

应用语言学研究丛书

# Measuring L2 Proficiency Perspectives from SLA

## 二语能力测试：从二语习得视角研究

Edited by Pascale Leclercq,  
Amanda Edmonds  
and Heather Hilton

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## 出版说明

对于中国这样一个英语教学大国，和语言教学相关的话题一直受到语言学界的关注。应用语言学作为一个涵盖范围十分广泛的研究领域，尤其受到我国学者及语言学方向师生的重视。本世纪初，外教社陆续引进出版了“牛津应用语言学丛书”、“剑桥应用语言学丛书”等国际优秀学术成果，因其内容权威、选择精当而受到外语界的好评。

近年来，应用语言学研究取得了很多新的进展，如何引导我国语言学方向的研究生快速便捷地了解这一领域的发展全貌和研究热点，成为我国语言学界老师面临的一个重要问题。有鉴于此，我们又从爱丁堡大学出版社、Multilingual Matters 等国际知名出版社精选了一批图书，组成“应用语言学研习丛书”，以更好地满足广大师生和相关学者的需求。

本丛书的各分册主题均为近年来应用语言学研究领域的热点话题，其中既有对所论述主题的理论回顾和梳理，也有对较新的发展和应用所做的阐释和分析，脉络清晰，语言简洁，共同反映了这一领域过去三四十年间的成果和积淀。

相信本套丛书的出版将为国内应用语言学研究带来新的启示，进一步推动我国语言学研究的的发展。

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# **Measuring L2 Proficiency**

Perspectives from SLA

Edited by

**Pascale Leclercq, Amanda Edmonds  
and Heather Hilton**

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# Preface

Language 'proficiency' is a concept that language teachers have been grappling with directly for the past 30 years: how can we help students improve their proficiency (both productive and receptive) in communicative or 'task-based' classrooms, and how can we 'measure' this type of improvement? During this same period, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have been interested in the emergence of proficiency in a second or foreign language (L2), its characteristics, and possible stages that language learners pass through on their way towards plurilingual competence. And, of course, the assessment of receptive and productive proficiency, both in the oral and written modes, is the bread and butter of the language testing industry, and lies at the heart of the *Common European Reference Framework for Languages*.

This book is an attempt to bring together concrete ideas on identifying and measuring L2 proficiency, from different branches of SLA research. The authors are not testing specialists, but researchers interested in different facets of foreign- and second-language (L2) proficiency, and most particularly in indicators of receptive or productive proficiency that are valid, reliable and easily implemented. We believe that this is the contribution of our volume – a renewal of interest in the criteria of reliability and feasibility in the assessment of L2 proficiency, both of which were sidelined in the performance-testing wave that swept in with the Communicative Approach. The authors of the *European Framework*, for example, declare quite openly that validity is the unique construct used to define the European language 'reference levels': 'Validity is the concept with which the *Framework* is concerned' (Council of Europe, 2001: 177). Dismissing *reliability* as a mere 'technical term', the authors maintain (rather circuitously) that 'accuracy' of assessment decisions can only be determined by the 'validity of the criteria used' and of the procedures used to determine these criteria (Council of Europe, 2001: 177).

Certainly the *Framework's* reference levels were painstakingly established (Council of Europe, 2001: 205–216), in an attempt to guarantee the accuracy/validity of the descriptors, but it has not been so easy for language teachers and language-teaching institutions to dismiss questions relating to the reliability and feasibility of implementing these performance-based descriptors. These questions have been addressed at numerous international conferences,

and various European projects have been set up in an attempt to improve the reliability of the 'Reference Level' scales or their implementation, including the WebCEF project (summarized in this volume by John Osborne), the SLATE project, CEFLING, as well as projects such as 'What is speaking proficiency?' (WISP, coordinated by the Amsterdam Center for Language and Communication at the Universiteit van Amsterdam).

It therefore seems timely to assemble investigations into L2 proficiency emanating from the various branches of SLA research: psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, corpus-based and applied linguistics. The chapters that follow are all concerned with indicators of productive or receptive proficiency in a second or foreign language that are precise and valid (often validated experimentally), but also practical to implement – and therefore useful. What can be measured, precisely and objectively, in L2 production and reception? What can one reliably propose in the form of self-assessment questionnaires? Which, among the reliable measures, best reflect overall proficiency? Are there subcomponents of proficiency that constitute particularly valid indicators of L2 level, and, if so, which of these can be easily measured? These chapters offer insights from the SLA research agenda that can also be useful to teachers, and may inspire new avenues of investigation for language-testing specialists.

*Heather Hilton*  
November 2013

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# Introduction



