Twenty years of the Studies in Language Testing series: A thematic categorisation from a reader’s perspective

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Introduction

Studies in Language Testing (SiLT) is a series of academic volumes edited by Dr Michael Milanovic and Professor Cyril J Weir and published jointly by Cambridge English Language Assessment and Cambridge University Press (CUP). The year 2015 will mark 20 years since its first volume was published in 1995, and altogether there are more than 40 volumes. From 2015, the series will be edited by Professor Nick Saville and Cyril J Weir. Over the past two decades, SiLT has become broader in content and more international in its reach with contributions from more than 300 academics and practitioners from over 30 countries. However, the very scope and variety of the series makes it difficult for readers or potential readers to construct a full picture of it or to make easy choices for their reference or reading.

As a reader, teacher, supervisor, academic researcher, language tester and external consultant to Cambridge English Language Assessment, I feel it might benefit readers or potential readers if I could present the SiLT series by categorizing its volumes in a systematic way which is reader-friendly.

This paper aims to complement the eight-page introduction to the series in the Studies in Language Testing 15th Anniversary Edition (UCLES 2010), the 41 Series Editors’ notes in the volumes so far, the available book reviews, and the website information on all the published volumes (www.cambridgeenglish.org/silt). It is hoped it will provide readers with a relatively comprehensive and coherent view of the categories covered by the series so that readers with specific interests in particular theme(s) can choose more conveniently and make better use of the series.

A thematic categorisation of the series

Table 1 presents the whole series according to its two stated purposes: 1) monographs and edited volumes directly related to Cambridge English Language Assessment, its test development, validation and research activities (19 volumes in total); and 2) monographs and edited volumes in support and promotion of work in the fields of applied linguistics and language assessment, including PhD theses and conference proceedings (altogether 21 volumes). The almost equal number of the volumes shows a balance between the two purposes.

Table 1 A categorisation of the SiLT series according to its two stated purposes

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<th>Categorisation</th>
<th>Monographs</th>
<th>Edited volumes</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>First purpose</td>
<td>V1 Bachman, Davidson, Ryan &amp; Choi</td>
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<td>V2 Kunnan (PhD)</td>
<td>Test-taker characteristics and test performance: Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)</td>
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<td>V4 Clapham (PhD)</td>
<td>Analysis of the effect of IELTS background knowledge on reading comprehension</td>
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<td>V8 Purpura (PhD)</td>
<td>Learner strategies and test performance: SEM</td>
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<tr>
<td>V16 Hawkey</td>
<td>Documenting: CELS exams</td>
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<td>V17 O'Sullivan</td>
<td>Documenting: BEC exams</td>
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<td>V23 Davies</td>
<td>Documenting: IELTS exam</td>
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<td>V24 Hawkey</td>
<td>Impact: IELTS and PL2000 project</td>
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<td>V25 Green (PhD)</td>
<td>Washback: IELTS writing</td>
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<td>V26 Shaw and Weir</td>
<td>Examining writing</td>
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<td>V28 Hawkey</td>
<td>Documenting: FCE and CAE</td>
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<td>V29 Khalifa &amp; Weir</td>
<td>Examining reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>V37 Weir, Vidaković &amp; Galaczi</td>
<td>Centenary volume documenting measured constructs</td>
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<td>V38 Hawkey &amp; Milanovic</td>
<td>Centenary volume documenting Cambridge English Exams</td>
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<td>Second purpose</td>
<td>V5 Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>V12 Weir, Yang and Jin</td>
<td>L2 reading componentiality</td>
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<td>V13 O'Loughlin (PhD)</td>
<td>Test format equivalence: Direct and indirect Speaking tests</td>
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<td>V14 Lazaraton</td>
<td>Methodology: CA, oral language tests</td>
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<td>V20 Hasselgreen (PhD)</td>
<td>Speaking tests, ‘smallwords’</td>
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<td>V21 Cheng (PhD)</td>
<td>Washback in Hong Kong</td>
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<td>V22 Wall (PhD)</td>
<td>Washback in Sri Lanka</td>
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<td>V32 Shiotsu (PhD)</td>
<td>L2 reading components</td>
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<td>V39 Taylor (PhD)</td>
<td>Assessment of reading ability through summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V40 Jones</td>
<td>Multilingual frameworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V41 Wu</td>
<td>Assessing reading</td>
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From Table 1, we could draw ten broad, yet inevitably overlapping, themes in the SiLT series:
- language testing terminology (V6, V7)
- language testing research methodology (V5, V14)
- test taker characteristics and language test performance (V2, V8)
- testing the four language skills (V12, V13, V20, V26, V29, V30, V32, V35, V39)
- testing EAP: IELTS (V4, V19, V23, V24, V25, V34)
- test impact/washback (V21, V22, V24, V25, V31)
- test comparability (V1)
- test documenting (V4, V15, V16, V17, V23, V28, V37, V38, V40)
- conference proceedings (V3, V9, V10, V18, V27, V31, V33, V36)
- Festschrift (V11)

Some volumes may belong to more than one theme, e.g. V4, V24, V25 and V31. They will be listed under corresponding themes, but will be introduced only once under one theme, for other themes, they will only be referred to.

**Language testing terminology (V6, V7)**

Anyone who seeks ‘a better understanding of the terminology and concepts used in language testing’ (UCLES 2010:20) can turn to these two volumes as valuable resources and aids (O’Sullivan 2002). Volume 6 covers a total of 442 entries in 10 different European languages and Volume 7 includes a total of 642 entries with extensive cross-referencing and suggestions for further reading (Watanabe 2005, UCLES 2010).

**Language testing research methodology (V5, V14)**
These two volumes are useful handbooks of qualitative approaches to language test validation. Volume 5 is a guide to the technique of verbal protocol analysis with a view of demonstrating to the practitioner in language testing how to apply the technique across a range of situations (Jafarpur 1999). Volume 14 provides an introduction to the principles and methods of discourse analysis, especially conversation analysis, as well as practical guidance on how to examine the functioning of oral language tests (Brown 2005).

Test-taker characteristics and language test performance (V2, V8)


These two volumes investigate the relationship between test taker/learner characteristics and their language test performances using an advanced statistical technique: structural equation modeling (SEM). The major difference lies in that Volume 2 focuses on the influence of test-taker characteristics (e.g. previous exposure to English, monitoring) on performance in tests of English as a foreign language, while Volume 8 focuses on ‘how learner strategy use influences test performance and how high performers use strategies differently from low performers’ (UCLES 2010: 27). These two volumes can also be used as references on how to use the SEM technique in test construct validation.

Testing four language skills

Examining four macro-skills—Cambridge English constructs and practice (V35, V30, V29, V26)

- Examining Listening: Research and Practice in Assessing Second Language Listening- Edited by Ardeshir Geranpayeh and Lynda Taylor (2013)
- Examining Writing: Research and Practice in Assessing Second Language Writing- Stuart Shaw and Cyril J Weir (2007)

These four volumes are referred to internally by Cambridge English Language Assessment as the ‘construct volumes’, focusing on the crucial issue of ‘defining, contextualising and providing a framework for the validation of its tests’ (UCLES 2010:xi). Therefore, they all tend to follow a similar structure: each develops a theoretical framework for validating tests of second language listening/speaking/reading/writing ability, and then uses the framework to examine listening/speaking/reading/writing tasks in a series of Cambridge English examinations that reflect the socio-cognitive nature of any assessment event (Coombe...

**Testing speaking (V13, V20)**

These two titles are about non-Cambridge English speaking tests. Volume 13 is a comparative study of two parallel test formats (direct/face-to-face and semi-directed/tape-mediated) in an Australian oral exam known as access to investigate the issue of test equivalence in high-stakes speaking tests (15th edition, 2010; Brooks, 2006). Volume 20 looks into testing the spoken English of young Norwegians, including a corpus-based study of how ‘smallwords’ (conversational fillers) contributing to spoken fluency (Ginther 2007, UCLES 2010).

**Testing reading (V12, V32, V39)**

Volumes 12 and 32 are both about non-Cambridge English L2 reading tests and Volume 39 focuses on one task type: text-removed summary completion to assessment reading comprehension ability. Volume 12 describes the development and evaluation of an English for Academic Purposes reading test at tertiary level in China with a combination of both *a priori* and *a posteriori* validation procedures applied qualitatively and quantitatively (Chen 2006, UCLES 2010). Volume 32 explores the linguistic and processing factors (e.g. syntactic knowledge, vocabulary breadth, word recognition efficiency, reading speed, working memory span) that impact on reading performance with a multivariate analysis of the test data in the context of Japanese learners of English (UCLES 2010). Volume 39 explores using summary tasks as an effective means of assessing reading comprehension ability. It offers a way of directly addressing the readers’ mental representation of tests of reading assessment and gives practical guidance on the development, trialling and validation of summary completion tasks.

**Testing EAP—IETLS studies (V23, V4, V19, V34, V24, V25)**
- *The Development of IELTS: A Study of the Effect of Background Knowledge on Reading Comprehension*- Caroline Clapham (1996)
- *IELTS Collected Papers: Research in Speaking and Writing Assessment*- Edited by Lynda Taylor and Peter Falvey (2007)
IELTS is the test which has received most attention in the series, with a total of six volumes focusing on its research. Two volumes are about its development and revisions, from general (V23) to specific (V4). Two volumes are about the four macro-skills tested in IELTS (V19 and V34). The remaining two are about IELTS impact/washback, also from general (V24) to specific (V25). Volume 23 documents the assessment of academic English from the 1950s to the present. It is a history of the English Proficiency Test Battery (EPTB in the 1960s), the English Language Testing Service (ELTS in the 1970s and 1980s), then the International English Language Testing System (IELTS since 1989) (UCLES 2010). Volume 4 reviews the development of IELTS and in particular investigates the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension (Davidson 1998, UCLES 2010). Volumes 19 and 34 chronicle fund-supported research associated with the four macro-skills tested in IELTS and discuss the role of research in the development of these components of IELTS (Rimmer 2010, UCLES 2010). For Volumes 24 and 25, please see the next section on test impact/washback studies. All the SiLT series IELTS studies illustrate clearly how how important academic research and validation are to test development and revision.

Test impact/washback studies (V24, V25, V21, V22, V31)

- **Changing Language Teaching through Language Testing: A Washback Study-** Liying Cheng (2005)
- **The Impact of High-stakes Examinations on Classroom Teaching: A Case Study Using Insights from Testing and Innovation Theory-** Wall (2005)

These five volumes show an increasing concern in the field of language testing and assessment with the influence of testing on teaching and learning, and educational and social contexts. Positive impact/washback is now widely considered an integral part of test validity, as is its research to test validation. Volume 24 combines a theoretical overview with practical advice on how to conduct impact studies, with two illustrative case studies of IELTS and the Progetto Lingue 2000 in Italy (UCLES 2010). Volume 25 covers an empirical investigation of the impact of the IELTS writing subtest in a context of English for Academic Purpose (Coombe 2009). Volumes 21 and 22 investigate aspects of test washback, with Volume 21 studying its effects on the classroom in Hong Kong (Guo 2008), and Volume 22 in Sri Lanka. For a description of Volume 31, please see the section on ‘Conference proceedings’.
Test comparability (V1)

- An Investigation into the Comparability of Two Tests of English as a Foreign Language: The Cambridge TOEFL comparability study- Lyle F Bachman, Fred Davidson, Katherine Ryan, Inn-Chull Choi 1995)

This volume is an influential comparative study of Cambridge English: First (FCE) with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to investigate similarities and differences in test construct, content, candidature and use (UCLES 2010). This study ‘provided a basis for substantial reform and development at Cambridge over the years’ and ‘generated a number of PhDs and two volumes (V2 and V8) are included in this series’ (UCLES 2010:vi).

Documenting the development and revision of Cambridge English Exams (V15, V16, V28, V17, V23, V4, V37, V38, V40)

- Examining FCE and CAE: Key Issues and Recurring Themes in Developing the First Certificate in English and Certificate in Advanced English exams- Roger Hawkey (2009)
- The Development of IELTS: A Study of the Effect of Background Knowledge on Reading Comprehension (Caroline Clapham 1996)
- Cambridge English Exams—The First Hundred Years: A History of English Language Assessment from the University of Cambridge 1913-2013 (Roger Hawkey and Michael Milanovic (2013)

Altogether there are nine volumes documenting the development and revision of Cambridge English Exams, including CPE, CELS, FCE, CAE, BEC and IELTS; the centenary evolution of the constructs of Cambridge English exams; the history of Cambridge English Language Assessment; and 20 years’ development of multilingual assessment frameworks and useful guidance of good practice.

Volume 15 provides a full account of the complex thinking, processes and procedures underpinning the development and revision of the CPE with a wealth of illustrative examples and detailed statistics (Spolsky 2004, UCLES 2010). Volume 16 documents the development of a suite of Cambridge exams called the Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS) and links their development to a range of precursor examinations. The volume also traces the evolution of the communicative language testing movement (UCLES 2010). Volume 28 follows the development of FCE and CAE from their introduction to the present day with a focus on the revised versions of
the two exams introduced in 2008. It addresses key issues of test constructs, proficiency levels, principles and practice in test development, validation and revision, organization and management, stakeholders and partnership. Volume 17 documents the development of business English testing, in particular the Business English Certificates (BEC) at Cambridge English Language Assessment. It provides a framework for understanding the testing of language for specific purposes with a special focus on issues in testing business English (Dunkley 2006, UCLES 2010). For Volumes 23 and 4, please see the section on ‘Testing EAP—IELTS studies’. These volumes are good examples for other high-stakes assessment developers, including other examination boards, of how exams are developed, have evolved, and are revised to retain their validity, including their relevance to changing requirements and other contextual factors.

Volume 37 is an overview of English language constructs measured in Cambridge English Exams over the last century. It complements previous historical volumes in the series on the development of Cambridge English exams, as well as titles which investigate language ability constructs underlying current Cambridge English exams. It illustrates how changes in language pedagogy, together with wider socio-economic factors, have shaped the development of English language exams in Cambridge over the last century. Volume 38 marks 100 years of Cambridge English exams from the first administration of the CPE taken by three candidates in 1913 to a wide range of Cambridge English exams meeting changing needs, taken annually by 4 million test takers across 130 countries in 2013. It covers intertwining themes such as mission, exam range, constructs, content, theory and practice, research and validation, and also explores relationships with key stakeholders, including key countries, institutions, centres, staff and test-takers. Volume 40 describes 20 years’ development of multilingual assessment frameworks, covering a few major multilingual projects, combining theoretical insights and practical advice along with interpretation and use of the CEFR.

Conference proceedings

Language Testing Research Colloquium (V3, V9)

- Fairness and Validation in Language Assessment: Selected papers from the 19th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Orlando, Florida- Edited by Antony John Kunnan (2000)

These two volumes are LTRC conference proceedings. Volume 3 contains 16 papers on the design, development, delivery, and validation of performance tests as well as on the complex relationship between cognition and assessment (15th edition, 2010; Norris, 1999). Volume 9 attempts to understand and define the concept of fairness and to connect it with the concept of validation in language testing. The papers in the volume appear to mark a changing focus from a technical orientation in language testing to issues of fairness and validation (UCLES 2010).

ALTE (V18, V27, V31, V 36)


These four volumes are ALTE proceedings. Volume 18 develops the theme of European language testing in a global context (UCLES 2010). Volume 27 focuses on balancing the need to set shared standards and ensure quality while sustaining linguistic diversity (Londe 2010, UCLES 2010). Volume 31 sets out to explore the social and educational impact of language testing (UCLES 2010). Volume 36 explores the role of language frameworks in social, educational and practical contexts and their impact on learning, teaching and assessment from the perspective of policies, procedures and challenges. Altogether, these volumes broaden the debate of the role of language assessment by bringing together constituencies in language testing.

Computer-Adaptive Testing (CAT) (V10)

Volume 10 includes selected papers from a conference on the computer-adaptive testing of reading held in Bloomington, Minnesota in 1996, as well as a number of specially written papers. It is a ‘technically-oriented’ volume (UCLES 2010:vii) which presents recent thoughts, issues, and challenges concerning the development of computer-adaptive tests, with special focus on reading. The volume was reviewed as ‘a key volume in the field for many years to come” (Fulcher 2000:361) and “to date, no parallel in its value’ (Bae 2005:169).

CEFR related issues (V33)

Volume 33 contains selected case studies on relating language examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), citing practitioners’ and academics’ reflections on the use of the Manual for linking tests, as presented at a two-day colloquium held in Cambridge in 2007 (UCLES 2010). Deville (2012: 314) considers that this volume ‘will serve as an excellent resource for professionals around the world who wish to learn how to go about the difficult task of aligning their assessments with the CEFR’.

Festschrift: In honour of lifetime ILTA/UCLES awards (V11)
Volume 11 is a Festschrift of 28 invited papers in honour of renowned British language tester Alan Davies, surveying the state of the art in language testing from a perspective which combines technical and broader applied linguistics insights. The volume locates work in language assessment in the context of social, political and ethical issues at a time when accountability is increasingly valued. This volume is ‘an issue-based topical discussion of what Davies has regarded as the very essence of the field of language testing’ (Lee 2005: 537, UCLES 2010:34).

Conclusion
As can be seen from the categorisations and descriptions above, the SiLT series relate to language assessment in a broad variety of ways and are of relevance and interest to a wide range of readers. This can also be seen from the book reviews of 20 volumes of the series, which are mainly published in the following key journals: Language Testing, Language Assessment Quarterly, Assessing Writing, Modern English Teacher, Applied Linguistics, ELT Journal, and Modern Language Journal, indicating that the series has already reached a wide range of readers.

The SiLT volume readership would seem likely to include the following groups with connections of various kinds to the assessment of language: researchers, postgraduate students, teachers, examination boards and other high- and less high-stakes test developers (including designers, item-writers and managers), educational policy makers, curriculum designers, material writers and teacher educators. Through this categorisation and introduction to the themes of the SiLT series, I hope that different groups of readers and potential readers may acquire a more complete view of the series and find it easier to choose the appropriate volumes to read or refer to according to their own interests and research areas.

Acknowledgements
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References

Studies in Language Testing Series in Publication Order
Volume 1 Lyle F. Bachman, Fred Davidson, Katherine Ryan, Inn-Chull Choi (1995)
An Investigation into the Comparability of Two Tests of English as a Foreign Language: The Cambridge TOEFL Comparability Study
Test taker Characteristics and Test Performance: A structural modeling approach
Volume 3 Edited by Michael Milanovic and Nick Saville (1996)
Performance Testing, Cognition and Assessment: Selected papers from the 15th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Cambridge and Arnhem
Volume 4 Caroline Clapham (1996)
The Development of IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension
Volume 5 Alison Green (1998)
Verbal Protocol Analysis in Language Testing Research: A handbook
Volume 6 Prepared by ALTE Members (1998)
Multilingual Glossary of Language Testing Terms
Volume 7 Alan Davies, Annie Brown, Cathie Elder, Kathryn Hill, Tom Lumley, Tim McNamara (1999)
Dictionary of Language Testing
Volume 8 James E. Purpura (1999)
Learner Strategy Use and Performance on Language Tests: A structural equation modeling approach
Volume 9 Edited by Antony John Kunnan (2000)
Fairness and Validation in Language Assessment: Selected papers from the 19th Language Testing Research Colloquium, Orlando, Florida
Volume 10 Edited by Micheline Chalhoub-Deville (1999)
Issues in Computer-Adaptive Testing of Reading Proficiency: Selected papers
Experimenting with Uncertainty: Essays in honour of Alan Davies
Volume 12 Edited by Cyril J Weir, Yang Huizhong, Jin Yan (2000)
An Empirical Investigation of the Componentiality of L2 Reading in English for Academic Purposes
Volume 13 Kieran O’Loughlin (2001)
The Equivalence of Direct and Semi-direct Speaking Tests
Volume 14 Anne Lazaraton (2002)
A Qualitative Approach to the Validation of Oral Language Tests
Volume 15 Edited by Cyril Weir and Michael Milanovic (2003)
Continuity and Innovation: Revising the Cambridge Proficiency in English Examination 1913-2002
A Modular Approach to Testing English Language Skills: The development of the Certificates in English Language Skills (CELS) examinations
Volume 19 Edited by Lynda Taylor and Peter Falvey (2007)
IELTS Collected Papers: Research in speaking and writing assessment
Volume 20 Angela Hasselgreen (2004)
Testing the Spoken English of Young Norwegians: A study of test validity and the role of ‘smallwords’ in contributing to pupils’ fluency
Volume 21 Liying Cheng (2005)
Changing Language Teaching through Language Testing: A washback study
Volume 22 Dianne Wall (2005)
The Impact of High-stakes Testing on Classroom Teaching: A case study using insights from testing and innovation theory
Volume 23 Alan Davies (2008)
Volume 24 Roger Hawkey (2006)
Impact Theory and Practice: Studies of the IELTS test and Progetto Lingue 2000
Volume 25 Anthony Green (2007)
IELTS Washback in Context: Preparation for academic writing in higher education.
Volume 26 Stuart D Shaw and Cyril J Weir (2007)

Examining Writing: Research and practice in assessing second language writing

Multilingualism and Assessment: Achieving transparency, assuring quality, sustaining diversity - Proceedings of the ALTE Berlin Conference, May 2005
Volume 28 Roger Hawkey (2009)

Examining FCE and CAE: Key issues and recurring themes in developing the First Certificate in English and Certificate in Advanced English exams
Volume 29 Hanan Khalifa and Cyril J Weir (2009)

Examining Reading: Research and practice in assessing second language reading
Volume 30 Edited by Lynda Taylor (2011)

Examining Speaking: Research and practice in assessing second language speaking
Volume 31 Edited by Lynda Taylor and Cyril J Weir (2009)

Volume 32 Toshihiko Shiotsu (2010)

Components of L2 Reading: Linguistic and processing factors in the reading test performances of Japanese EFL Learners
Volume 33 Edited by Waldemar Martyniuk (2010)

Aligning Tests with the CEFR: Reflections on using the Council of Europe's draft Manual
Volume 34 Edited by Lynda Taylor and Cyril J Weir (2012)

IELTS Collected Papers 2: Research in reading and listening assessment
Volume 35 Edited by Ardeshr Geranpayeh and Lynda Taylor (2012)

Examining Speaking: Research and practice in assessing second language speaking
Volume 36 Edited by Evelina D Galaczi and Cyril Weir (2013)


Measured Constructs: A history of Cambridge English language examinations 1913-2012
Volume 38 Roger Hawkey and Michael Milanovic (2013)

Cambridge English Exams—The First Hundred Years: A history of English language assessment fro the University of Cambridge 1913-2013
Volume 39 Lynda Taylor (2013)

Testing reading through summary: Investigating summary completion tasks for assessing reading comprehension ability
Volume 40 Neil Jones (2014)

Multilingual Frameworks: The construction and use of multilingual proficiency frameworks


Book Reviews of 20 SiLT Volumes

**Other Reference:**