A Modular Approach to Testing English Language Skills

The development of the Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS) examinations
A Modular Approach to Testing English Language Skills

The development of the Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS) examinations

Roger Hawkey
Also in this series:

An investigation into the comparability of two tests of English as a Foreign Language: The Cambridge-TOEFL comparability study
Lyle F. Bachman, F. Davidson, K. Ryan, I.-C. Choi

Test taker characteristics and performance: A structural modeling approach
Antony John Kunnan

Performance testing, cognition and assessment: Selected papers from the 15th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Cambridge and Arnhem
Michael Milanovic, Nick Saville

The development of IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension
Caroline Margaret Clapham

Verbal protocol analysis in language testing research: A handbook
Alison Green

A multilingual glossary of language testing terms
Prepared by ALTE members

Dictionary of language testing
Alan Davies, Annie Brown, Cathie Elder, Kathryn Hill, Tom Lumley, Tim McNamara

Learner strategy use and performance on language tests: A structural equation modelling approach
James Enos Purpura

Fairness and validation in language assessment: Selected papers from the 19th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Orlando, Florida
Antony John Kunnan

Issues in computer-adaptive testing of reading proficiency
Micheline Chalhoub-Deville

Experimenting with uncertainty: Essays in honour of Alan Davies
A. Brown, C. Elder, N. Iwashita, E. Grove, K. Hill, T. Lumley, K. O’Loughlin, T. McNamara

An empirical investigation of the componentiality of L2 reading in English for academic purposes
Cyril Weir

The equivalence of direct and semi-direct speaking tests
Kieran O’Loughlin

A qualitative approach to the validation of oral language tests
Anne Lazaraton
Continuity and Innovation: Revising the Cambridge Proficiency in English Examination 1913–2002
Edited by Cyril Weir and Michael Milanovic

European language testing in a global context
Edited by Cyril Weir and Michael Milanovic

Unpublished

Testing the Spoken English of Young Norwegians: a study of testing validity and the role of ‘smallwords’ in contributing to pupils' fluency
Angela Hasselgreen

Changing language teaching through language testing: A washback study
Liying Cheng

The Impact of High-Stakes Examinations on Classroom Teaching: A Case Study Using Insights from Testing and Innovation Theory
Dianne Wall
Contents

Acknowledgements ix
Series Editor’s note xi

Chapter 1
The linguistic, language teaching and language testing background 1
Approaches to language teaching 1
Psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis 9
Needs, purposes, syllabuses and materials 12
The communicative approach to language teaching 14
Pre-communicative language testing 18
The communicative approach to language testing 24

Chapter 2
The Oxford-ARELS Examinations: History and Characteristics 37
Oxford-ARELS relationships 37
Oxford-ARELS: key numbers 40
The ARELS Oral Examination: approach and specifications 40
Review of the ARELS Oral exam 47
ARELS Oral Exam: validation 49
The Oxford EFL Exam: approach and specifications 56
Review of the Oxford EFL Exam 62
The Oxford EFL Exam: validation 64
Appendix 2.1 Examples of ARELS Examinations 72
Appendix 2.2 Examples of Oxford EFL Examinations 122

Chapter 3
The Royal Society of Arts Examinations in the Communicative Use of
English as a Foreign Language (CUEFL), and the University of
Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate Certificates in
Communicative Skills in English (CCSE):
History and Characteristics 142
The Royal Society of Arts and the University of Cambridge Local
Examinations Board relationship 143
CUEFL/CCSE: key numbers 143
The RSA CUEFL Examination: approach and specifications 143
Review of the CUEFL exam | 155
CUEFL: validation | 160
The CCSE Examination: approach and specifications | 168
Review of the CCSE exam | 180
CCSE validation | 181
Four exams compared | 192
**Appendix 3.1** Examples of CUEFL Examinations | 197
**Appendix 3.2** Examples of CCSE Examinations | 245

**Chapter 4**
The Certificates in English Language Skills Examination: rationale, and development | 374
- Rationale for a new exam | 374
- Prevailing UCLES systems | 377
- The concepts and management of change | 389
- The processes of change | 393
- The emerging CELS test | 406

**Chapter 5**
The Certificates in English Language Skills Examination: Specifications and Samples | 411
- Comparing CELS and CCSE Handbooks | 411
- CELS Exam Papers: Tests of Reading; Preliminary, Vantage and Higher levels | 417
- CELS and CCSE Handbooks: Writing | 456
- CELS Exam Papers: Tests of Writing; Preliminary, Vantage and Higher levels | 457
- CELS and CCSE Handbooks: Listening | 481
- CELS Exam papers: Tests of Listening; Preliminary, Vantage and Higher levels | 482
- CELS and CCSE Handbooks: Speaking | 530
- CELS Exam Papers: Tests of Speaking; Preliminary, Vantage and Higher levels | 531
- CELS and CCSE Handbooks: Q & A sections | 544
- Conclusion | 545

**References** | 546
**Index** | 553
Acknowledgments

This book could not have been completed without the help of many people, in various capacities, to whom I am sincerely grateful.

The first group is of individuals who have been key figures in the international English language tests that are the subject of this book, whom I met to discuss historical and other matters, and who were kind enough to advise me on the relevant parts of my text. In this capacity, I should like to acknowledge, in the order of the relevant chapters in the book, the invaluable contributions of:

• Don Malpass, former Director of the Association of Recognised English Language Schools (ARELS) Examinations Trust
• Bernard Smith, Controller of Examinations for the Oxford-ARELS Examinations in English as a Foreign Language
• Steve Baxter, former Senior Examiner of Oxford EFL exams, and current Chair of Writing for the Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS) exams
• H A Swan, Principal, Swan School of English, former Chief Examiner for the University of Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, and Trustee of the ARELS Oral Examinations
• Hazel Orchard, formerly of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Examinations Board
• Dave Allan, Director of the Norwich Institute for Language Education, member of the original Communicative Use of English as a Foreign Language (CUEFL) Examination Working Group, and former Chief Examiner for CUEFL.

I should also like to acknowledge the contribution of Keith Morrow, Chief examiner for both the CUEFL and Certificates in Communicative Skills in English (CCSE) exams, who was kind enough to read the manuscript of this book and advise on certain points. May I in addition express my gratitude to Alan Davies, Professor (Emeritus), Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, University of Edinburgh, who read parts of the manuscript of the book. My thanks also to Richard West of the University of Manchester, who advised me on the English Speaking Union ELT Examinations Framework Project, and acknowledgements to Joseph McKewan, the creator of the picture panels for the ARELS Higher Certificate exam reprinted in this volume.

I am grateful to the following Cambridge ESOL (then University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES)) staff members for...
agreeing to read and offer critical comment as the book progressed: Nick Charge, Subject Manager for the IELTS test, and Subject Officers, Shakeh Manassian and Chris Sinclair.

Finally may I acknowledge the help and advice I received throughout this project from Nick Saville, Director of the Cambridge ESOL Research and Validation Group, from Mike Milanovic, Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, and from the late Peter Hargreaves, former Chief Executive.

Roger Hawkey
Series Editor’s note

Over the years, many different organisations in Britain have been involved in the testing and certification of English as a Foreign Language. For a variety of reasons some of these organisations no longer operate. Unfortunately, there is rarely any significant record of what they did or how they did it. This volume was written in order to capture the history of the Oxford-ARELS English examinations and those of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA), and to describe how they have impacted on the development of a new Cambridge ESOL examination – Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS). The Oxford-ARELS English examinations and those of the RSA made an important contribution to the testing of English as a Foreign Language in the UK and around the world for a number of years in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Since the 1980s the number of examination boards operating in the context of school examinations in the UK has decreased. This has been for a number of reasons related to government policy, the economics of running examination boards and so on. The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) has remained as the only university directly involved in school examinations in the UK. Through the 1980s and into the 1990s, UCLES formed strategic alliances with a number of other boards culminating in 1998 with the formation of Oxford, Cambridge, RSA (OCR). The drive to form OCR was a consequence of government legislation in the UK. As these various mergers took place, EFL examinations were sometimes involved but EFL was never the prime driver for any of the mergers. The consequence, however, was that by the late 1990s Cambridge ESOL (or UCLES EFL as it was then known) was in possession of a fairly large number of examinations that did not sit easily together but required significant resources to support. A decision was made to produce a new suite, CELS, which aimed to rationalise the number of examinations offered while attempting to bring together the best features, as far as it could, of the examinations that were to be phased out.

In this volume Roger Hawkey begins by describing the English Language teaching and testing context out of which the Oxford-ARELS and RSA examinations grew. He outlines succinctly a number of trends and evolves a very useful framework for the evaluation of communicative tests that he later applies to his analysis of the various examinations described in more detail in chapters two and three.
Chapters two and three trace in some detail the history of the Oxford-ARELS and RSA examinations respectively. Although the records are sometimes sparse, Hawkey was able gain access to a certain amount of useful documentation. However, what makes this volume so special are the numerous interviews that Hawkey was able to conduct with many of the key people involved in the initial development and subsequent production of these examinations. He draws a fascinating, accurate and sympathetic picture of how the boards operated and how the examinations were conceived and subsequently produced. Hawkey’s analysis of the examinations is always fair and certainly helps us fully appreciate the great dedication and commitment of the individuals involved in their development. Each chapter also has extensive appendices that allow readers to get a very clear idea of what these examinations looked like and what was in them. Many readers will, I believe, find this of significant interest.

Chapter four brings us into the present in that it describes in detail the rationale and development of CELS. There is a significant focus on the validation of the new examination focusing in some detail on the validity, reliability, impact and practicality issues that surround examination development. The question paper production process is described and there is some emphasis on the management of change. The Cambridge ESOL approach to examination development gets significant attention and provides the reader with a very detailed understanding of the processes and issues involved.

Chapter five presents the new CELS examination in detail and compares its content to the Certificates in Communicative Skill in English (CCSE), one of the examinations that CELS replaced. There is a comprehensive review of CELS sample materials and specifications.

Roger Hawkey has produced a well written and fascinating history of a number of examinations that no longer exist, as well as a detailed review of CELS, the new examination that replaces them. He brings out clearly the high degree of professionalism that has characterised the British approach to English language testing over the years and illustrates well the quality of the new CELS and the great emphasis that Cambridge ESOL places on all aspects of the examination revision, development, production and validation process.

This volume is the second historical survey in this series, the first being SILT 15, which documented the revision of the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE). Volumes on the development of business English, academic English and English for young learners are now being prepared.

Michael Milanovic
Cyril Weir
Cambridge
September 2002