

Reviews of Fulcher, G. (2010). *Practical Language Testing*. London: Hodder Education.

Fulcher is highly successful in his presentation of foundational testing knowledge within broader historical and social contexts. In fact, the continual embedding of language testing practices within larger historical and social frameworks is one of the real strengths of this volume as well as its coverage of the statistical foundations of classical test theory, the history of large-scale testing, the social uses and consequences of testing, and the relationship between testing and assessment. The presentation and discussion of material within this volume not only represents current trends in testing and assessment but also invites both application and critique in a manner that will be of interest to a broad audience including students, teachers, and seasoned language testers.

A hallmark of this volume, as well as of Fulcher's other writing, is his effective use of examples and analogies for instructive purposes. This skill—along with the author's ability and willingness to draw on a wide array of sources to get his point across—results in a text that is both informative and readable even when the more arcane aspects of testing and measurement are presented and discussed. For example, Fulcher's use of Yerkes's (1941) data describing score distributions of subpopulations of enlisted army men is an effective and impressive introduction to the technical characteristics of distributions and the normal curve. The presentation of a transcript of an unbalanced dialogue between two speakers—"Deciding What to Test"—is an excellent example of the difficulty of defining and measuring interactional competence. The discussion of reverse engineering, peppered throughout, reminds readers that arguments for validity often involve a considerable amount of speculation and uncertainty. Fulcher's balance of the technical and interpretative illustrates the potential and the challenges of language testing.

April Ginther, *Purdue University*, writing in *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (2011) 33(4), 639

I enjoyed reading this book and found it very stimulating. It has a wealth of interesting ideas from a whole range of sources within the language testing literature and beyond. It reflects current thinking about the nature of language assessment and engages with the problem areas that we all have to grapple with. In addition, it is a highly literate volume in which the author draws unapologetically on his interests in philosophy, history and ideology, as well as architecture and engineering, to elucidate the larger context in which language tests operate and to discuss enduring issues in the field, all in an accessible style of writing....

A strong feature of the book is the Activities section at the end of each chapter. Many of these are not just token questions of the 'Think about a reading test you are familiar with ...' variety, but really well-conceived tasks based on interesting stimulus material that encourage readers to explore further and apply the ideas presented in the chapter. The

sources include newspaper articles about the social consequences of testing; transcripts of interactional discourse between learners; actual tasks from a variety of tests; sets of faulty test items for review; and numerous websites...

It has certainly enriched my own understanding of the subject and I am sure it will do the same for many other readers who are receptive to the author's scholarly approach.

John Read, University of Auckland, writing in *Language Testing* (2011) 28(2), 302 – 304.

Read the full review at: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/28/2/302.full.pdf+html?rss=1>

Fulcher threads practicality throughout the entire book, manifesting that an introductory book to foster “language assessment literacy” should be at its heart reflective of accessibility and practicality. This feature is further supported by illustrative examples from various real-life settings relevant to language testing practitioners and a useful glossary of key terminology.”

The coherence of activity design ... not only reinforces the reader's knowledge acquired from the previous chapter but also arouses the reader's interest in continuing with activities in each chapter until the test design cycle moves back to its point of departure.

...Practical Language Testing is an integral contribution to fostering language assessment literacy. A combination of metaphorized key concepts in the test design cycle, the author's own argumentation and enlightening activities makes it a soft start for those who would be professionals. The systematic and up-to-date discussions on the aspects of test development may usefully inform the language assessment practitioners of additional invaluable insights. In fact, this book deserves high recommendation to the international language testing community, including those who teach undergraduate or postgraduate courses on language testing, and also those language teachers who, although not directly involved in test development and validation, are associated with language testing in some other ways, as stakeholders, for using various tests, rating test candidates' performances, administering tests, and even preparing their students for tests. A careful read of this book may help one better understand the nuts and bolts of language testing, because this book “does what it says on the tin: it is a practical approach” (p. xiii).

David Qian, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, writing in *Language Assessment Quarterly* (2011) 8(3), 309 - 312.

Read the full review at:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15434303.2011.574764?ai=y6&mi=3kzbp6&af=R>