IELTS Collected Papers 2

Research in reading and listening assessment
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Edited by
Lynda Taylor
Consultant to University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations
and
Cyril J Weir
Powdrill Professor in English Language Assessment
University of Bedfordshire
In memory of Morgan Terry
1949-2011
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Series Editors’ note

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has developed over the years in line with theoretical and technical developments in assessment. Lynda Taylor and Cyril Weir’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 Academic Reading and Listening components of the examination.

Since 1995, the IELTS partnership has provided funding for research into various aspects of IELTS. Over the past decade IDP Education Australia and the British Council have jointly published a series of volumes containing reports from the IELTS Joint-funded Research Program and these have recently been made more readily available via the IELTS website.

Many of the grant-funded research studies conducted between 1995 and 2005 focused on the IELTS Speaking and Writing modules. Cambridge ESOL decided to publish an edited selection of these as Volume 19 in the Studies in Language Testing series, entitled *IELTS Collected Papers: Research in speaking and writing assessment* (Eds Taylor and Falvey 2007). At the time of publication it was hoped a companion volume might follow at some point focusing on research into reading and listening assessment. *IELTS Collected Papers 2* fulfils that aspiration by bringing together eight of the joint-funded studies conducted in recent years on the assessment of academic reading and listening in IELTS.

The eight studies published here provide rich insights into issues and concerns that were in the thoughts of those involved in the development and revision of IELTS during the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. All the studies are directly relevant to claims of validity, quality and usefulness made for the IELTS Academic Reading and Listening components. A further important rationale for this volume is to illustrate how applied research into specific issues has contributed to the evolution of IELTS over this period and continues to inform changes to the test in various ways. As such, the reader’s attention is drawn to Lynda Taylor’s two chapters (5 and 10), which discuss the impact that the particular studies reported in this volume have had on IELTS revisions.

Issues investigated in Part 1 are: the relationship between the academic reading construct as measured by IELTS and the reading experiences of students in the first year of their courses at a British university (Weir, Hawkey, Green, Ünaldi and Devi); the reading requirements in IELTS test items
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...and in university study (Moore, Morton and Price); the cognitive processes underlying the academic reading construct as measured by IELTS (Weir, Hawkey, Green and Devi); and the process of writing test items for the IELTS Academic Reading test (Green and Hawkey).

Part 2 contains four chapters focusing on various issues in listening assessment in IELTS: a cognitive validation of the lecture-listening component (Field); the use of tactics and strategies by Chinese students (Badger and Yan); predictive validity of student coping ability in English-medium undergraduate courses in Spain (Breeze and Miller); and the relationship between test takers' listening proficiency and their performance on the IELTS Speaking test (Nakatsuhara).

Reports of the eight research studies on IELTS combined with the general introduction to this volume and with the chapters on the impact of the studies on IELTS will be, we hope, a valuable contribution to the assessment community, not just to established testing professionals but also to new and recently joining members of the community.

IELTS Collected Papers 2 should be of immediate interest to all those directly involved with IELTS and to anyone concerned more generally with the assessment of reading and listening proficiency, especially as these relate to the demands of academic literacy.

Finally, we are pleased to be able to dedicate this volume to the memory of Morgan Terry. Morgan worked as a freelance consultant on IELTS from the early 1990s, when she and her husband, Steve, were part of a talented and committed team who took on the IELTS 95 Project to revise and re-engineer the test for a long-term and sustainable future. Over a 15-year period, Morgan worked on all the IELTS papers – Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. She served as Chair of the Speaking paper for 10 years and was instrumental in the 2001 redevelopment of the assessment criteria, rating scales and examiner training procedures. The growth and success of IELTS is in no small measure due to Morgan's vision and commitment as a faithful and enthusiastic member of the IELTS team. She was a respected colleague and a much-loved friend. Morgan's untimely death is a source of great sadness but we remain grateful for all that she gave us.

Michael Milanovic and Cyril J Weir
Cambridge – August 2011
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Notes on volume contributors

Richard Badger is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Leeds, Leeds, UK. He co-ordinates the MA TESOL and ICT programme and teaches modules in Teaching and Learning in TESOL and Learning and Teaching Vocabulary. His research interests include authenticity in the teaching of academic writing, argument in academic contexts and academic listening. He has published in Applied Linguistics, ELT Journal, the Journal of Second Language Writing, the Journal of Pragmatics, System and ESP Journal. He is currently working on projects investigating how listening is taught in China and how IELTS relates to study skills.

Ruth Breeze is Director of the Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Navarra, Spain, where she teaches English for Law, English for Journalism and Academic Writing. She has a PhD in Language Education, and has published widely on discourse analysis and language teaching. She has participated in several research projects, including Transparency in the Acquired Language Competences (Leonardo da Vinci programme) and GRADUN (University of Navarra).

Sarojani Devi is a postgraduate student at the University of Bedfordshire, currently investigating the academic reading of first-year undergraduates at a British university.

John Field is Senior Lecturer in cognitive approaches to language learning at the CRELLA research unit of the University of Bedfordshire, UK. He also teaches at the Faculty of Education, Cambridge University. His main area of expertise is second language listening, on which he has researched and written widely. His recent book Listening in the Language Classroom (2008) won the Ben Warren Prize for its contribution to the field. He has written several books on psycholinguistics and is currently engaged in projects that explore the notion of cognitive validity in language testing. Before becoming an academic, he worked in many parts of the world as an ELT advisor, materials writer, curriculum designer and teacher trainer.

Anthony Green is Reader in Language Assessment at the University of Bedfordshire (UK). He is the author of IELTS Washback in Context (2007) and Language Functions Revisited (2011) and has published widely on language assessment. He is involved in managing funded research projects, supervising research students and carrying out language testing consultancies.
worldwide. He has extensive experience of all stages of test development and delivery including work as a test designer, item writer and examiner for tests of speaking skills. Current research and consultancy interests include the relationship between assessment and learning, especially in relation to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the assessment of literacy skills and practical test development.

**Roger Hawkey** has many years of experience in English language teaching, teacher education, course design, and assessment projects in Africa, Asia and Europe. He is now a consultant on testing with Cambridge ESOL and a Visiting Professor at the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire (UK). He has published widely in applied linguistics, language teaching and assessment, including three volumes in Cambridge’s *Studies in Language Testing* series – *A Modular Approach to Testing English Language Skills* (2004), *Impact Theory and Practice* (2006) and *Examining FCE and CAE* (2009).

**Paul Miller** is Deputy Director of the Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Navarra, Spain, and Deputy Director of the University’s Master’s Degree in Language Teaching. He has a PhD in Applied Linguistics, and his research interests include medical English and computer assisted language learning.

**Tim Moore** is a senior lecturer in academic literacy at Swinburne University, Australia. He is co-author of *Critical Thinking and Language* (Continuum 2011). Along with research into the IELTS Reading module, he and co-researcher, Janne Morton, have also conducted IELTS-funded research into the Academic Writing module, published in *Studies in Language Testing* 19 (2007).

**Janne Morton** works in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne, Australia, as a lecturer in ESL. She is currently completing her PhD in the area of socialisation into disciplinary discourses. Her research interests include academic literacies, spoken genres, and second language testing and assessment.

**Fumiyo Nakatsuhara** is a lecturer in Language Assessment at the University of Bedfordshire. She has a PhD in Language Testing and an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Essex. Her research interests include the nature of co-constructed interaction in various speaking test formats. Her MA dissertation received the IELTS MA Award 2005 from the IELTS partners (University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the British Council, and IDP: IELTS Australia). She is the author of the forthcoming book *The Co-construction of Conversation in Group Oral Tests* (Peter Lang). Her recent publications include a book chapter in O’Sullivan, B (ed. 2011) *Language
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**Steve Price** works in the area of academic literacy at Swinburne University. He is currently writing up a PhD on the engagement with legal discourses by international post-graduate law students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. He has research interests in reading, discourse analysis and the discourses of Law.

**Lynda Taylor** is a Consultant to University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations and formerly Assistant Director of the Research and Validation Group there. She holds an MPhil and PhD in Applied Linguistics and Language Assessment from the University of Cambridge (UK). She has over 25 years’ experience of the theoretical and practical issues involved in L2 testing and assessment, and has provided expert assistance for test development projects worldwide. She regularly teaches, writes and presents on language testing matters and has edited, co-edited and contributed to several of the volumes in Cambridge’s *Studies in Language Testing* series, including *IELTS Collected Papers* (2007), *Multilingualism and Assessment* (2008), *Language Testing Matters* (2009), *Aligning Tests with the CEFR* (2010) and *Examining Speaking* (2011).

**Aylin Ünaldi** has a PhD in Applied Linguistics – Language Testing (Bogazici University, Turkey) and an MA in Applied Linguistics (University of Reading, UK). She has experience in foreign language teaching, teacher training, test development and validation. Her research interests include language test validation, academic literacy and reading into writing as an integrated academic skill. She is currently studying academic literacy for second language learners.

**Cyril J Weir** holds the Powdrill Chair in English Language Acquisition at the University of Bedfordshire (UK) and is Guest Professor at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, PRC. He has taught short courses and carried out consultancies in language testing, evaluation and curriculum renewal in over 50 countries worldwide. He has published many books on language testing, including *Language Testing and Validation: an evidence-based approach* (2005), *Examining Writing* (2007) and *Examining Reading* (2009). He is also joint Series Editor of *Studies in Language Testing*. Current interests include academic literacy and test validation.

**Xiaobiao Yan** is a lecturer at Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in Guangzhou, Guangdong, China. He has been engaged in IELTS teaching and research for several years. His research interests are language testing, particularly for listening and writing, and SLA. He has published seven articles on language teaching and testing. He is currently working on a project sponsored by the Natural Science Foundation.