

Book review

Language Testing

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K. Sadeghi (Ed.), *Technology-Assisted Language Assessment in Diverse Contexts: Lessons from the Transition to Online Testing During Covid-19*. New York: Routledge, 2022. 274 pp. ISBN 9781003221463

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on people worldwide on an unprecedented scale, leading to significant changes in national economies, social life, and education (for recent systematic reviews, see Betthäuser et al., 2023 and Tang, 2023). As many schools closed and transitioned to online education, there has been a rapid increase in demand for technology-assisted language assessment, with various forms of online language assessment now available. However, these new language assessments also present radical challenges. Accordingly, education stakeholders require evidence-based recommendations for practice, informed by research conducted across diverse educational contexts. Karim Sadeghi's edited volume, *Technology-Assisted Language Assessment in Diverse Contexts: Lessons from the Transition to Online Testing during COVID-19* (Routledge, 2022), responds to these needs with a timely, diverse, and reader-friendly publication. As the book's title suggests, it is a compilation of studies conducted in various educational contexts, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. However, the diversity of this book extends beyond its geographical scope. The 26 contributors to the book are experts across a range of educational settings and organizations, emphasizing the need for individuals with different "cognitive diversities" (Syed, 2019) to collaborate and offer fresh perspectives when approaching difficult challenges. By showcasing such collaboration, this book demonstrates the potential of a new era of online language assessment in response to the pandemic crisis. Although the readability of individual chapters may vary based on the reader's familiarity with specific topics, the book is generally clear and concise. It features numerous relevant examples and case studies to illustrate key points, making it an accessible and informative resource.

This book is divided into three sections. Section I begins with a historical overview of technology-assisted language assessment and a description of the book's overall structure (Chapter 1). Following this, five empirical studies (Chapters 2–6) are presented, with most concentrating on validating online tests developed during the pandemic. Online language assessment brings several theoretical and methodological concerns that can affect test quality and effectiveness, including internet connection and technology, test content and format appropriateness, and test security and cheating. Addressing these

concerns is crucial for maintaining integrity, fairness, and effectiveness in testing, especially given the rapid growth of online language assessment due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Erguvan, 2021). In light of these challenges, Clark et al. (Chapter 2) examined the IELTS Indicator test and discuss the prospects and obstacles of online language testing. Their paper highlights the test's effectiveness but emphasizes the necessity for ongoing data collection to strengthen validity arguments regarding online testing. In contrast, Amer and Cabrera-Puche (Chapter 6) argued that even low-stakes placement exams can be modernized using web and mobile apps. They noted that the pandemic has prompted stakeholders to consider cross-border assessment and that placement exams must adapt to the realities of education and assessment. Each chapter demonstrates that valid and reliable tests can be administered in the digital age, accurately measuring test-takers' language proficiency. Overall, the section offers valuable insights for teachers and researchers in language assessment who aim to develop and validate online language assessments.

Section II of the book presents five case studies (Chapters 7–11) that illustrate how different educational contexts responded to the challenges of online language assessment during emergency situations. East et al. (Chapter 7) described the strategies used to ensure the validity, reliability, and fairness of assessments in French classes at a New Zealand university. To minimize academic dishonesty, students were required to use the structures and vocabulary covered in class in tests, and they were asked to agree to an online "Academic Honesty Declaration." Balteiro (Chapter 8) and Hardacre (Chapter 9) focussed on learners and investigated their perceptions of online assessment and learning outcomes, such as language development. Overall, the learners showed a positive attitude towards remote teaching and demonstrated no less progress than in previous face-to-face classes. However, the studies also found some unique concerns and challenges related to online tests, such as difficulty in maintaining students' attention and anxiety about presenting through a screen. In contrast, Neiriz et al. (Chapter 10) focussed on teachers and examined their considerations of fairness in online assessment. The issue of fairness and academic integrity has been frequently reported in other studies (e.g., Vellanki et al., 2023), indicating that teachers pay considerable attention to these issues. Neiriz et al. found that teachers express concerns about the potential for cheating in online assessments and believe that live proctoring can help mitigate this issue. The researchers also noted that teachers are interested in utilizing technology to enhance the exam experience and provide more detailed feedback to learners. This chapter offers valuable insights into teachers' perspectives on online language assessment, emphasizing the importance of addressing fairness, and academic integrity in such contexts. Collectively, the studies in this section unveil strategies for ensuring the validity, reliability, and fairness of assessments, as well as exploring learners' perceptions and teachers' considerations in the realm of online assessment.

In Section III, four concrete examples of alternative assessments that have become widely used in the wake of the pandemic crisis are presented (Chapters 12–15), and the book concludes with the lessons learned from their use. Many of the assessment tools introduced, such as e-Portfolios (Chapters 12 and 14), videoconferencing (Chapter 13), and online placement tests (Chapter 15), have been incorporated to some extent in past educational practices. However, many teachers have been stuck with the conventional

assessment methods they are accustomed to. The pandemic has changed this situation entirely, and as Ducasse (Chapter 14) noted, “the sink or swim context resulted in breaking with tradition and changes of mindset borne out of resilience” (p. 224). This change is a step in the right direction. The use of e-portfolios allows students to showcase their work and reflect on what they have learned. Videoconferencing facilitates synchronous communication and collaboration between students and teachers. Online placement tests can be taken remotely and provide immediate feedback to students. These reports suggest that more flexible and adaptive assessment methods are needed to meet the changing needs of learners and teachers in the context of remote, hybrid learning environments.

This edited volume serves as an essential resource for teachers, offering practical tips for fostering positive relationships with learners. The book emphasizes the significance of providing constructive feedback, setting clear objectives, and maintaining regular communication with learners. In addition, it underscores the necessity for teachers to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate learners’ needs and facilitate opportunities for self-assessment and reflection. However, we observed that the book does not address individual differences among learners, which can significantly impact online language assessment results (Pawlak, 2022). Factors such as learners’ computer literacy levels may affect their performance on online exams. Furthermore, despite the editor’s Iranian background, the book does not explore educational practices in Asian/Middle Eastern contexts—specifically, Iran, China, Japan, and Turkey—which tend to be more teacher-centred and exam-oriented. Future editions could delve deeper into these topics and discuss strategies to minimize the influence of these factors. Despite these limitations, this book remains an indispensable resource for shedding light on language assessment in a new era.

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