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978-0-521-42269-7 - Evaluating Second Language Education

Edited by J. Charles Alderson and Alan Beretta

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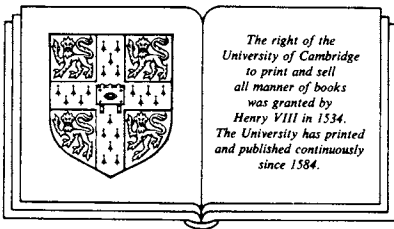
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## *Series editors' preface*

If the desire of most practitioners to professionalise language teaching were not motivation enough, increasing demands for accountability in foreign and second language education – both from those who finance such programmes and from students, the consumers – make programme evaluation of growing importance for applied linguists, administrators and language teachers. To be satisfactory, evaluations will need to be rigorous, theoretically motivated and data-based. As such, the field experiences and developing expertise among second language programme evaluators are suitable topics for inclusion in the *Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series*.

The more sophisticated study of second language acquisition and second language classroom processes of the 1970s and 1980s has placed second language programme evaluators in a better position to meet the demands for accountability. So has the increasing availability in masters level programmes of basic training in research methods and statistics. What is still often lacking, however, is much appreciation of the potential of qualitative methods in evaluation work, and of how useful a combination of second language research findings and quantitative and qualitative methods can often be.

Drs Alderson and Beretta are both seasoned programme evaluators and very aware of these issues. In *Evaluating Second Language Education*, they have provided a series of case studies which illustrate the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative approaches and the frequent value of combining them. In addition, in this book, they and the other contributors have sought to document evaluation studies from the inside, in all their gory, private detail, rather than to provide more polished, but less informative, versions for the shop window. The contexts, scope and scale of the individual studies vary greatly, as does the level of success of the original projects, which were sometimes conducted in difficult circumstances. Throughout, however, this is a book written by evaluators for evaluators and for those likely to be evaluated. The stories are often not pretty, and things do not always go as



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planned, but we are likely to learn more from the frank accounts of what really happened and is likely to happen again than from another set of articles about how to conduct the ideal study in a laboratory setting.

Michael H. Long  
Jack C. Richards

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