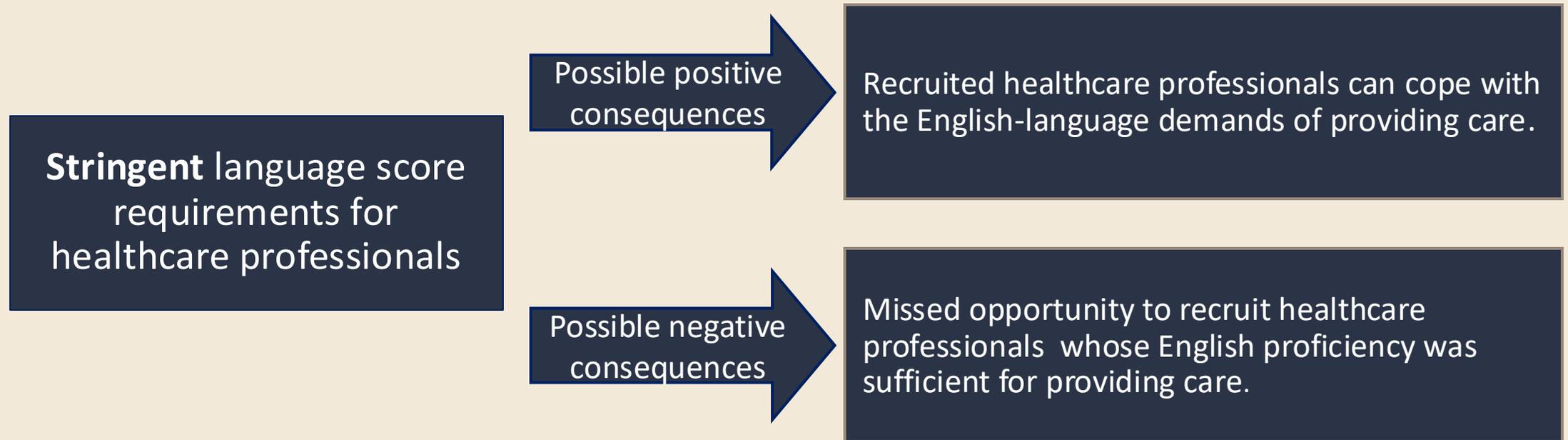
Language proficiency tests can provide reliable, fair, and valid measures of communication skills

- Most language proficiency tests adopt a similar “4-skills” (reading, listening, speaking, writing) model of **communicative language proficiency**
- However, **different tests** – *even those that intend to measure similar skills, like English speaking proficiency* – define and measure the skill in slightly different ways, with different levels of precision, across different ranges of proficiency
- This creates a major challenge for using the tests **effectively** and **fairly**: the comparability (or concordance) of test scores
- To use these measurements **effectively**, you also need to determine the level of proficiency needed for your purpose (i.e., the minimum **threshold for competency** or cut score)

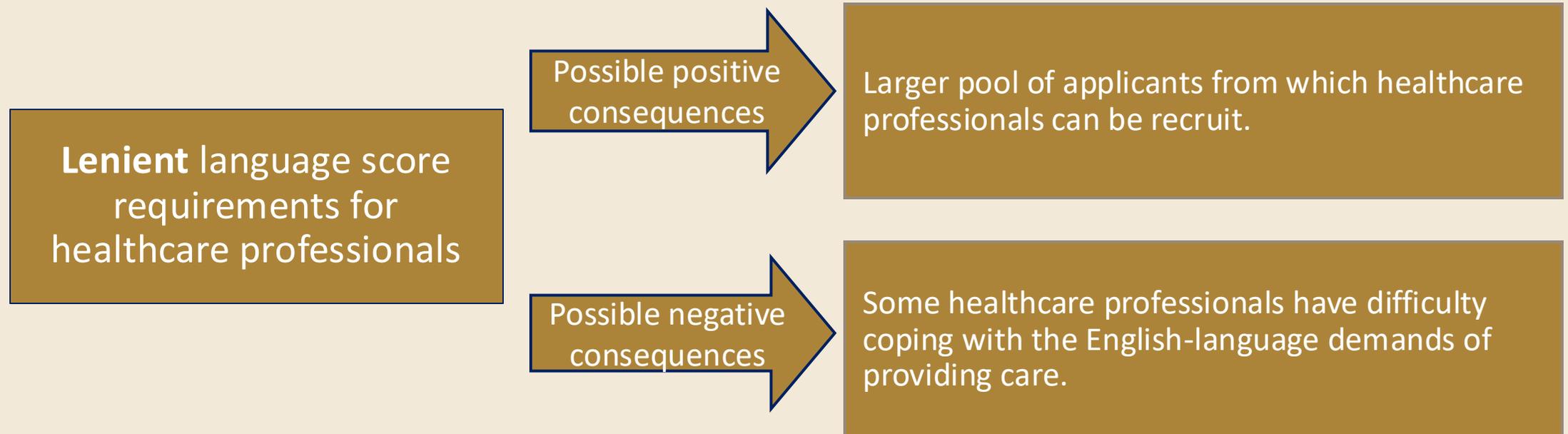
Standard setting creates evidence-based thresholds for competency

- The process of establishing cut scores on a test that differentiates “adequate” from “inadequate” proficiency – or “safe” vs. “unsafe” performance levels
- A standard setting study is used to determine the minimum level of proficiency needed to safely and reliably perform job tasks
- In a standard setting study, we convene a panel of subject-matter experts and use a systematic, judgment-based procedure that produces a minimum score (or cut score)
- The process and rationale for the cut score is clearly documented and its validity can be established

Consequences of **stringent** language score requirements



Consequences of **lenient** language score requirements



Main points

- When English language skills are needed to **ensure safe and effective healthcare**, language proficiency tests can measure the communicative skills needed
- **Differences in language test design** (including the nature of the skills measured, range of proficiency targeted, and precision of the score scale) and **test quality** (reliability, validity, fairness) lead to **challenges in score comparability**; these can be addressed through **concordance** studies and research-based comparison tables
- Regardless, effective use of assessment is predicated on **using scores appropriately for your purpose**; standard setting research creates **evidence-based thresholds for competency**