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# IELTS Collected Papers 2

Research in reading and listening  
assessment

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## Research in reading and listening assessment

**Edited by**

**Lynda Taylor**

Consultant to University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

**and**

**Cyril J Weir**

Powdrill Professor in English Language Assessment  
University of Bedfordshire



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*In memory of Morgan Terry  
1949-2011*

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## Series Editors' note

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The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has developed over the years in line with theoretical and technical developments in assessment. Lynda Taylor and Cyril Weir's general introduction to this volume is a very useful guide for those who wish to learn about the beginnings of IELTS, its subsequent development and its recent changes, particularly in the Academic Reading and Listening components of the examination.

Since 1995, the IELTS partnership has provided funding for research into various aspects of IELTS. Over the past decade IDP Education Australia and the British Council have jointly published a series of volumes containing reports from the IELTS Joint-funded Research Program and these have recently been made more readily available via the IELTS website.

Many of the grant-funded research studies conducted between 1995 and 2005 focused on the IELTS Speaking and Writing modules. Cambridge ESOL decided to publish an edited selection of these as Volume 19 in the Studies in Language Testing series, entitled *IELTS Collected Papers: Research in speaking and writing assessment* (Eds Taylor and Falvey 2007). At the time of publication it was hoped a companion volume might follow at some point focusing on research into reading and listening assessment. *IELTS Collected Papers 2* fulfils that aspiration by bringing together eight of the joint-funded studies conducted in recent years on the assessment of academic reading and listening in IELTS.

The eight studies published here provide rich insights into issues and concerns that were in the thoughts of those involved in the development and revision of IELTS during the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century. All the studies are directly relevant to claims of validity, quality and usefulness made for the IELTS Academic Reading and Listening components. A further important rationale for this volume is to illustrate how applied research into specific issues has contributed to the evolution of IELTS over this period and continues to inform changes to the test in various ways. As such, the reader's attention is drawn to Lynda Taylor's two chapters (5 and 10), which discuss the impact that the particular studies reported in this volume have had on IELTS revisions.

Issues investigated in Part 1 are: the relationship between the academic reading construct as measured by IELTS and the reading experiences of students in the first year of their courses at a British university (Weir, Hawkey, Green, Ünalı and Devi); the reading requirements in IELTS test items

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and in university study (Moore, Morton and Price); the cognitive processes underlying the academic reading construct as measured by IELTS (Weir, Hawkey, Green and Devi); and the process of writing test items for the IELTS Academic Reading test (Green and Hawkey).

Part 2 contains four chapters focusing on various issues in listening assessment in IELTS: a cognitive validation of the lecture-listening component (Field); the use of tactics and strategies by Chinese students (Badger and Yan); predictive validity of student coping ability in English-medium undergraduate courses in Spain (Breeze and Miller); and the relationship between test takers' listening proficiency and their performance on the IELTS Speaking test (Nakatsuhara).

Reports of the eight research studies on IELTS combined with the general introduction to this volume and with the chapters on the impact of the studies on IELTS will be, we hope, a valuable contribution to the assessment community, not just to established testing professionals but also to new and recently joining members of the community.

*IELTS Collected Papers 2* should be of immediate interest to all those directly involved with IELTS and to anyone concerned more generally with the assessment of reading and listening proficiency, especially as these relate to the demands of academic literacy.

Finally, we are pleased to be able to dedicate this volume to the memory of Morgan Terry. Morgan worked as a freelance consultant on IELTS from the early 1990s, when she and her husband, Steve, were part of a talented and committed team who took on the IELTS 95 Project to revise and re-engineer the test for a long-term and sustainable future. Over a 15-year period, Morgan worked on all the IELTS papers – Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. She served as Chair of the Speaking paper for 10 years and was instrumental in the 2001 redevelopment of the assessment criteria, rating scales and examiner training procedures. The growth and success of IELTS is in no small measure due to Morgan's vision and commitment as a faithful and enthusiastic member of the IELTS team. She was a respected colleague and a much-loved friend. Morgan's untimely death is a source of great sadness but we remain grateful for all that she gave us.

Michael Milanovic and Cyril J Weir  
Cambridge – August 2011

## Acknowledgements

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We would like to express our thanks to all the volume contributors for submitting their original research project reports to be considered for publication in this edited volume of *IELTS Collected Papers* and for their willingness to make subsequent revisions in line with our editorial suggestions.

The volume could not have reached publication without the professional, technological and administrative assistance of various staff members based at Cambridge ESOL including: Gad Lim and John Savage in the Research and Validation Group; and Sally Downes in the Stakeholder Relations and Legal Affairs Group. We are grateful to all of them for their support throughout the production process.

Finally, the publishers are grateful to the original copyright holders for permission to use the copyright material reproduced in this book, especially the British Council and IDP:IELTS Australia who funded the research projects and agreed to their publication in an edited *Studies in Language Testing* volume.

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## Notes on volume contributors

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*Testing: Theories and Practices* and research papers in *ELT Journal* (2008) and *Language Testing* (2011).

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