

Editorial

The Editorial Board of *Scripta Manent* suggested I write an editorial for the issue **Testing and Assessment of Languages for Specific Purposes**. I took this as a challenge and started planning how to cover the international testing situation as broadly as possible. Unfortunately the testers from some European countries informed me that they were in the middle of their testing sessions and could not afford to write any articles or studies on testing at that time. It was difficult to lower the expectations but at least foreign testers were informed about the existence of *Scripta Manent*.

Two articles in this issue refer to the testing situation in Slovenia but the authors describe two different situations. The first article focuses on the testing of English for Specific Purposes and outlines the format of the national exam *Vocational Matura*. The second text describes the military testing situation within a language institution which needs to follow international language standards for the military. It is interesting how many similarities can be found in both texts covering two different ESP situations; they both highlight the importance of washback and the authenticity of test tasks, and they both mention promoting language skills into teaching and testing as an opportunity for professional development and life-long learning. By highlighting the same issues, both authors view ESP testing as a framework within which the same testing principles and values are followed. What is significant for testing in different ESP contexts is the test content which needs to be represented by authentic target language use situations.

The relationship between testing and teaching is expressed by washback effect. While the first text discusses the washback effect in the vocational matura exam, the second one analyses positive and negative washback in specific situations within the language/testing institution. Positive and negative washback provide important information which is related not only to testing and teaching issues but to ethical standards of testers and teachers as well. The more high-stakes tests are the more attention to washback effect is required and more responsibility is put on testing institutions to improve tests.

The analyses of the reading and writing tasks in the English *Vocational Matura* and specific military testing situations show that changes to tests are needed but they also show how sensitive the institutions should be when introducing them. Changes to high-stakes tests are complex and affect the stakeholders, test designers, test takers, teachers, the curricula, and teaching and classroom situations. Since proficiency testing in language does not have a long tradition, research is needed so that changes and improvements are not introduced on the basis of speculations. Testing boards need relevant education in testing and research into washback effect before they decide upon innovations.

There is a lack of research into specific testing settings, current testing and teaching practices, resources, as well as behaviour and attitudes of stakeholders, testers, and teachers. Those who are responsible for high-stakes tests in language institutions or manage developments at national levels surely feel this need. Test validity and ethical standards have become issues of basic importance. To address them means to plan research and training. We can certainly believe that our current testing practice is fine as long as tests are designed and administered and results are statistically counted and interpreted. Of course, we can do worse, but we can also do better.

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