Book Review: Testing for language teachers, 2nd ed.

Arthur Hughes, *Testing for Language Teachers second edition*. (2003). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. xi-251

Reviewed by Tomonori Nagano

The new edition of *Testing for Language Teachers* has comprehensive coverage of language testing principles and offers guidelines for language teachers to improve language tests with which their students are evaluated. This new edition – the first revision since 1990 – remains a good primer for pre-service teachers and classroom teachers who have little experience in research on language testing. In this new edition, Hughes holds that, despite their negative impact on classroom instruction, language tests are still indispensable as an accountable measurement of students' language ability. Since, in reality, language tests are playing an increasingly important role in making high-stakes decisions for students, language teachers should make every effort to create a good test that fairly and appropriately evaluates their students' abilities. This book is intended, therefore, to provide language teachers with a better understanding of language tests and to help teachers work collaboratively on constructing and developing better language tests.

A few major changes from the first edition are found in the addition of two new chapters—"Tests for Young Learners" and "Testing Overall Ability,"— and in the expansion in the chapters "Stages of Test Development" and "Common Test Techniques." The updated references in the *Further Reading* section at the end of each chapter provide suggestions for further research. The new edition is accompanied with its companion website <http://www.cambridge.org/elt/tflt> which includes exercises in statistical analysis and links to the related websites. Readers who are interested in the use of computers in language testing may also find the *Item Banking* appendix informative.

The beginning half of the book is intended to familiarize readers with the basic concepts and elements of language testing. Following the overviews of *beneficial backwash,* or positive impact of language tests on teaching and learning, in Chapter 1 and 2, Chapter 3 explores the basic distinctions in types of language tests as defined by purpose (proficiency, achievement, diagnostic, and placement test) and kind (direct vs. indirect, norm-referenced vs. criterion-based etc.) of testing. Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the notion of *validity* and *reliability*, two crucial components in constructing quality language tests. In each chapter, different forms of *validity* and *reliability* are discussed along with several empirical approaches to measure them. Although the statistical analysis is not discussed in-depth, the notion of the *correlation coefficient*, the mathematical yardstick to represent the degree of *validity* and *reliability*, is briefly introduced. Chapters 6 through 8 focus on construction and development of teacher-made language tests. Readers of the first edition will find a great deal of expansion in those chapters in particular. After touching upon the general guidelines to achieve *beneficial backwash*, Chapter 6 and 7 introduce the step-by-step procedure to develop teacher-made language tests. In Chapter 8, common testing techniques, such as multiple-choice, yes/no questions, and short-answer questions, are introduced. Other common testing techniques, such as cloze and dictation, are presented in the new chapter on "Testing overall ability."

The second half of the book explores how to assess each language modality with language tests. Chapters 9 to 13 feature testing techniques in the four language skills: writing, oral ability, reading,

listening, and, grammar and vocabulary, respectively. In each chapter, there are a good number of samples of test specifications and sample tasks, both of which are excerpted from the professional language tests administered by large-scale testing organizations. Testing techniques, which are introduced in Chapters 8 and 14, are re-examined to discuss their advantages and disadvantages for each language modality. Because this by no means represents a comprehensive description of testing of each language skill, sources for further reading are listed in the "Further reading" sections. Readers who are concerned with teaching young language learners may appreciate Chapter 15, a new chapter on testing young children. In response to the increasing trend of the English education at the younger age in many EFL countries, this new chapter introduces special concerns in developing language tests for these learners. Finally, Chapter 16 lists suggestions for administrating language tests.

Undoubtedly, this book will benefit many teachers who seek to broaden their understanding of language testing. The only reservation I have, however, is that some teachers, particularly those who have ample experience in classrooms, might be turned off by the slightly theoretical disposition of this book. It is also feared that EFL teachers in countries where direct testing techniques such as compositions and oral interviews are less common, may also feel overwhelmed with the emphasis on direct testing in this book. These reservations notwithstanding, the intention to promote classroom assessment that provides *beneficial backwash* is achieved; all description and information in this book is accessible and extensive enough for newcomers in field to build up a foundation in language testing. Experienced teachers may also find this book useful to update themselves with the recent studies on the language testing.