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## Introduction

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The six papers in this collection were presented at the Eleventh World Congress of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) held in Jyväskylä, Finland, during a symposium entitled "Bridging the gap between language and the professions: What do language testers need to know?" The symposium explored the relationship between specific purpose language testers and professionals in the fields that are the target domains of the language tests. Questions such as the following were explored: How specific are specific purpose language tests? Who should determine content relevance? How can we set thresholds? To what extent do specific purpose tests actually mirror real-world language use? Each paper offers a somewhat different perspective on these fundamental issues in LSP testing.

Lesleyanne Hawthorne takes up the difficult challenge of defining the target domain in complex occupational situations such as engineering and nursing. A central problem is one of personal presentation in accessing employment: many of the migrant engineers and nurses do not view English skills as an important part of their professional abilities, while employers view English ability as a mandatory sine qua non for job seekers. The result is that migrant professionals have a hard time getting their foot in the door, and experience ongoing hardships after job placement related to the degree of acceptance by their Australian colleagues. The other papers in this collection discuss in one way or another details of what language testers need to be aware of and concern themselves with.

Tim McNamara takes readers through a discussion of the stages of development of the Occupational English Test, an instrument that embodies all the "right stuff" in specific purpose language test development. However, in rehearsing the practical problems encountered in the development process, and the solutions arrived at, McNamara lays bare some fundamental problems in language performance testing related to the well known trade-offs that test developers are forced to make in the transition from the analysis of

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the target domain to the construction of reliable and efficient test tasks.

Kathryn Hill grapples with a fundamental problem in the standardized assessment of language knowledge for teachers of different languages: it appears that even if tests in different languages are devised for the same purpose, based on similarly conducted analyses of the target domain, and constructed according to the same design principles, the resulting tests will be operationalized differently. This realization casts doubts on the possibility of setting uniform standards of proficiency across languages.

Noriko Iwashita and Cathie Elder reviewed the feedback provided by test candidates from a range of backgrounds (teachers, teachers-in-training and undergraduate language students) to a language test for teachers of Japanese, and compared this with candidate performance on the different test components. Aspects of the content, construct and face validity of the test are considered in the light of the analysis, and the value of test-taker feedback in the test revision process is discussed, focussing in particular on the status of teachers as 'expert informants'. They found a somewhat confused picture of the value of the test-takers' feedback. On the one hand, the experienced teachers' comments were seen as potentially of value in providing validity evidence for the various task types in the test; on the other, the teachers' judgements appeared to have been influenced by the fact that many of them felt ill-equipped to meet the proficiency requirements of the test, thus casting some doubt on the objectivity of their feedback. Iwashita and Elder conclude with a discussion of the appropriacy of test-taker feedback in the analysis of specific purpose tests.

Cathie Elder and Annie Brown discuss three performance tests, focussing on the problem of the separability of language proficiency and pragmatic behavior necessary for performing the test tasks. In particular, they wrestle with the problems of defining the trait to be measured in a performance test and of locating raters who are able to rate both the language they are exposed to and the quality of the performance in which the language is an integral part.

Finally, Alan Davies discusses the knowledge base required by professional language testers in specific purpose contexts and the

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problems of how this knowledge is to be acquired. In particular, how is the gap to be bridged between the kind of knowledge language testers are likely to have - linguistic and measurement and research design knowledge - and that which they are not likely to possess - the content of the specific purpose area in question?

Taken together, these papers define more clearly the dimensions of the gap between language and the professions and thus allow us to approach the task of bridging it more realistically and from a more informed perspective.