丛书主编　H.G.Widdowson

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牛津语言学入门丛书
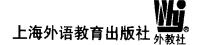
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出 版 前 言

　　在语言研究方面不乏详尽权威的导论。但这些学术专论都趋于冗长且学术性太强,对初学者来说大有泰山压顶之势。于是,"牛津语言学入门丛书",这套让人们循序渐进、轻松地掌握复杂概念的过渡性简明教程,就应运用生了。

　　人们在对语言的特定细节进行剖析之前,应该对语言整体有个大致的了解。作为供语言学研究方向的学生进行深入研究之前的热身阅读,这套丛书的主旨是为人们理解那些学术性强的语言学专著奠定理论基础。因为这套丛书浅显易懂,对那些感兴趣却并非专门从事语言研究的人进一步了解语言也大有裨益。

　　本套丛书采用了统一的结构模式,在"前言"之后,由"概述"、"阅读材料"、"参考书目"和"术语表"四个部分构成。第一部分概述是全书的主体,也是有关该领域研究的导论。第二部分提供与书中各章节内容相应的深入阅读的材料,其后所附的问题极具启发性,有助于读者形成对有关领域研究的独立见解。第三部分提供相应章节的参考书目,并对它们的主要内容作了点评,以便有兴趣的学习者深入学习。第四部分列出术语表,帮助初学者了解有关术语的定义。

　　《语言测试》为本丛书之一,出版于2000年,是一部有关语言测试基本理论和实践的导论性著作,内容函盖了测试设计、测试评分程序、测试的效度和信度以及语言测试的社会因素等方面。作者T·麦克纳马拉(Tim McNamara)是澳大利亚墨尔本大学语言学与应用语言学副教授。

　　本书的主体(概述部分)分为八章。第一章简洁明了地

介绍了语言测试的性质、类型、目的、标准及标准之间的关系。第二章从语言与语用两方面入手,简述了分散点测试、综合性测试、语用性测试、交际性语言测试以及交际能力的模式;第三章从制约测试的因素、测试内容、测试方法、应答的信度、固定应答格式与构答反应格式、测试规范、试测等方面探讨测试运作的全过程。第四章描述评分程序中程序的确立、评分者遇到的难题、评判框架的确立、评分尺度、综合评分法与分析评分法以及评分者培训等问题;第五章论述测试的效度及其作用;第六章则从测量学的角度评述如何保证评分及测试本身的信度。第七章介绍了语言测试的社会性特征,并提出了测试的设计人员和组织者的社会责任问题。第八章展望了语言测试发展的前景,同时对目前所面临的困惑提出了质疑。

　　本套丛书的读者对象是英语专业高年级学生、语言学、应用语言学与相关专业研究生以及对相应领域感兴趣的人员。欢迎读者对我们的工作提出宝贵意见。

本社编辑部

2002 年 10 月

Preface

Purpose

What justification might there be for a series of introductions to language study? After all, linguistics is already well served with introductory texts: expositions and explanations which are comprehensive, authoritative, and excellent in their way. Generally speaking, however, their way is the essentially academic one of providing a detailed initiation into the discipline of linguistics, and they tend to be lengthy and technical: appropriately so, given their purpose. But they can be quite daunting to the novice. There is also a need for a more general and gradual introduction to language: transitional texts which will ease people into an understanding of complex ideas. This series of introductions is designed to serve this need.

Their purpose, therefore, is not to supplant but to support the more academically oriented introductions to linguistics: to prepare the conceptual ground. They are based on the belief that it is an advantage to have a broad map of the terrain sketched out before one considers its more specific features on a smaller scale, a general context in reference to which the detail makes sense. It is sometimes the case that students are introduced to detail without it being made clear what it is a detail of. Clearly, a general understanding of ideas is not sufficient: there needs to be closer scrutiny. But equally, close scrutiny can be myopic and meaningless unless it is related to the larger view. Indeed it can be said that the precondition of more particular enquiry is an awareness of what, in general, the particulars are about. This series is designed to provide this large-scale view of different areas of language

study. As such it can serve as preliminary to (and precondition for) the more specific and specialized enquiry which students of linguistics are required to undertake.

But the series is not only intended to be helpful to such students. There are many people who take an interest in language without being academically engaged in linguistics per se. Such people may recognize the importance of understanding language for their own lines of enquiry, or for their own practical purposes, or quite simply for making them aware of something which figures so centrally in their everyday lives. If linguistics has revealing and relevant things to say about language, this should presumably not be a privileged revelation, but one accessible to people other than linguists. These books have been so designed as to accommodate these broader interests too: they are meant to be introductions to language more generally as well as to linguistics as a discipline.

Design

The books in the series are all cut to the same basic pattern. There are four parts: Survey, Readings, References, and Glossary.

Survey

This is a summary overview of the main features of the area of language study concerned: its scope and principles of enquiry, its basic concerns and key concepts. These are expressed and explained in ways which are intended to make them as accessible as possible to people who have no prior knowledge or expertise in the subject. The Survey is written to be readable and is uncluttered by the customary scholarly references. In this sense, it is simple. But it is not simplistic. Lack of specialist expertise does not imply an inability to understand or evaluate ideas. Ignorance means lack of knowledge, not lack of intelligence. The Survey, therefore, is meant to be challenging. It draws a map of the subject area in such a way as to stimulate thought and to invite a critical participation in the exploration of ideas. This kind of conceptual cartography has its dangers of course: the selection of what is significant, and the manner of its representation, will not be to the liking of everybody, particularly not, perhaps, to some

of those inside the discipline. But these surveys are written in the belief that there must be an alternative to a technical account on the one hand, and an idiot's guide on the other if linguistics is to be made relevant to people in the wider world.

Readings

Some people will be content to read, and perhaps re-read, the summary Survey. Others will want to pursue the subject and so will use the Survey as the preliminary for more detailed study. The Readings provide the necessary transition. For here the reader is presented with texts extracted from the specialist literature. The purpose of these Readings is quite different from the Survey. It is to get readers to focus on the specifics of what is said, and how it is said, in these source texts. Questions are provided to further this purpose: they are designed to direct attention to points in each text, how they compare across texts, and how they deal with the issues discussed in the Survey. The idea is to give readers an initial familiarity with the more specialist idiom of the linguistics literature, where the issues might not be so readily accessible, and to encourage them into close critical reading.

References

One way of moving into more detailed study is through the Readings. Another is through the annotated References in the third section of each book. Here there is a selection of works (books and articles) for further reading. Accompanying comments indicate how these deal in more detail with the issues discussed in the different chapters of the Survey.

Glossary

Certain terms in the Survey appear in bold. These are terms used in a special or technical sense in the discipline. Their meanings are made clear in the discussion, but they are also explained in the Glossary at the end of each book. The Glossary is cross-referenced to the Survey, and therefore serves at the same time as an index. This enables readers to locate the term and what it signifies in the more general discussion, thereby, in effect, using the Survey as a summary work of reference.

Use

The series has been designed so as to be flexible in use. Each title is separate and self-contained, with only the basic format in common. The four sections of the format, as described here, can be drawn upon and combined in different ways, as required by the needs, or interests, of different readers. Some may be content with the Survey and the Glossary and may not want to follow up the suggested References. Some may not wish to venture into the Readings. Again, the Survey might be considered as appropriate preliminary reading for a course in applied linguistics or teacher education, and the Readings more appropriate for seminar discussion during the course. In short, the notion of an introduction will mean different things to different people, but in all cases the concern is to provide access to specialist knowledge and stimulate an awareness of its significance. This series as a whole has been designed to provide this access and promote this awareness in respect to different areas of language study.

H.G.WIDDOWSON

Author's acknowledgements

Language testing is often thought of as an arcane and difficult field, and politically incorrect to boot. The opportunity to provide an introduction to the conceptual interest of the field and to some of its procedures has been an exciting one. The immediate genesis for this book came from an invitation from Henry Widdowson, who proved to be an illuminating and supportive editor throughout the process of the book's writing. It was an honour and a pleasure to work with him.

The real origins of the book lay further back, when over 15 years ago Terry Quinn of the University of Melbourne urged me to take up a consultancy on language testing at the Australian Language Centre in Jakarta. Terry has been an invaluable support and mentor throughout my career in applied linguistics, nowhere more so than in the field of language testing, which in his usual clear-sighted way he has always understood as being inherently political and social in character, a perspective which I am

only now, after twelve years of research in the area, beginning to properly understand. I am also grateful to my other principal teachers about language testing, Alan Davies, Lyle Bachman, and Bernard Spolsky, and to my friend and colleague Elana Shohamy, from whom I have learnt so much in conversations long into the night about these and other matters. I also owe a deep debt to Sally Jacoby, a challenging thinker and great teacher, who has helped me frame and contextualize in new ways my work in this field. My colleagues at Melbourne, Brian Lynch and Alastair Pennycook, have dragged me kicking and screaming at least some way into the postmodern era. The Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne has been for over a decade the perfect environment within which thinking on language testing can flourish, and I am grateful to (again) Alan Davies and to Cathie Elder, and to all my other colleagues there. Whatever clarity the book may have is principally due to my dear friend and soulmate Lillian Nativ, who remains the most difficult and critical student I have had. Being a wonderful teacher herself she will never accept anything less than clear explanations. The students to whom I have taught language testing or whose research I have supervised over the years have also shaped this book in considerable ways. At OUP, I have had excellent help from Julia Sallabank and Belinda Fenn.

On a more personal note I am grateful for the continuing support and friendship of Marie-Thérèse Jensen and the love of our son Daniel.

TIM McNAMARA

Contents

Survey

1
Testing, testing ...
What is a language test?

Testing is a universal feature of social life. Throughout history people have been put to the test to prove their capabilities or to establish their credentials; this is the stuff of Homeric epic, of Arthurian legend. In modern societies such tests have proliferated rapidly. Testing for purposes of detection or to establish identity has become an accepted part of sport (drugs testing), the law (DNA tests, paternity tests, lie detection tests), medicine (blood tests, cancer screening tests, hearing, and eye tests), and other fields. Tests to see how a person performs particularly in relation to a threshold of performance have become important social institutions and fulfil a gatekeeping function in that they control entry to many important social roles. These include the driving test and a range of tests in education and the workplace. Given the centrality of testing in social life, it is perhaps surprising that its practice is so little understood. In fact, as so often happens in the modern world, this process, which so much affects our lives, becomes the province of experts and we become dependent on them. The expertise of those involved in testing is seen as remote and obscure, and the tests they produce are typically associated in us with feelings of anxiety and powerlessness.

What is true of testing in general is true also of language testing, not a topic likely to quicken the pulse or excite much immediate interest. If it evokes any reaction, it will probably take the form of negative associations. For many, language tests may conjure up an image of an examination room, a test paper with questions, desperate scribbling against the clock. Or a chair outside the interview room and a nervous victim waiting with rehearsed phrases to be called into an inquisitional conversation with the examiners. But there is more to language testing than this.