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### **Book Review: Practical language testing (2nd ed.), Glenn Fulcher. Routledge (2024). pp. 364. Paperback: \$48.99. ISBN 9781032447285 (paperback)**

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The fields of testing and assessment are significant in language education and applied linguistics, involving an inextricable relationship with social change and technological progress. (Fulcher et al., 2022). *Practical Language Testing* by Glenn Fulcher satisfies the thirst of the educators, researchers, and assessment practitioners who are into language testing and assessment. Remarkably, this book establishes the direction towards language testing, which is the opportunity and equity of a person in society, and, last but not least, the educational policy. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) claim that the products of the language assessment agents ought to mediate between theory and practice, and construct and object. This means that assessment has now become a sophisticated process from various angles with the use of electronic assessment and diagnostic systems. These diagnostic solutions are capable of giving feedback with the help of AI and data analytics to respond to personal needs by monitoring academic progress in real time. Technological integration is more effective, adaptive, and individualised in assessment and testing. However, this rapid

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transition raises concerns about fairness and the legitimate use of assessment. Fulcher gratefully promotes ethical approaches to assessment design and implementation in this book, and it seems that some issues have been resolved. This book emphasises practical use and approaches by presenting basic concepts and their practical applications throughout the entire volume.

The second edition of Fulcher's book includes a new chapter on validity, reflecting his recognition of the Messick Award. It updates discussions on standardized testing and learning-oriented assessment, further elaborating on features like authenticity and automated scoring. The book is organized into nine chapters, each focusing on a specific theme in language testing along with practical activities.

Chapter 1 establishes the foundations of the purpose of testing and assessment through precursors from Carroll to Messick over the past 30 years in societal, educational, and historical contexts. Among them, Cronbach's (1984) test purpose discusses testing choices that depend on contextual purposes from the perspective of strategic concepts and teaching and learning objectives. This chapter explains testing routines and unexpected impacts, such as washback effects, test migration, health, and fairness issues. Historical interludes review developments in testing practice, and the sections touching on politics and professionalising language education and testing outline current debates on how and in what manner language testing co-constructs power dynamics in society. Validity is discussed as the cornerstone of meaningful and effective testing.

Chapters 2 and 3 delve into the principles and practices of testing by contrasting two paradigms: norm- and criterion-referenced testing. Chapter 2 covers statistical concepts in statistics such as score distribution curves, reliability, and measurement principles. It offers information concerning processes of deriving and interpreting test reliability within the paradigm of norm-referenced testing. Chapter 3 has moved into the description of classroom assessment with the paradigm of criterion-referenced testing. Being focused on tasks and activities in the context of classroom learning, this chapter highlights two approaches to classroom assessments: assessment for learning and dynamic assessment. Formative assessment, self-assessment, peer assessment, and test dependability are effective and practically useful in classroom testing and assessment. This book is based on sociocultural theory and talks about how cognitive abilities may be instilled by socially mediated learning. Fulcher, however, denounces this method as having the potential to inhibit validity and generalizability. Specifically, he expresses a concern about reliability when change evidence is taken as an assessment foundation. This is a minor position that is attracted to the practical constraints of dynamic assessment in language testing.

Fulcher added a new concept of *assessment literacy* in this chapter. The expanded definition of Language Assessment Literacy (from Fulcher, 2012, p. 126) was displayed as a structure into three strata: 1) philosophical and ethical frameworks, 2) principles and concepts of assessment, and 3) practical domains of knowledge, skills, and abilities in assessment. He claimed that teachers should be empowered to create assessments to fit high-stakes testing or

local assessment for learning, fostering productive collaboration and professional development (Fulcher, 2019). This discussion of practical approaches to embedding formative assessment in practice keeps the content of the chapter readily applicable to those currently practicing assessments.

Chapters 4 through 7 give a comprehensive description of the test design tools necessary for constructing a test. Chapter 4 delineates test constructs, the test design cycle, and the model of communicative competence. Influenced by Hymes' (1972) 'competence for grammar' and 'competence for use' (p. 15), two communicative competence models were introduced: construct models (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983) and performance models (e.g., North, 2000; Shohamy, 1996). Such insights can help understand aspects of assessment theories when teachers and test developers create assessments of communicative situations and competencies to increase fairness and validity. Chapter 5 focuses on designing test specifications. This chapter is also notable for introducing the new concept of 'accommodations' in test development. It emphasizes inclusivity and learning objectives by analysing the considerations of performance conditions, specifications, and accommodations. A sample reading test specification provided in Chapter 5 (p. 152) can serve as a reference that directly explains the application of the test principles to educators and test developers. The flow between theory and practice of test design is displayed as an iterative process necessary for effective and constructive test development.

Fulcher delimits the processes of evaluating, prototyping, and piloting in Chapter 6, while in Chapter 7 instructs scoring language tests. Chapter 6 examines essential features entailing test usefulness and usability, item and task analysis, test specifications, and guidelines for multiple-choice item construction. Methodological applications of testing, such as prototyping, field testing, piloting, using item shells containing a standardised set of instructions and layout, and carrying out operational item review and pretesting, also fall in this category. Furthermore, the chapter presents the critical reverse engineering approach in which the test developers critically scrutinize the selected sample item in order to identify its intended purpose, argue on the meaning of the item and predict possible difficulties when using this item for test development. Conducting an iterative systematic way of prototyping, piloting, and pretesting warrants high standards of test quality and usability. Chapter 7 mainly discusses scorability, scoring constructed response tasks, and automated scoring. Scorability is considered one of the critical factors that define the usefulness of a particular test. This chapter also provides several rating scales: holistic scales, primary trait scales, and multiple trait scoring. It enables readers to understand how to operationalise theory concerning the development of scoring rubrics and frameworks based on examples and activities.

Standards play a significant role in language testing. Chapter 8 aims to highlight their historical development and social impact. It expands on the definition of standards and explores both the advantages and disadvantages of their use to the goals of harmonisation and cultural identity in the context of language assessment. In this regard, Fulcher investigates performance level descriptors (PLDs) for a paradigmatic hierarchy of performance, standard-setting methods, and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). While

supporting the idea of connecting tests and teaching with the CEFR, he states that this process should prioritize local learner needs over organisational demands and should be made reasonably and critically.

The final chapter of the book gives the audience a notion of validity and what modern concepts like argument-based validation and pragmatic realism mean. This new chapter highly focuses on Samuel Messick's work on validity by describing his validity model, that is, a "unified validity theory" (p. 252). Messick's validity model concerns test use and interpretation along with evidential and consequential bases, and his view of assessment effects for the individuals and society is rooted in construct validity (Messick, 1989). Argument-based validation has been introduced as a recent approach concerned with the formal characteristics of argumentation for validation. Technicalism in validation is primarily driven by a checklist approach associated with making sure that all aspects of the validation process are covered and addressed. The new realism model assumes that tests are valid by virtue of the fact that these scores mirror differences in psychological characteristics. On the other hand, the constructivist view of testing looks at equity for marginalized groups as part of the purpose of testing. Pragmatic realism as a middle ground takes into account both theory and practice dimensions and presents concrete recommendations concerning validity with reference to any given paradigm. Fulcher, therefore, invites stakeholders interested in the test to ask more practical questions about test validation concerning its purpose and objectives.

Several characteristics make this book unique. It provides a starting point for the majority of the key areas of testing and assessment. This book is grounded in theoretical backgrounds and frameworks to give details of reliability and validity so that the readers gain an understanding of the concept of reliability and validity. Fulcher attempts to help the reader realize how language testing and assessment depend on educational and social settings. Another feature is the learning activities that are featured at the end of every chapter. Via them, readers can get off the theoretical talk and move into the practical application in assessment. It can be employed by assessment experts and preservice teachers in carrying out testing and assessment. Lastly, it is also a strength that the book emphasises validity in meaningful assessment. In the aspect of language testing, he talks about the ethical considerations that accompany the testing process, which can sometimes benefit society, and at other times harm it. Such elements of the book's concerns broaden the improvement of assessment not only in terms of effectiveness and the support of students' agency but also regarding fairness and equity concerns in learning assurance to present the work as relevant in assessment contexts.

Despite several advantages when using this book, it is pertinent to look at other suggestions for improvement. Although the book addresses automated scoring, there are things like artificial intelligence and machine learning in language testing that are not given adequate consideration. These are thought of as being useful, and therefore incorporating a section on them in the book would be deemed helpful to a modern audience. We hence argue that an online companion to this book would add value to this book since it offers supplementary,

creative features such as video demonstrations. Some of these could help readers to enhance the usability of assessment concepts highlighted in the book. While the book addresses accommodation for various test-takers and bias/sensitivity in item review, there could be an in-depth chapter on how cultural sensitivity might be explored in test development so as not to disadvantage those from marginalised linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to design culturally inclusive assessments. This would be in accordance with recent developments in learning and curriculum assessment, which makes language testing context-sensitive, rather than adopting it as a universal approach. The last suggestion is that particularly related research studies should be added at the end of each chapter. It serves the purpose of directing the readers to other literature works of related ideas and helping them develop critical thinking skills when relating the chapter content to empirical research findings.

Glenn Fulcher's book *Practical Language Testing* is a comprehensive textbook combining historical approaches, quantitative analysis, and current concerns of language testing and assessment. Furthermore, the relevance is not limited to academic classroom, calling the reader to think of the possibility of global relations in terms of individuals' communicative access, social identity, and geographic mobility. Success or failure on high-stakes language tests can determine one's eligibility for academic programs, employment, or migration, thereby affecting how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves in multilingual and multicultural contexts. In this way, language assessments become gatekeepers of opportunity and contributors to the construction of identity in a globalized world.

We admire this book because it is a great example of excellent practice of theory connected with reality. The pedagogical strength of the book is its attention to detail concerning the onset of concepts, its focal point of validity as the framework of assessment, and its practices that close the gap between theory and practice. This book also empowers teachers to take control of assessment practices, as Fulcher asserts in an interview with McCallum and Coombe (2022) "getting teachers into the habit of thinking that what they do personally should be research-led would be a really important step" (p. 16). Fulcher's critical concern towards ethical aspects and the role of testing in society makes the book valuable in the period that turns towards equity and fairness in learning. This book will continue to be a source of information and ideas of assessment, and inspiration for teachers, scholars, and assessment developers who confront the challenges of language tests in a globalized and technologized world. Fulcher's book would be the most useful reference work for scholastically inspired and systematic advances in ethical and accessible and effective language testing, and it is a clarion for change.

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