Language Testing in Focus: An International Journal

Book Review

Challenges in Language Testing around the World: Insights for Language Test Users
Betty Lanteigne, Christine Coombe, and James Dean Brown (Eds.), Springer Nature Singapore, 2021

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Language testing has developed as a field that broadly extends to educational, societal and economic contexts (Yildiz, 2019). However, the past edited volumes grappling with the main themes in language testing are primarily exclusive and typically limited. Most insights are either heavily dominant to Western English-speaking countries or focused on problem resolutions. There is rarely any publication that unveils human infallibilities or misinterpretations in various contexts across countries. To address these gaps, Betty Lanteigne, Christine Coombe, and James Dean Brown jointly co-edit this book. These renowned scholars aim to focus on a broader view of conventional policy, test development, practice, and research. Against this backdrop, the insights-driven can be more meaningful and applicable to wider audiences. Indeed, this is an extraordinary book that highlights multiple perspectives in terms of choosing the authors, themes, and chapters.

The book titled: "Challenges in Language Testing Around the World: Insights for language test users" has given readers some indications about language testing dilemmas across countries for language test users. The book title further hints at drawing insights from mishaps in real-world contexts based on wide-ranging perspectives. Although the omission of the term "Assessment" might leave readers wondering whether this book highlights language assessment practices, this important element is somehow included in the contents. Despite that, language testing and assessment concepts are rather not as overtly used, defined, and distinguished as they are compared with the previously published volume (e.g., Shohamy et al., 2017). These two volumes are, nonetheless, considered analogous as they both move forward in a similar direction in their highlights on innovation, societal roles and responsibility in addition to emerging solutions or reflections of the complex issues.

Overall, this book contains thirty-seven chapters, particularly chapters 1 and 37 are devoted to the editors for introduction and closing. The remaining thirty-five chapters (e.g., Chapters 2-36) cover the implications of various issues, problems, and challenges in language testing which can be differentiated by experienced- and data-based papers. The overview of the book outline is rather reader-friendly. Only thirty-six chapters are divided into six major parts (e.g., I – VI). Each part deals with a specific theme offered invaluable insights for language test users. Generally, the section commences with discussions about language test interpretation problems, negative effects, or misuse (Part I, Chapters 1 to 11). Next, it shifts to tests of world languages (Part II, Chapters 12-15). Then, it moves on to program-level language tests (Part III, Chapters 16-21) before it comes to language skills tests (Part IV, Chapters 22-28). After that, it advocates

learning from tests, teachers, and language assessment literacy (Part V, Chapters 29-36). Lastly, it arrives at the closing thoughts (Part VI, Chapter 37).

Part I highlights learning from language test problems, negative effects, or misuse. Dealing with statistical issues, Brown (Chapter 2) and Rowles (Chapter 3) report ignorance about descriptive statistics and underlying assumptions in all statistical tests. Regarding fairness, Butler and Iino (Chapter 5) raise issues concerning the use of external examinations. As high-stakes language tests are often criticized, Karatas and Okan (Chapter 8) propose a framework for critical language testing. On negative washback effects, Han (Chapter 4) addresses the College English Test while Đinh Thi and Widodo (Chapter 9) confront a national English-as-a-foreign-language test problem. About (mis)use, Huang (Chapter 6) exposes the misuse of high-stakes standardized tests for multiple purposes. Likewise, Bullock and Westbrook (Chapter 7) warn against the discrepancy between aviation and maritime English certification tests. As for scores, Leitner and Kremmel (Chapter 10) stress scoring reliability and fairness, though Lanteigne and Sulieman (Chapter 11) call attention to score changes when taking paper TOEFL tests repeatedly.

Part II suggests learning from tests of world languages other than British-Australian-North American English. On the one hand, Cheng, Im, and Jabeen (Chapter 12) handle the English language construct with issues surrounding the international contexts. On the other hand, Graaf (Chapter 13) shows how to develop secondary education standardized tests in the Netherlands by adaptation. This is followed by Inbar-Lourie and Shohamy (Chapter 14) who settle on large-scale national and international tests used in Israel using the critical assessment literate view. At last, Ferbežar and Stanovnik (Chapter 15) suggest fairness when confronting with foreignness and prejudice issues in language testing.

Part III supports learning from program-level language tests related to curriculum and instruction. In Japan, Carpenter and Matsugu (Chapter 16) advocate 'filiopietism' and its role in program-level language tests. In Ukraine, Kvasova (Chapter 17) proposes workshops for untrained teachers to collaboratively design a summative test. In chapter 18, Cervini and Masperi design a multilingual large-scale placement test using specific strategies. Faced with challenges for institutional placement testing in the USA, Stantavicca (Chapter 19) emphasizes details on assessment design, administration principles, and procedures. Faced with placement testing issues in Iran, Razavipour and Firoozi (Chapter 20) recommend raising awareness, enhancing assessment literacy, or establishing national and local standards. Regarding test selection in Mexico, Figueroa and Zimányi (Chapter 21) propose re-evaluating institutional policies to account for standard measurement and consequential validity.

Part IV recommends learning from tests of language skills. Shin (Chapter 22) addresses a mismatch by completing the triangle of reading fluency assessment. Abandoning authenticity, Ngo (Chapter 23) uses considerable editing and even (re)-creating listening texts for a high-stakes standardized English test. While confronted with a communication breakdown, Boraie and Shabara (Chapter 24) propose changes to the design of a standardized oral test. To ensure transparency, Khabbazbashi, Jing, and Galaczi (Chapter 25) explore the mysteries surrounding the automated scoring of spoken language. Dursun, Swinehart, McCormick and Baumann (Chapter 26) address testing foreign language reading ability by providing a replicable model. Concerning problems in rubrics, Sabieh (Chapter 27) stresses clarity when defining the function of rubrics in teaching, learning, and assessment. Regarding the scoring validity of writing sample ratings, Zabala-Delgado (Chapter 28) suggests identifying expert raters for controlling the testing context.

Part V shows learning from tests, teachers, and language assessment literacy. Exploring language assessment literacy, Ölmezer-Öztürk, Öztürk, and Aydın (Chapter 29) either involve relevant stakeholders or give support to those with assessment background knowledge. Regarding quality Arabic translations, Norrbom and Zuboy (chapter 30) suggest utilizing any teaching or assessment items in the short term, but a CEFR translation be produced in the long term. Having examined assessment literacy, Silva (Chapter 31) suggests training and support for the basic principles of assessment. Concerning testing practices, Rahman and Khan (Chapter 32) suggest the need to develop assessment literacy to identify and correct harmful practices. Khemakhem (Chapter 33) creates a new assessment tool that merges IELTS descriptors with classroom interaction to ensure highly proficient graduate teachers. Regarding pre-service teachers' spoken English proficiency, Vassallo, Xerri, and Jonk (chapter 34) describe the design and use of a test that includes teacher discourse. Dealing with high-stakes test preparation, Saif (chapter 35) recognizes that the culture of the test center shapes the courses. About conflicting ratings, Yan, Kim, and Kotnarowski (chapter 36) create separate assessment criteria for certain essays that more accurately reflect the examinees' range of writing performances. At last, the

editors (Chapter 37) invite language test users to enter this real world of language testing challenges.

This book is commendable for several major reasons. Firstly, it discloses human malpractices in language testing. Although readers may find it critical to expose the human malpractices against language test developers, language test users and stakeholders, the editors intend to call the need for collaboration among them. This is because the editors recognize that any poor decision made by language test users may lead to long-lasting negative implications. Thus, it can be a wake-up call to all of them to be more socially responsible because their mistakes are held accountable to the test-takers and society. Secondly, this book is unique as it brings forth multiple perspectives offering a more balanced choice of views. It is worth noting that this book is impossible without the efforts dedicated by more than sixty authors. For this reason, it covers a spectrum of language testing genres worldwide, including critical issues such as assessing language varieties, traditional skill areas, local high-stakes placement tests, and classroom tests. Last but not least, it also covers the assessment literacy from teachers' perspectives across countries with invaluable reflections and possible resolutions. Therefore, the editors' intellectual decision to bring this book together is undeniably laudable due to their inclusive and diverse practices. If readers find the current book too difficult to grasp, Shohamy et al.'s (2017) third revised edition can serve as a co-reference guide and an excellent companion to the readers. Notably, this book is not just written for language teachers. It opens to the general public unaware of what to do in good language test principles. In other words, this book can be a wise reference for policymakers to make important decisions adhering to the good fundamental language testing and assessment principles. Finally, the editors expect that readers will draw new insights from language assessment literacy and critical language testing to propose appropriate critical solutions in this dynamic and complex robust field. Apart from social and user-focused research and methods, other significant themes, such as validity, performance and classroom assessment, and technology, will be more likely to stay relevant in the coming years in the language testing field (Plakans, 2018).

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Competing Interests
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