

LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT AND TEST PREPARATION

IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) EDUCATION

EDITED BY

SERVET ÇELİK - HANDAN ÇELİK - CHRISTINE COOMBE



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PREFACE

Measuring the foreign language proficiency of learners has always been one of the intricate tasks for classroom practitioners. This book comprises a comprehensive review and discussion of key areas of knowledge, skills, and expertise in language testing and assessment for pre-service and in-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers, as well as language teacher educators and other language professionals.

The opening chapter by Servet Çelik and Christine Coombe sets the scene for the book as it emphasizes the need for assessment literacy for pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. The chapter provides insights regarding the reasons for providing both pre-service and in-service teachers with opportunities to acquire and develop assessment-related knowledge, skills, and understanding of planning, designing, and developing tests.

Chapter 2 by Oktay Yağız addresses test types and assessment methods together with their use in different age and proficiency groups. The main test types mentioned include placement, aptitude, diagnostic, progress, achievement, and proficiency. Other test types such as norm-referenced vs. criterion-referenced, objective vs. subjective, summative vs. formative, direct vs. indirect, discrete-point vs. integrative, high-stakes vs. low-stakes testing are also covered.

Next, in Chapter 3, Mine Yıldız debates some key issues to help teachers understand if their tests are effective within their own boundaries. The principles discussed in the chapter include reliability, validity, practicality, usefulness, authenticity, washback, transparency, and security.

Chapter 4 by Deniz Şallı-Çopur explains the role of test methods (selected, constructed, and extended response formats) and item design techniques in foreign language tests providing examples from well-known standardized English language tests and teacher-made classroom assessment tasks. Her chapter also demonstrates how the assessment criterion changes from one test method to another. She lastly discusses the importance of learners' age and level of proficiency in item design.

In Chapter 5, Pelin Irgin describes the listening comprehension process and introduces the processes underlying listening skills to assist the reader to recognize what is meant through the testing and assessment of listening in language classrooms. Various test task types used to assess the skill in different dimensions such as intensive, responsive, selective, and extensive activities are clearly presented. This chapter also contains the use and suitability of different test task types and dimensions in different age and proficiency groups, the scoring of listening tasks, and sample test items for different age and proficiency groups.

In Chapter 6, Çiler Hatipoğlu closely examines the skill of speaking in a foreign language and the assessment processes related to it. Part one of the chapter discusses the nature of the speaking skill and tries to answer why it is difficult to assess in a reliable and valid manner. Following the presentation of the theoretical background of the topic, a detailed account of speaking in a foreign language and how to teach and test it is provided. The chapter concludes with more practical information related to the assessment of speaking. Also, various task types employed in speaking tests with different aims are presented and exemplified.

Like the previous chapters addressing the testing and assessment of different language skills, Chapter 7 by Aslı Lidice Göktürk Sağlam addresses how the concepts of reading and reading proficiency work. Then, different test task types used to assess the reading skill are discussed. The chapter also suggests sample test items for different age and proficiency groups.

In Chapter 8 by Turgay Han and Rebecca Soler Costa, first the complexity of assessing L2 writing performance is discussed from the perspectives of the factors contributing to variability, reliability, and fairness of the scores awarded to a piece of writing. Next, accomplishing writing tasks, genres of writing, types of writing, and micro and macro skills at various levels of proficiency are described. Finally, how to design tasks for different language levels with some sample tasks are explained.

Chapter 9 by Nuray Çaylak provides some background information regarding how vocabulary is conceptualized as a skill and what is meant by the assessment of vocabulary. The chapter also discusses the importance of vocabulary assessment. In order to describe the complex nature of vocabulary knowledge, aspects of vocabulary knowledge and dimensions of vocabulary assessment are dealt with. Finally, a variety of testing formats regarding standardized vocabulary tests and teacher-created vocabulary tests are presented.

In Chapter 10, Görsev Sönmez provides the readers with information about grammar as a concept, an explanation of grammatical knowledge, grammatical ability, and the assessment of grammar. The chapter then discusses different test task types and some sample test items are included.

Chapter 11 by Ali Erarslan contains information regarding major standardized national foreign language tests in Turkey. This includes a discussion of the history, content and structure (e.g., language skills addressed, and test task and item types) of the test, who the test is for, how the scoring works, how the scores are reported, and any relevant technical information (e.g., registration, test dates). Some model test task types and questions are listed, and data (facts and figures) regarding the test are reported. Finally, how to prepare students and test-taking strategies for such tests are discussed.

Chapter 12 by Devrim Höl incorporates material about major international foreign language tests, and just like the previous chapter, covers information about the historical background, similarities and differences between the content and structure (e.g., language skills addressed, and test task and item types) of the tests, who they are for, how the scoring works, how the scores are reported, and other relevant technical information (e.g., registration, test centers and dates). Again, model test task types and questions are listed, data regarding facts and figures on the tests are reported, and how to prepare students and test-taking strategies for such tests are debated.

In the next chapter, Suzan Kavanoz discusses authentic and alternative means of assessment foreign language teachers can utilize to replace the traditional forms of testing. These include self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolios/e-portfolios, online discussions and e-groups, learner journals, performance-based assessment (e.g., oral presentations, interviews, debates), project works, observations, term papers, and other possible activities requiring some type of rubric.

Lastly, Chapter 14 by Handan Çelik addresses assessment in ESP by emphasizing the challenges that ESP teachers, as teachers of English for General Purposes, face as they teach ESP courses and the need to train and equip both pre-service and in-service English teachers with the knowledge, skills, and understanding of ESP assessment. In this regard, the chapter presents a detailed account of what ESP assessment means, its characteristics, and target language use and target situation analysis as cornerstones. Guidelines are also presented regarding how to assess language skills in ESP, and test tasks are included to exemplify.

As the editors, we would like to thank all contributing authors for their dedication and hard work in bringing this much-needed work into completion. Special thanks go to Professor Barry O'Sullivan, the Head of Assessment Research & Development at the British Council and the founding president of the UK Association of Language Testing and Assessment (UKALTA), for graciously agreeing to review and write an endorsement for the book.

While the primary audience for this book are pre-service and in-service EFL teachers, particularly in Turkey, we are confident that undergraduate and graduate students in language education, linguistics or related fields, teacher trainers and other language professionals both in Turkey and abroad will find the text valuable and benefit from it as a comprehensive reference work in language assessment. Happy reading!

Servet Çelik
Handan Çelik
Christine Coombe

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