

Language Testing

English 674

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This class is an introduction to the technique, practice, and history of language testing. During the first several weeks of class, I will provide *introductory* lectures on some of the basic technical aspects of language testing – procedures with which you must be familiar in order to understand the central concepts of the field: reliability and validity. The remainder of the class will involve the discussion of the assigned readings and videos. The issues presented in the readings and videos will be supplemented by practice in the resolution of practical language testing problems.

Required Reading/Viewing

Text

Spolsky, B. (1995). *Measured Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Videos on the Resources in Language Testing Website

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/languagestudies/ltest/ltrfile/ltrframe.html>

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|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Reliability | Alan Davies |
| 2. Validity | Bernard Spolsky |
| 3. Test Impact | Elana Shohamy |
| 4. Test Specifications | Charles Alderson |
| 5. Writing Test Items | Charles Stansfield |
| 6. Pretesting | J.D. Brown |
| 7. Testing Listening | Gary Buck |
| 8. Testing Speaking | Glenn Fulcher |
| 9. Testing Reading | Caroline Clapham |
| 10. Testing Writing | Liz Hamp-Lyons |
| 11. Statistics | Fred Davidson |
| 12. Testing for Specific Purposes | Dan Douglas |

Articles at <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/languagestudies/ltest/ltrfile/ltrframe.html>

Cronbach, L. J. and Meehl, P. E. 1955. Construct Validity in Psychological Tests Psychological Bulletin, 52, 281 - 302.

Frary, R. B. 1995. How difficult should a test be? ERIC/AE Digest Series EDO-TM-95-6.

Gladwell, M. 2001. Examined Life The New Yorker, 2001, 12/17/2001.

Madaus, G. F., Haney, W. and Kreitzer, A. 1996. Testing and Evaluation Primer Council for Aid to Education. **** recommended ****

North, B. 1997. Language Proficiency Descriptors.

Phelps, R. P. No date. Why Testing Experts Hate Testing. Washington D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

Porter, D. 1997. Dimensions in the Diversity of Language: A Language Testing Perspective The Language Teacher.

Rudner, L. 1994. Questions to ask when evaluating tests. ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation.

From Purdue Libraries e-journals:

Estimating the difficulty of oral proficiency tasks: what does the test-taker have to offer? By: McNamara, T. Language Testing. Oct 2002, Vol. 19 Issue 4, p347, 22p.

Language assessment as social practice: challenges for research. By: McNamara, T. Language Testing, Oct2001, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p333, 17p.

Democratic assessment as an alternative. By: Shohamy, E.. Language Testing, Oct 2001, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p373, 19p.

Outcomes-based assessment in practice: some examples and emerging insights. By: Brindley, G. Language Testing, Oct 2001, Vol. 18 Issue 4, p393, 15p.

Class Requirements

Your grade in the course will be determined by your grades on [1] an average of grades on your homework assignments (15%), [2] your written summary/synthesis of selected Language Testing Videos (15%), [3] your language test website presentation (20%), and [4] your final paper (50%).

Summaries of Video Topics

Provide a discussion/summary/synthesis of selected video topics presented on the website "Resources in Language Testing". Go to the website

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/languagestudies/ltest/ltrfile/ltrframe.html> and click on "video". These videos will provide you with an introduction to the topics covered and may provide you with some ideas about topics to pursue in subsequent assignments. Listen to **ALL 12** of the videos, but limit your discussion/summary/synthesis to three or four selected topics. Choose any three or four that you find particularly interesting. In preparation for your discussion/summary/synthesis, you may want to augment the information provided in the videos with additional background reading. Do not hesitate to discuss the possibilities with me. I will gladly provide you with additional resources. Go to the website and get started as soon as possible. Limit your discussion to no more than 2,500 words.

Language Testing Website Presentations

There are many websites that have information about language tests. Examine information contained on a site that includes either a complete or sample practice test and discuss and evaluate the characteristics of the test. You will have about 25 minutes for your entire presentation. Provide a handout for the class that includes an abstract and a written summary/critique of no more than 1000 words to me.

Language Testing Project

Fifty percent of your final grade is dependent on your completion of a paper that addresses a language testing issue of your choice. The paper must be based on research; that is, you must collect and analyze subject responses or analyze subject responses in an existing database. Your paper should follow a standard journal format and must include the following sections: abstract, literature review (background for the study), research questions, methodology, results, discussion, references. The paper should be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. The paper must not exceed 20 pages in length. Assuming that you are all going to conduct excellent studies and write excellent papers, you are strongly encouraged to submit an abstract of your paper for presentation at the next Midwestern Association of Language Tester's (MwALT) Annual Meeting.

Class Schedule *		
#	Date	Assignment
1	08/25	Introduction – Lecture: Terms and Issues <i>Readings:</i> Phelps, Gladwell, Brindley
2	09/01**	Lecture: Measurement Scales <i>Readings:</i> Porter, McNamara (2001)
3	09/08	Lecture: Measures of Central Tendency <i>Readings:</i> Frary HW1 – Due Monday, 9/15
4	09/15	Lecture: Correlation & Reliability -- <i>Readings:</i> Messick, Rudner
5	09/22	Discussion of Language Testing Videos – Video Summary – Due Friday, 9/26
6	09/29	Practice scales – writing: holistic, analytic, usage – TSE – <i>Readings:</i> North HW2 – Due Friday, 10/3
7	10/06	Practice scales – writing – TSE
8	10/13**	<i>Readings:</i> Anghoff, Cronbach & Meehl
9	10/20	Practice scales – speaking – OEPT – <i>Readings:</i> McNamara (2002) HW3 – Due Monday, 10/20
10	10/27	MW: 1 – 3
11	11/03	MW: 4 – 6
12	11/10	MW: 7 – 9
13	11/17	MW: 10, 20
14	11/24	Reading: Shohamy Thanksgiving Vacation – no class Wednesday and Friday
15	12/01	Oral reports on language testing websites
16	12/08	Oral reports on language testing websites
17	12/15	Final papers due // 12/17 // 1:00 pm // ESL Office

Note: * the schedule may change, depending on our ability to work through the assigned material

** week 2 & 8, no class on Monday