IELTS Collected Papers

Research in speaking and writing assessment
Also in this series:

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

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

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

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 modeling approach
James E 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
Edited by 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
Edited by Cyril J Weir, Yang Huizhong, Jin Yan

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

Edited by Cyril Weir and Michael Milanovic

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

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
Liyung Cheng

The impact of high-stakes examinations on classroom teaching: A case study using insights from testing and innovation theory
Dianne Wall

Issues in testing business English: The revision of the Cambridge Business English Certificates
Barry O'Sullivan

© Cambridge University Press  www.cambridge.org
IELTS Collected Papers

Research in speaking and writing assessment

Edited by

Lynda Taylor and Peter Falvey
In memory of Peter Hargreaves
1942–2003
Contents

Abbreviations x
Contributors xii
Series Editors’ note xv

Introduction
Lynda Taylor 1

PART 1

Speaking
1 Interviewer style and candidate performance in the IELTS oral interview 37
   Annie Brown and Kathryn Hill
Methodology evaluation 62

2 An investigation into the role of gender in the IELTS oral interview 63
   Kieran O’Loughlin
Methodology evaluation 96

3 An investigation of the rating process in the IELTS oral interview 98
   Annie Brown
Methodology evaluation 140

4 A survey of examiner attitudes and behaviour in the IELTS oral interview 142
   Brent Merrylees and Clare McDowell
Methodology evaluation 183

5 The impact of the joint-funded research studies on the IELTS Speaking Module 185
   Lynda Taylor
PART 2

Writing

6 Authenticity in the IELTS Academic Module Writing test: a comparative study of Task 2 items and university assignments
Tim Moore and Janne Morton
Methodology evaluation

7 A linguistic analysis of Chinese and Greek L1 scripts for IELTS Academic Writing Task 2
Barbara Mayor, Ann Hewings, Sarah North and Joan Swann with Caroline Coffin
Methodology evaluation

8 A corpus-based investigation of linguistic responses to an IELTS Academic Writing task
Chris Kennedy and Dilys Thorp
Methodology evaluation

9 Investigating task design in Academic Writing prompts
Kieran O’Loughlin and Gillian Wigglesworth
Methodology evaluation

10 The effect of standardisation-training on rater judgements for the IELTS Writing Module
Clare Furneaux and Mark Rignall
Methodology evaluation

11 Assessing the value of bias analysis feedback to raters for the IELTS Writing Module
Barry O’Sullivan and Mark Rignall
Methodology evaluation

12 The impact of the joint-funded research studies on the IELTS Writing Module
Lynda Taylor
Methodology evaluation
## Contents

**Appendices**

1.1 Progress of the IELTS interview ............................... 58
1.2 Description of the multifaceted Rasch model .................. 61
2.1 Transcription notation ........................................... 95
3.1 Instructions to raters ............................................ 139
4.1 IELTS Speaking test: examiner questionnaire ............... 165
4.2 Individual comments made by IELTS examiners (Australia) 169
4.3 Individual comments made by IELTS examiners (Asia-Pacific) 179
6.1 Sources of IELTS Task 2 items used in the study ............ 242
6.2 Interview schedule .............................................. 245
6.3 Sample question paper from Monash University ........... 247
7.1 Problems of reliability in analysing language errors .......... 303
8.1 Academic Writing Task 2: the question prompt ............. 372
8.2 Topic analysis at each level ................................... 373
9.1 Control tasks ....................................................... 407
9.2 Experimental tasks .............................................. 409
9.3 Research design for administration of control and experimental tasks ........................................... 417
9.4 Ethics consent .................................................... 419
10.1 Instructions for Project Task 1 ................................. 439
10.2 Tables 10.9–10.13 .............................................. 440
10.3 Examples of raters’ notes explaining rationale for score awarded ............................................... 442
11.1 Planning schedule for the project ............................... 470
11.2 Rater confidentiality declaration ............................... 471
11.3 Examples of feedback reports .................................. 472
11.4 IELTS Research Project – Questionnaire ................... 475

References .................................................................. 493
Abbreviations

ACTFL  American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
AIE  Arguments, Ideas and Evidence
ALTE  Association of Language Testers in Europe
BC  British Council
BC/IDPA  British Council/International Development Programme
Australia
BEC  Business English Certificates
BSS  Business Studies and Social Sciences
CAE  Certificate in Advanced English
CASE  Cambridge Assessment of Spoken English
CB  computer-based
CC  Coherence and Cohesion
CLC  Cambridge Learner Corpus
CPE  Certificate of Proficiency in English
CQ  Communicative Quality
EAP  English for Academic Purposes
EFL  English as a Foreign Language
ELICOS  English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ELT  English Language Teaching
ELTS  English Language Testing Service
ELTSVal  ELTS Validation Project
EPTB  English Proficiency Test Battery
ESL  English as a Second Language
ESOLComms  English for Speakers of Other Languages Communications (computerised test administration system)
ESP/LSP  English or Language for Specific Purposes
FCE  First Certificate in English
IDP  International Development Program
IELTS  International English Language Testing System
ILTA  International Language Testing Association
IRT  item response theory
LMS  Life and Medical Sciences
MFRA  multifaceted Rasch analysis
NS  native speaker

x
Abbreviations

OET  Occupational English Test
OMR  Optical Mark Reader
OPI  Oral Proficiency Interview
PET  Preliminary English Test
PSN  Professional Support Network
PST  Physical Sciences and Technology
QPP  Question Paper Production
SEM  standard error of measurement
TE   trainee examiner
TF   Task Fulfilment
TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCLES University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
VSS  Vocabulary and Sentence Structure
Contributors

Caroline Coffin is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Language and Communication at The Open University (UK). Previously she worked as a lecturer at the University of Technology, Sydney and the University of New South Wales, Australia. Her area of expertise is functional linguistics with much of her research focusing on disciplinary knowledge construction. Recent publications include *Historical Discourse: the language of time, cause and evaluation*, (Continuum, 2006), *Applying English Grammar: functional and corpus approaches* (edited with Ann Hewings and Kieran O’Halloran, Hodder-Arnold, 2004) and, of relevance to this book, ‘Arguing about how the world is or how the world should be: the role of argument in IELTS Tests’ (*Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, Vol 3, no. 3).

Peter Falvey, who has an MA and PhD in Applied Linguistics, is currently a Consultant with Cambridge ESOL and teaches on the MA ELT programme at the University of Nottingham. Before returning to the UK in 2001, he taught for 13 years in the Faculty of Education at the University of Hong Kong where he was a Head of Department. Before that he was a specialist British Council Officer in ELT and ELT teacher education for 14 years, working in Kuwait, Iraq, Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia. He has published six books on Testing in ELT and Literature Methodology, numerous articles and has supervised over 10 PhD students, two of whom gained international awards for their theses. He was a co-principal investigator for the Hong Kong government from 1996–2000 in the ground-breaking language benchmark initiative setting standards of English proficiency for teachers of English in Hong Kong.

Clare Furneaux teaches in the School of Languages and European Studies (formerly Centre for Applied Language Studies), the University of Reading, England. Her background is in English for academic purposes and teacher education. She teaches on the campus-based MA in English Language Teaching and is academic director of the Distance Study programme. Her current research interests are distance learning and the teaching of writing.

Ann Hewings is a senior lecturer in the Centre for Language and Communication at The Open University (UK). She previously taught English in Europe, Asia, and Australia from primary to tertiary levels. She
worked for a number of years on the COBUILD project, researching and contributing to dictionaries and other English language reference material. Her current research focus is academic writing in disciplinary contexts, particularly at tertiary level and in electronic environments. Publications include ‘IELTS as preparation for tertiary writing: distinctive interpersonal and textual strategies’, with Caroline Coffin, in Analysing Academic Writing (eds Louise Ravelli and Rod Ellis, Continuum, 2004).

Professor Chris Kennedy has worked as teacher, trainer, adviser, and researcher in Africa, the Middle East, South-East Asia, and South America. His research and publications focus on Language Policy, Curriculum Innovation, and English as a Global Language, with interests also in Primary ELT, Professional Communication and Applied Corpus Linguistics. He is a Past President of IATEFL, and is Chair of the British Council’s English Teaching Advisory Committee. He is Director of the Centre for English Language Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK, which runs in-house and distance Masters and PhD programmes in ELT, Applied Linguistics, and Translation Studies.

Barbara Mayor is a lecturer in the Centre for Language and Communication at The Open University (UK). She previously taught English at secondary and adult level in Europe and the Middle East. Her research interests include bilingualism and bilingual education, and the use of English as a global language of education. Recent publications include ‘The English language and “global” teaching’, with Joan Swann, in Distributed Learning: Social and Cultural Approaches to Practice (eds Mary Lea and Kathy Nicoll, Routledge Falmer, 2002) and ‘Dialogic and Hortatory features in the writing of Chinese candidates for the IELTS test’ (Language, Culture and Curriculum, Vol 19, no 1).

Sarah North is a lecturer in the Centre for Language and Communication at The Open University (UK). After teaching EAP for several years in Indonesia, Singapore, Tanzania and China, she then moved into teacher education, working with teachers and teacher trainees from a range of countries, including India, Malaysia and Mexico. Her main research interests are English for academic purposes, language and literacy, and computer-mediated communication. She has published in ELT Journal, Applied Linguistics and Studies in Higher Education, and has recently written with Theresa Lillis a chapter on academic writing in Doing Postgraduate Research (ed Stephen Potter, Sage, 2006, 2nd edn).

Kieran O’Loughlin is currently Senior Lecturer in TESOL at the University of Melbourne. He was employed in the same position at the time both research projects reported in this volume were completed. He has worked in the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL for many years as a teacher,
teacher educator, manager and academic. In recent years he has continued to undertake research projects under the IELTS joint-funded research program including studies on test-taker score gains after intensive English language instruction and higher education degree programs as well as the use of the test for university selection in Australia.

Mark Rignall taught on the EAP programme at the University of Reading’s Centre for Applied Language Studies through the 1990s and published EAP course material with Clare Furneaux. He has been a Senior Examiner for IELTS and, with colleagues at Reading, has carried out a number of small-scale research studies of rater behaviour and the effects of rater training.

Joan Swann is a senior lecturer and currently Director of the Centre for Language and Communication at The Open University (UK). Her teaching focuses on the design of multi-media materials in English language studies for international as well as UK audiences. Her main academic area is sociolinguistics, and her research includes the study of language and gender, language and educational policy and practice, and political and cultural issues in academic writing in English. Recent books include *The Art of English: Everyday Creativity* (co-edited with Janet Maybin, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); *A Dictionary of Sociolinguistics* (co-authored with Ana Deumert, Rajend Mesthrie and Theresa Lillis, Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

Lynda Taylor is Assistant Director of the Research and Validation Group at the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (part of Cambridge Assessment – a non-teaching department of the University). She assists in co-ordinating the research and validation programme to support Cambridge ESOL’s wide range of language tests and teaching awards. She has extensive experience of the theoretical and practical issues involved in second language testing and assessment. She regularly writes and presents on the work of the Group and has been involved in providing expert assistance for a number of major test design and development projects in the UK and overseas.

Dilys Thorp has many years’ experience of TESOL in China, Japan, Hong Kong and Britain. After thirteen years as Senior Lecturer in ELT at Thames Valley University, Ealing, London, she has worked freelance as a lecturer and researcher for a number of different universities. At the time of writing this paper she was working as a researcher with Chris Kennedy at Birmingham, whilst also teaching on the MEd TESOL at Bristol. Recently she has completed a research project for the Peninsula Medical School, Exeter, investigating the linguistic nature of reflective writing in a corpus of medical undergraduates’ scripts.
Series Editors’ note

This volume, the nineteenth in the *Studies in Language Testing* series, is dedicated to the memory of Dr Peter Hargreaves. Peter was appointed Chief Executive of Cambridge ESOL (known at that time as the UCLES EFL Division) in 1988; he saw its ESOL and Teacher Education Examinations and their validation and administrative services develop and grow during the 14 years he was in charge until his untimely death in January 2003. Among his many contributions to Cambridge ESOL, he encouraged the introduction of this series of language testing volumes in the early 1990s. Peter was involved with the development of IELTS from its very early stages while working with the British Council as a senior evaluation consultant and he continued this involvement for his whole time with Cambridge ESOL contributing greatly to the success of IELTS.

IELTS has developed over the years in line with theoretical and technical developments in assessment. Lynda Taylor’s general introduction to this volume is a very useful guide for those who wish to learn about the beginnings of IELTS, its subsequent development and its recent changes, particularly in the Speaking and Writing components of the examination.

Since 1995, the IELTS partnership has provided funding for research into various aspects of IELTS, in particular its Speaking and Writing components. IDP Education Australia Limited (IDP) has to date published several volumes of the IDP-commissioned reports. This volume in the *Studies in Language Testing* series includes a selection of British Council as well as IDP-commissioned work. As the process of publishing hard copy takes time, often resulting in delays, it is our intention, in future, to publish more of the commissioned research studies in a web-based format. This will put recent and relevant research into the public domain more quickly, and so allow access to studies much earlier than hitherto.

The 10 studies published here provide insights into issues that were in the thoughts of those involved in the development and revision of IELTS in the late 1990s and the first half of this decade. An important rationale for this volume is to illustrate how applied research into specific issues contributed to the evolution of IELTS over this period. As such, the reader’s attention will be drawn to Lynda Taylor’s two chapters (5 and 12), which discuss the impact that these particular studies had on IELTS revisions. Issues investigated in Part I are: *interviewer style and candidate performance in the IELTS oral interview* (Brown and Hill); *the role of gender in the IELTS oral interview*
Series Editors’ note

(O’Loughlin); the rating process in the IELTS oral interview (Brown); examiner attitudes and behaviour in the IELTS oral interview (Merrylees and McDowell).

The effects of interviewer style on candidate performance has been the focus of many studies in recent years. Likewise, the role of gender in assessment has become well-established over the past 10 years as an issue for discussion in assessment circles ever since attention began to focus on ethical matters. The rating process is a regular topic in direct tests of language production and surveys of examiner attitudes are always of value. What is of particular interest in this volume is that all the studies were commissioned specifically for IELTS performance tests.

Part 2 contains the six chapters focusing on various issues in writing assessment: authenticity in Task 2 of the IELTS Academic Module Writing test (Moore and Morton); linguistic analysis of Chinese and Greek L1 scripts for IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 (Mayor et al); corpus-based investigation of linguistic responses to an IELTS Academic Writing task (Kennedy and Thorp); task design in Academic Writing prompts (O’Loughlin and Wigglesworth); standardisation-training on rater-judgements for the IELTS Writing Module (Furneaux and Rignall); bias analysis feedback to raters for the IELTS Writing Module (O’Sullivan and Rignall).

Once again, it is clear that the issues of authenticity, linguistic analyses of writing performance, the training of raters of writing, task design in writing prompts and feedback to raters of the IELTS Writing Module are all important topics. As Lynda Taylor shows in her chapter on the impact of these studies on the revisions to the Writing component of IELTS, all of these studies had either a direct influence on the revision process itself or provided evidence on which to base informed decisions.

A further component has been added at the end of each chapter which provides a commentary on the research methodology employed in each of the 10 research studies. These commentary sections are specifically designed to assist new/young researchers who are interested in research on assessment and assessment instruments. They were trialled with new researchers at the 2005 ALTE Conference in Berlin and were found to be helpful in stimulating questions about topics such as the formulation of research questions, the design of questionnaire-based surveys and the selection of appropriate research methodologies.

The general introduction to the volume along with Lynda Taylor’s chapters on the impact of these studies on the work of IELTS and Peter Falvey’s comments on the research methodology used in each study will be, we hope, a valuable contribution to the assessment community, not only for those who are already assessment professionals but particularly for new and recently-joining members of the community.

Michael Milanovic
Cyril Weir