Assessing Language Teachers’ Professional Skills and Knowledge
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Series Editors’ note

Examinations specifically aimed at language teachers go back a long way in the history of Cambridge English language examinations. The University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) instituted a Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) in 1913 alongside Certificates in Proficiency for teachers in other languages, viz., French and German. The 1913 Regulations for the Examinations for Certificates of Proficiency in Modern Languages and Religious Knowledge noted:

The Certificate of Proficiency in English is designed for Foreign Students who desire a satisfactory proof of their knowledge of the language with a view to teaching it in foreign schools. The Certificate is not, however, limited to Foreign Students (1913:5).

The emphasis in the early CPE was on the language proficiency of the candidates rather than their pedagogical expertise, though their knowledge of pedagogy was directly assessed, for example, in the writing paper. Proof of the suitability of the examination for practising or prospective teachers of English can be found in some of the CPE essay titles:

• 1920 The ‘direct method’ in the teaching of languages
• 1921 The value and importance of dialect
• 1922 The art of reading
• 1923 Intonation in speech as a mark of nationality

In addition papers in phonetics and grammar, as well as reading aloud, were particularly apposite components of CPE in terms of their relevance for the teacher in the English language teaching (ELT) classroom. A close relationship between assessment and the content of learning was an important consideration in this English language examination for actual or intending teachers of English in 1913.

This narrowly defined target audience would disappear from the regulations by 1933 and we find that by 1947 CPE was:

… open to all candidates whose mother tongue is not English and it is designed not only for prospective teachers but also for other students with a wide range of interest within the field of English studies (Regulations 1947).
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The Diploma of English Studies was another Cambridge English language examination with potential for use as a teaching qualification. The Diploma of English Studies (DES) was an advanced, specialist examination in English Literature and background studies at post-Proficiency level. It was first offered in December 1945 to 16 candidates, eight in Egypt, at the British Institutes in Cairo and Alexandria, two at the Cultural Institute in Montevideo, Uruguay, and six at the Polytechnic in Regent Street, London.

The British Council was keen for the exam ‘to be regarded abroad as a valuable qualification for foreign teachers of English’ (letter to UCLES from the Council Secretary-General, dated 23 March 1945). In the January 1945 British Council UCLES Joint Committee minutes, it is clear that the Council (in the chair at this meeting) was pushing for the inclusion of a paper on the teaching of English in the Diploma examination but the syndicate were unwilling to countenance such a move:

**British Council request for a paper on the teaching of English.**
It was understood that the Syndicate’s representatives felt unable to commit the Syndicate at this stage; the proposal might involve the Syndicate in a far-reaching, long-term responsibility, and one aspect of this, which the Syndicate’s representatives would first wish to discuss with the British Council, would be the necessary financial provision. The Chairman pressed the need, not only for a practical test, but also for an adequate record of a candidate’s teaching practice over a period. It was agreed to refer the matter to an expert Committee to be called together for the purpose.

The issue of a paper on teaching methods was raised again at the July 1948 meeting following the 1947 UCLES/British Council conference for teachers from centres overseas:

**Min. 5(d) Proposal for a Diploma paper on Teaching Method.**
There was further discussion on the proposal for the inclusion in the Diploma examination of an optional additional paper on the teaching of English as a foreign language. It was pointed out that, irrespective of the desirability of such a paper from the candidates’ point of view, it was doubtful whether, in view of the present lack of a recognised body of doctrine, it was a suitable subject for examination. The subject would be taken up again at a future conference.

Although there was a reluctance to embark on a test specifically for English language teaching at this stage, this was an area of Cambridge’s work, which would eventually increase dramatically, in spite of this early reticence.
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After the Second World War external circumstances played their part and there was a marked increase in the spread of English around the world as English became an international language. Crystal (1997) expands in detail on a variety of factors which led to the increasing dominance of English as a world language: access to knowledge, use in: international relations, the press, advertising, broadcasting, motion pictures, popular music, international travel, international safety, education, and communications (see also Graddol 1997, 2006). English was the *lingua franca* needed ‘to meet the needs of international communication’ (Howatt 1997:263). This growth in the importance of English had a significant impact on educational systems worldwide and concomitantly on the numbers of English language teachers required. The increased demand for teachers led to a related increase in teacher training programmes of all kinds. With this demand for trained teachers came a demand for evidence of their ability. There was thus a pressing need for qualified teachers.

By the 1960s, the climate with regard to ELT qualifications had clearly changed and International House and the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) began offering English language teaching qualifications driven in the main by practical considerations rather than theoretical. In 1988 the well-established and respected RSA qualifications moved to Cambridge under the guidance of Lynette Murphy O’Dwyer who transferred from the RSA to UCLES at the same time. The training of English language teachers and the assessment of their competence was increasingly seen as an important part of ELT in general and the Cambridge landscape in particular (see Chapter 2 in this volume for details). The 1990s saw further changes to the former RSA examinations leading to the new Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) and Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Delta) and the addition of a separate *Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT)* in 2005.

Much has been written about the training of English Language teachers over the last few decades, but unfortunately relatively little that relates to the assessment of knowledge, skills and ability in this area. This volume is one of the few to address this deficit and it is the first in the Studies in Language Testing (SiLT) series to consider assessment with regard to Cambridge English Teaching Qualifications (full details of the content of each of the qualifications discussed in this volume can be found on the website www.cambridgeenglish.org).

The editors of this volume explain in their introduction (Chapter 1) how the format in each of the chapters involves a discussion of key issues involved in a particular aspect of language teacher assessment together with an account of how those issues are addressed in the various Cambridge English qualifications. They have organised sections around themes that link the various chapters: history and background; development and assessment; the