

Oxford Introductions to Language Study

Series Editor H.G. Widdowson

Language Testing

Tim McNamara

OXFORD

Contents

Preface	ix
Author's preface	xi
SECTION I	
Survey	I
1 Testing, testing . . . What is a language test?	3
Understanding language testing	4
Types of test	5
Test purpose	6
The criterion	7
The test–criterion relationship	10
Conclusion	11
2 Communication and the design of language tests	13
Discrete point tests	13
Integrative and pragmatic tests	14
Communicative language tests	16
Models of communicative ability	17
Conclusion	21
3 The testing cycle	23
Understanding the constraints	24
Test content	25
Test method	26
Authenticity of response	27
Fixed and constructed response formats	29
Test specifications	31
Test trials	32
Conclusion	33

4 The rating process	35
Establishing a rating procedure	36
The problem with raters	37
Establishing a framework for making judgements	38
Rating scales	40
Holistic and analytic ratings	43
Rater training	44
Conclusion	44
5 Validity: testing the test	47
Threats to test validity	50
Test content	50
Test method and test construct	52
The impact of tests	53
Conclusion	54
6 Measurement	55
Introduction	55
Measurement	56
Quality control for raters	56
Investigating the properties of individual test items	59
Norm-referenced and criterion-referenced measurement	62
New approaches to measurement	64
Conclusion	65
7 The social character of language tests	67
Introduction	67
The institutional character of assessment	68
Assessment and social policy	68
Assessment and educational policy	69
The social responsibility of the language tester	70
Ethical language testing	72
Accountability	72
Washback	73
Test impact	74
Codes of professional ethics for language testers	75
Critical language testing	76
Conclusion	77

8 New directions—and dilemmas?	79
Computers and language testing	79
Technology and the testing of speaking	81
Dilemmas: whose performance?	83
 SECTION 2	
Readings	87
 SECTION 3	
References	121
 SECTION 4	
Glossary	131