

Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL

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Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL		
Author:	Glaylor Ekbatani (2011)	
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An indispensable component in language learning, assessment measures to what degree students have attained certain learning goals. Assessment is essential in the area of second language learning, given that it is used not only as a diagnostic or placement tool in a language classroom, but also as a screening tool in university application, employment, or citizenship tests. Second language specialists and practitioners need to be well aware of theories, frameworks, and methods of evaluating language proficiency when designing and interpreting assessments. Gloyal Ekbatani responds to these needs in her recent book, *Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL*, by providing a concise overview of critical concepts and discussing effective methods of measuring language proficiency that are congruent with recent theory and trends in language assessment.

The stated purpose of the book is to provide a succinct and practical guide to ESL assessment by covering fundamental issues such as reliability and validity in a non-technical manner, describing a variety of techniques to improve assessment of reading, writing, and oral proficiency, and offering innovative examples of assessment. Although the book is focused on the application of theories of assessment, it also provides readers with a broad theoretical foundation. Topics include the discussions of construct (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Brown, 2004),

authenticity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), definition of reading (e.g., Walker, 1988) and writing constructs (e.g., Weigle, 2002), and oral proficiency (e.g., Chapelle, 1999; Fulcher, 2003). The author's careful combination of theory and application makes *Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL* an easy-to-use handbook for designing, implementing, and evaluating an assessment in a language classroom, program, or school.

Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL is intended for ESL teachers and program administrators interested in designing and developing assessments in the U.S. or international settings. ESL teachers who have no background knowledge in technical terms would particularly benefit from the author's discussion of key concepts and relevant practical examples for writing test questions for each skill area. Due to its easy readability and introductory nature, it would be valuable for graduate or undergraduate students seeking for ESL professions or building their knowledge in this field.

The book's seven chapters can be divided into three sections in terms of its related contents. The first section (chapters 1, 3 and 4) summarizes the fundamental concepts in language testing. The author explains a variety of ways to categorize language testing based on purpose (i.e., placement, achievement, or diagnosis), methods, and approaches (i.e., communicative, performance, and task-based assessments). The section also discusses the integral components of testing such as validity, reliability, authenticity, and interactiveness as well as other desirable test qualities and the significance of achieving them in testing results. The second section (chapter 2) presents basic measurement concepts and statistical techniques crucial to language testing. The final section of the book (chapters 5, 6, and 7) examines a number of issues in assessing writing, speaking, and oral proficiency by defining the construct of each language skill, demonstrating techniques for making sound assessments, and explaining various ways to assess these skills.

One of the biggest strengths of the book is its conciseness and practicability. Although it is written in a succinct manner, it contains almost all of the integral issues, concepts, and new trends that scholars are discussing in the field of second language assessment. The book's ready-to-use and all-in-one nature offers readers both the theory behind and examples of various assessments for reading, writing, and oral proficiency. Additionally, the book provides comprehensive rubrics to assist in scoring a student's level in each language skill.

Readers will also appreciate the book's specific examples of how to make valid testing questions and its introduction to alternative assessments that are grounded in current research. In chapter 5, for example, the author illuminates the potential pitfalls associated with multiple-choice reading comprehension questionnaires and suggests ways to make more sound and appropriate multiple-choice items. Further, the book illustrates alternative forms of assessments such as student-developed portfolios, self-assessment, and task-based integrated speaking tests, which can be a great resource for ESL teachers and administrators interested in enhancing assessments in their classroom or TESOL programs.

Although the author attempts to take a “fresh look” at traditional concepts such as validity and reliability, she simplifies them in a way that is quite traditional rather than innovative. In addition, the book provides few examples of alternative assessments despite the fact that the cover claims to especially emphasize such content. Only a few novel methods are introduced in assessing each skill area. Readers would have benefited from presentation of a diverse and detailed innovative assessments. Despite these relatively minor oversights, the book’s ability to connect theoretical language testing concepts to their practical application makes *Measurement and Evaluation in Post-Secondary ESL* a valuable resource for classroom teachers, graduate students, and administrators interested in ESL assessment.

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Reviewed by

Jayoung Song
The University of Texas at Austin
<jayoung.song@utexas.edu>

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