

Second Language Testing for Student Evaluation and Classroom Research

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Title: Second Language Testing for Student Evaluation and Classroom Research

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Publisher: Information Age Publishing, Charlotte

ISBN: 1641130113, **Pages:** 392, **Year:** 2017

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This book provides a solid foundation regarding the various forms of testing and how they relate to English language learners. The format is clear and the table of contents provides a logical breakdown of the types of assessments and how they can be used to build relevant instruction. Moreover, it is written in a user-friendly form that allows readers to dive into the material and easily follow along while also ensuring that the research base is included throughout.

The authors are well versed in linguistics, research, bilingual education, second language learners, technology, and assessment, and it's evident that they used this background knowledge to develop their book in a well-rounded way. Greta Gorsuch has been publishing since the 1990s; topics of her previous publications include English as a foreign language, reading fluency and comprehension, technology, culture, evaluation, research, theory, and discourse intonation. Dale T. Griffee's work includes writings on research, second language methods, songs in the English as a second language classroom, validating questionnaires, assessments, and course evaluations.

The topics or chapters included in this current work include norm-referenced tests; test item formats; teacher-made tests; the role of theory in second language testing; performance tests, scales, distributions, and descriptive statistics; correlation; reliability; test validity and validation; standard setting and cut scores; tests and teaching; and tests and classroom research. Each chapter begins by explaining why the selected topic is important along with a brief introduction. For example, in the chapter about test validity and validation, the authors begin with a simple introduction, stating:

Typically, books on testing have a chapter on test validity. It is an important concept and speaks to the soundness, authority, and trustworthiness of a test. So we focus on test validity in this chapter, but we also focus on test validation, which is the process of providing evidence that a test has validity.” (p. 219)

They also provide relevant history when applicable. The chapter on test validity includes a section entitled “A Short History of Validity, and Key Concepts – 1960s Through the 1980s” (p. 221). Here, the authors include a chart that clearly delineates the differences between test validity in the 1960s through the 1990s compared to the 1990s to the present. Models are outlined, a table

is provided indicating various people's roles (teacher, researcher, educator, evaluator) in assessments, and reliability and validation are explained using bold headings and short paragraphs. The chapter concludes by referring the reader to the student workbook for learning activities, which include the following sections: "test yourself, discussion questions, application tasks, and answers" (p. 245). Each chapter has a similar layout, helping the reader to easily follow along as each topic is discussed.

The strengths of this book lie in the broad yet deep view provided about the value of assessments. Examples of assessments are shown throughout, along with numerous figures and tables that allow the reader to more easily understand the concepts. The book also includes appendices to further explain normal distributions and percentile scores. It ends with a comprehensive glossary list of terms used to help readers with comprehension. Because the book provides a strong research base throughout, and the authors explain the concepts very well, it can be used by teachers and teacher educators alike. Administrators wanting to learn about assessments related to English language learners would find it useful, as would graduate students. The authors specifically state that it can even be used by "practicing language teachers who do not like testing, especially the idea of statistical analysis" (p. xii).

It might have been interesting if the authors added an online component to this book where they explain the more difficult concepts through a video. The book is also entirely in black and white, whereas color might have made the visuals more appealing. Another drawback is that the vocabulary in bold is defined in the glossary in the back of the book, rather than on the same page; on the same page the terms are explained, but sometimes not in enough detail.

Despite a few minor drawbacks, overall this book provides readers assessment information with a balance. Assessment books sometimes show various assessment examples but do not provide detailed research information about them. Alternatively, they provide dense research information that is not easily digestible. These authors, however, were able to strike a balance where a reader can learn what is behind assessments without getting lost in the explanation. As the authors noted in the preface, "we became more intrigued with tests, their purposes, their construction, their analyses, and their validation" (p. x). This deep understanding came through in their explanations. In addition, their acknowledgements demonstrate the large number of people they worked with to gain the information to write this book, which shows how it can take numerous conversations, courses, collaborations on projects, and other published works to write a book with this much detailed information. For people interested in taking their knowledge of assessments to the next level, beyond what is typically offered in professional development, this book is a good choice. After reading this book, readers will know more about the roles, research, and theory of assessments, how to develop their own tests, and will even learn some idioms that are interspersed throughout the book, which make it engaging.

Cite This Article as: *Teachers College Record*, Date Published: July 09, 2018
<http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 22421, Date Accessed: 7/16/2018 1:57:27 PM