



Cambridge Research Update

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Validity

FCE Speaking test interaction

Tests such as FCE use paired speakers to give a realistic representation of a candidate's ability to interact using the language being tested. However, there are different kinds of interaction and it raises questions as to whether these behaviours can affect exam performance. Evelina Galaczi has written a paper outlining different types of interaction such as 'collaborative', 'parallel' and 'asymmetric' and the relationships between these behaviours and scores, in the context of the FCE speaking test.

Peer-Peer Interaction in a Speaking Test: The Case of the First Certificate in English Examination, published in Language Assessment Quarterly, 5 (2), 89-119, 2008.

Revising the IELTS scale

In Aug 2008, Cambridge ESOL introduced a nine-point pronunciation scale for IELTS, responding to requests for clearer specification than allowed by the previous four-point scale – particularly at the critical 5,6 and 7 bands. Sacha DeVelle outlines the qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out in the research and implementation of the new nine-point scale.

The revised IELTS pronunciation scale, is published in Research Notes 34.

Differential Item Functioning in CAE listening put to the test

Ardeshir Geranpayeh and Antony John Kunnan of California University, Los Angeles have published the results of a study of nearly 5,000 candidates who took the CAE listening test in 2002. Using both statistical and content analyses, a small number of items that appeared to function differentially were identified, but no evidence of age bias in the test was established.

Differential Item Functioning in Terms of Age in the Certificate in Advanced, published in Assessment Quarterly, 4(2), 190-222, 2007.

Learning to use language and using language to learn

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) describes an approach to learning where a curricular subject is taught through the medium of an L2 language. *Assessment for teaching: Cambridge ESOL's CLIL exam paper*, describes how Cambridge ESOL developed and validated the new CLIL module of the Teaching Knowledge Test. ***Assessment for teaching: Cambridge ESOL's CLIL exam, by Mick Ashton and Evelina Galaczi, is published in Research Notes 34, 2008.***

Encyclopaedia outlines corpora use in language assessment

Lynda Taylor and Fiona Barker have written an article in the current edition of the *Encyclopedia of Language and Education* outlining the use of corpora in language assessment. The article includes the history of corpora, their present uses (including an outline of work in progress) and also suggests where the future of the use of corpora may lie.

Using Corpora for Language Assessment is published in the Encyclopaedia of Language and Education (2ed,), New York: Springer, 2008

Computer-based testing

Computer-based writing compared with paper-based tests

There have been advantages to the recent trend towards the use of computer technology for taking tests, but questions have been raised as to whether different technology affects the validity of writing tests. Lucy Chambers has used word frequency and other lexical analyses to examine writing samples for both computer and paper tests. The conclusions outline some of the differences and similarities between paper-based and computer-based writing.

Computer-based and paper-based writing assessment: a comparative text analysis, is published in Research Notes 34, 2008.

Frameworks

Scales and Frameworks

A short introduction to scales and frameworks, the differences between them and their uses in language learning and teaching is outlined in *The Handbook of Educational Linguistics*. Written by Neil Jones and Nick Saville, the chapter covers the types, origins and construction of scales and how they are used to create standards. An overview is also given of the different kinds of frameworks and their practical uses in educational assessment.

The Handbook of Educational Linguistics is edited by Bernard Spolsky and Francis Hult (Editors), and published by Wiley, 2007.

Impact

TKT's impact on Uruguay

With a population of only 3.3 million, around one in every 2,600 inhabitants of Uruguay has taken a TKT module. What impact has the prevalence of this exam had on language learning in the country?

Impact of TKT on language teachers and schools in Uruguay, by Gerardo Valazza, Head of Academic Department, Instituto Cultural Anglo Uruguayo, is published in Research Notes 34, 2008.

IELTS studies

Volume 8 (2008) of the series *IELTS Research Reports* includes five studies examining the issues of washback and impact in the context of IELTS.

Further information about IELTS Research Reports can be found at www.ielts.org

Partnership Working

Seminar launches South East Europe Network for English Profile

Interest from academics and educational institutions in South East Europe has led to the formation of an English Profile network for the region. To officially launch this network, a two-day English Profile seminar was held in Herceg Novi, Montenegro.

A full report can be found on the English Profile website: www.englishprofile.org

Context Validity and English Profile

Context Validity, Chapter 4, Volume 26 of *Studies in Language Testing* by Shaw and Weir (2007) describes how the contextual parameters under which exam writing is produced affect learners' exam performance. This in turn affects data from

these exams when it is harvested for corpora. Identifying how proficiency levels differ from each other in this respect is important for understanding not only what kind of English learners produce, but also how they produce it.

An extract of this chapter can be found on the English Profile website: www.EnglishProfile.org

SurveyLang consortium examines making different language tests comparable

The contract to develop the European Survey on Language Competences was awarded in 2008 to the SurveyLang consortium, coordinated by Cambridge ESOL. The survey is part of a European Commission strategy to improve language skills and data collected from the survey will benefit policy makers, teachers and practitioners. Research and development for SurveyLang is currently looking at issues such as making the tests comparable across the five European languages to be surveyed, and relating the data collected to the CEFR.

More information about SurveyLang can be found at: www.SurveyLang.org

Asset Languages and the Languages Ladder

A forthcoming book on multilingualism features an introduction to the Asset Languages system developed to recognise and certify community languages in the UK. The chapter outlines the programme and the research agenda set up to address issues such as ensuring comparability across assessments when languages have different learning loads.

The Languages Ladder and Asset Languages: a new assessment framework for languages in England, by Karen Ashton, is published in Kenner, C. & Hickey, T.M. (eds) Multilingual Europe: Diversity and Learning. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books, 2008.

ALTE

Joint ALTE-EAQUALS event in Lisbon

A joint meeting and conference: *Quality and Assessment for Language Learning* was held at the University of Lisbon by the Association of Language Testers in Europe and the European Association for Quality Language Services in November 2008. The conference included contributions from Cambridge ESOL staff on ALTE and its Role in Language Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Michael Milanovic), Revising European Language Portfolio descriptors (Hanan Khalifa with Brian North) and Delivering the European Indicator of Language Competences (Neil Jones).