

High-Stakes Testing at High Fees: Notes and Queries on the International English Proficiency Assessment Market

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Abstract

As the neoliberal Order spreads around the globe, the megalanguage English integral to its functioning spreads with it. Concomitantly, a worldwide testing industry for English as a foreign language has established itself, a commercial condominium trading in a specific knowledge product, the standardised EFL proficiency test. Scores on two high-stakes exams in particular, TOEFL and IELTS, have assumed a prime classificatory (and disciplinary) function. The article explores the impact of this high-stakes industrialised testing business and its implications for educational commodification and marketisation on a global scale. It focuses on the 'products' of its principal corporation, Educational Testing Service (ETS, Princeton, N.J.), with a side look at the Anglo-Australian examining 'trust' behind IELTS.

It is argued that within the political economy and cultural politics of English as an international language, this testing industry constitutes a unique site for examining dimensions of knowledge commercialisation, reproduction of social class and inequality, the intrusion of Capital and its ideologies into the education of urban elites, and gatekeeper functions of Centre-defined skills and proficiencies in a high-intensity transnational context. I introduce the notion of a 'critical ethnography' of high-stakes testing, look at current moves to better assess EFL assessment and its global social fallout and suggest some research desiderata. The final sections set out several feasible alternatives to the present testing regime and foci for grassroots critical testing advocacy and related demands by EFL professionals and other cultural workers. Initiatives can be launched

throughout international education, the dominion of these abuses is distinctively planetary.

Keywords: Education, Business, Capitalism, Globalisation, EFL, Testing, Inequality, Linguistic Imperialism, Political Economy

I see so much testing in the world, and see how badly most of it is done. I also see the faith many people put in tests and test results, and the consequences for people when test results are used to make decisions about their lives. --Liz Hamp-Lyons (2002)

1. Introduction: Imperial English and its Testing

Integral to the project of corporate globalisation is the spread of its lingua franca. In knowledge production and the internationalisation of universities, English has risen to near total hegemony as a kind of linguistic 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' (Swales 1997; Canagarajah 2002: 34 ff.). Concomitantly, a global commercial testing industry has established itself inside EFL (English as a Foreign Language) assessment, trading in a specific product, the standardised EFL proficiency test. The entry points into privileged career paths at the portal to university study in English-speaking countries—and within numerous job pyramids inside the corporate and professional world—are controlled by quantitatively measured performance on several international language proficiency tests. Scores on two high-stakes exams in particular, TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Language Testing System), have assumed a gatekeeper function for access to higher education in the BANA (Britain/Australasia/North America) countries.[1] These exam batteries stand at the very portal of the training ground of transnational elites (Phillipson 1992; Zughoul 2003). The remainder of this introduction touches on EFL testing and teaching as a distinctive site for analysis within the global 'certified society' (Ainley 1999).

1.1 A Complex Microcosm of Commodification

I argue below that TOEFL and IELTS have become in effect an EFL testing condominium or cartel.[2] A prime frame thesis is that high-stakes EFL testing is a *specific microcosm* of the contradictions that beset the global spread of the neoliberal Order, its megalanguage and educational standards. The commercialisation of the

teaching profession familiar from the advanced industrialised world can be examined here in a high-intensity context stretching literally across the planet. Language skills and their certifiable 'demonstration' for future study and career pathways are being commodified here in a distinctive manner, within a global English language teaching industry that is mushrooming.[3] This is integral to what Holbrow (2003) has termed the 'McDonaldisation of English', its standardised packaging in courses and a panoply of teaching materials. The control of English skills at more advanced levels as measured by a numerical score on a commercial test becomes a principal form of 'cultural capital'. In turn, the entrenched global proficiency exams in effect control the students, and how knowledge of English is defined (Shohamy 2001a).

Moreover, qualification in English as measured by high-stakes commercial testing has become a key transnational achievement arena where students are socialised into highly "individualistic practices of competitive survival and self-responsibility" (Mulderigg 2003) central to neoliberal value systems within a global certified society. Test-demonstrated English proficiency is a primary paradigm of Boxley's (2003) 'performative order' at a juncture when education across much of the world-system is being deformed ever more into a profit-driven business, marketised and attuned to managerial values and standardised outcomes.

1.2 Inequity and EFL

A corollary to the above thesis is readily demonstrable: Never before in the planet's history have so many of the poor spent so much to learn the language of the rich. Capital has managed to 'externalise' nearly all the costs of studying its planetary lingua franca, what Chinua Achebe once called "the world language which history has forced down our throats". EFL skills now function as a prime catalyst in generating ever greater social inequality across the globe, a Great EFL Divide. At no time in the long history of English has it served to reinforce and reify so much class distinction inside societies, especially in what Gustavo Esteva calls the Two-Thirds World, where the social majorities live.[4] The evidence is overwhelming (Prakash and Esteva 1998; Pennycook 1994; 1998; 1999a; Canagarajah 1999). In this complex, the present assessment regime is a prime site for reproducing the class stratification many students from privileged strata benefit from. Students from better situated largely urban backgrounds will not only have attended better schools, often private, they also

are the prime clientele for special commercial supplementary courses geared to passing IELTS, TOEFL and other recognised credential exams.

The rapid rise of this examination battery to assessment dominion in international EFL is itself an illustration of how hegemony operates in the realm of global educational policy. These exams were not imposed by some dictate but have been adopted almost unquestioned as the only 'efficient, scientific' option for an international 'assessment marketplace', creating a "hegemonic consensus on the inevitability of it all" (Mulderrig 2003). Educational administrators have enacted policy created in effect by a commercial educational condominium able to establish a monopoly of its own 'knowledge commodity'. [5]

1.3 Overview

In the remainder of the paper, Section 2 introduces the notion of a 'critical ethnography' of testing and some of the questions it raises. Section 3 looks briefly at current moves to better assess assessment, its ecology and abuses, and the lack of an activist critical contingent in the EFL profession. Section 4 surveys the two main test batteries in international EFL assessment, and interrogates some of these tests' unanswered contradictions. Section 5 examines elements of washback and impact. Section 6 looks more closely at the corporate nature of the Educational Testing Service (Princeton, N.J.) as a showcase paradigm of educational commercialisation. Section 7 takes a detour to more corporate testing concerns in ELT, as reflected in the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) exam, an ETS flagship in the corporate world. Section 8 explores some longer-term alternatives. A concluding section 9 suggests several foci for possible grassroots critical testing advocacy, within the EFL profession and among progressive scholars throughout international higher education.

Common abbreviations used are ELT (English language teaching), TEFL (Teaching English as a foreign language), TESOL (Teaching English to speakers of other languages), IDP (International Development Program Education Australia), UCLES (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), BC (British Council).

2. Toward a Critical Ethnography of Testing

The paper is intended as a partial preface to what might be termed a 'critical ethnography of testing' (or 'testography'),[6] in the sense of 'critical language testing' as elaborated by Elena Shohamy (1998; 2001a; 2001b), but moving beyond. It is embedded in several broader currents in critical applied linguistics (Pennycook 1999b; 2001) and the political economy and 'geopolitics' of international EFL testing & teaching. It explores some notes and queries in the morphodynamics of testing 'washback'—the entire phenomenon of the influence of industrialised testing on teaching—and its broader fallout in society, termed 'impact' (Alderson & Wall 1993; Wall 1997; McNamara 2000). The discussion centres on the 'ecology' of the two major batteries, TOEFL and IELTS, with a side look at TOEIC. My perspective is tilted more toward the North American context, where TOEFL predominates.

Questions are raised about the pricing of these 'assessment products', their regency in the profession, the organisations that manufacture and control them. How have profit-driven private firms (or in the case of IELTS, a kind of Anglo-Australian government-linked 'trust') been able to achieve such a dominant position in EFL proficiency assessment? What are the actual social, monetary and psychological costs for examinees? Who benefits, who loses? Are in-house or other alternatives to commercial tests possible? Where can resistance and constructive change begin: how can educators and students 'regain the commons' on the turf of EFL testing?

The problematic focused on here dovetails with the broader question of how values of social equity and fairness in globalised TEFL can best be served (Benesch 2001, 2003; Edge 2004; Johnston 2003; Hamp-Lyons 1998; Kunnan 1997; Pennycook 1999a; Tollefson 2002), today a prime focus within critical applied linguistics. As Julian Edge (2003), noting a "growing perception that we are implicated up to our communicative necks in the building of an empire with whose purposes we may not wish to align ourselves, but whose uniforms we may be seen to be wearing," recently put it:

English language teaching is an arm of imperial policy — out in the open — in ways that were not so obvious before. [] It is no longer credible (if it ever was) to teach EFL and blinker out the political impact of the large-scale endeavour to which one contributes. [] We need to look again at the materials we use in class

and the worldviews that they represent [] at the extent to which we teach a language of compliance to the exclusion of a language of protest, at the tests we use, to what purpose, and at the policy decisions we make in language planning.

3. Assessing Assessment and its Ethics

The ethical implications of assessment are being addressed by a growing number of scholars inside the EFL profession. Fulcher (1999) notes that it is "not surprising that the moral problems of the late 20th Century have finally caught up with applied linguists and language testers". Liz Hamp-Lyons, current president of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA), stresses that "an ethical approach to language testing requires us to make clear the limitations of our tests to everyone involved—not only test takers, but their parents, their teachers, school administrations, and political decision makers" (2002). Her work opens certain reformist windows onto testing ethics, though largely in terms of 'individual responsibility' of testers (Hamp-Lyons 1997a, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c; Alderson & Hamp-Lyons 1996).

Bernard Spolsky (1995) has been one of the few to raise probing questions about the institutional and policy origins of language testing, centering on TOEFL. In the past half-decade, a more radical turn has emerged, as reflected in particular in the work of Elena Shohamy (2001a; 2001b) on 'critical language testing', which interrogates the very practice of language testing as a site of classification, social manipulation and control. Various papers at the July 2003 Language Testing Research Colloquium also touch on ethical dimensions (Shohamy et al. 2003; Green 2003; Haines & Ashworth 2003; Kunnan 2003; Wall & Horak 2003), and the ILTA has increasingly become a forum for such concerns, as reflected in its Code of Ethics (ILTA 2000).[7]

These are questions whose empirical investigation is overdue. The associated issues have sparked little advocacy. Standard TEFL handbooks such as Carter & Nunan (2001) do not touch on any of these social, economic or test-political aspects.[8]

McNamara (2002) stresses that

industrialized language testing - is ripe for critical analysis. There are approximately one million individual administrations of the TOEFL test in any year, in a huge number of countries; what are we to make of this phenomenon in critical terms? [] much work remains to be done.

Yet he suspects that "a radical social critique of language testing [] is perhaps unlikely to emerge from within the field". Part of that lack of radical consciousness inside TEFL regarding this prime disciplinary site may be due to the very fact of internationalisation: these are 'exported' exams, administered and paid for largely outside the BANA countries, much of their social impact is 'peripheral' to the metropolitan centres.

FairTest in the U.S., which is a critical watchdog following high-stakes testing in the American schools, is well aware of the issue of the TOEFL, yet its journal *Fairtest Examiner* over the past 15 years has had only one article focusing on TOEFL. More concerned with SAT, GRE and related tests, it is only beginning to contemplate a strategy for addressing some of the TOEFL issues and possible alternatives.[9] Peter Sacks (2000) has also written incisive critique of the testing cult in the U.S. (<http://www.petersacks.org/>), but has not addressed the EFL testing industry.

3.1 Some Research Desiderata

Extensive narratives collected from 'unsuccessful' candidates, the autobiographical account of their encounter with meritocratic testing and its impact on their own lives, descriptions of how students prepare and are 'groomed' for these tests need to be gathered in building a 'thick description' of the realities of such testing in specific locales. One approach is through journals, diary-keeping in a test context (Tzagari 2003). We need a database of case studies to better document causal factors impacting test-taker performance, such as gender (Ghonsooly 2003), ethnicity (Leung et al. 2003) and disability (Taylor 2003). As Hamp-Lyons (1997b: 299) has noted, "test-takers and parents in the many countries where IELTS is taken are rarely invited to participate in the critique of the test. Many more studies are needed of students' views"—and of students' and parents' rights as the major stakeholders here (Pavlou 2003). A far fuller empirically grounded picture of the contours of inequity is imperative. It can start locally at U.S., British and Australasian campuses with comparative EFL biographies of international students that can reveal patterns in their educational and social trajectories—and abroad probing the social biographies of those whose 'climb up a ladder' was abruptly halted by a score on TOEFL or IELTS.

In BANA academe, more graduate students in EFL and applied linguistics need to be directed toward empirical research on a variety of aspects and questions of education policy raised in the paper, in the own university backyards. International students are a rich source of test-ethnographic information and perception. It is their lives that have been manipulated by testing regimes in English proficiency over many years—and their voices that should be heard.

3.2 Advocacy Needed

Unfortunately, the research insights and empirically-grounded critique by Spolsky, Shohamy, Lynch (2001) and others are not being sufficiently channelled into pro-active organised advocacy by professionals within the international EFL profession to change practices and generate more egalitarian alternatives. The AssessESLEFL listserv has had little discussion of this problem. The power of the current testing establishment is huge, the task to challenge it and 'regain the testing commons' formidable. What EFL needs in part is a core of critical educators analogous to the new counter-hegemonic coalition of engaged psychologists PsyACT (Psychologists Acting with Conscience Together, <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/community/psyact>), an advocacy initiative centred on EFL examining and related issues patterned somewhat on the model of FairTest. The "radical social critique" McNamara invokes must come primarily from within the ranks of TEFL. I return to this in concluding remarks.

4. An Assessment Condominium?

Oldest of the two major tests is TOEFL, controlled by Educational Testing Service (Princeton/NJ), the world's largest private educational testing and measurement organisation. TOEFL, introduced in 1964, is now ETS's fourth largest engine, with 740,000 exams administered in 2001-2002.[10] Virtually all American colleges and universities require a TOEFL score of their foreign applicants, often setting that at an arbitrary 550 on the paper-based test (213 on the computer-based test) for undergrads, 567 (227 computer-based) for prospective post-graduate students.[11] For much of the rest of the English-speaking world, the required hurdle for university entry is IELTS, introduced in 1989. It is jointly managed by the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations, the British Council and IDP Education Australia.[12] Its scoring band extends from 1 to 9, the going minimum for acceptance often set by a

college's administrators at 5.5. Depending on an applicant's country of origin, it may even be 6.5 for an Australian student visa (a TOEFL score is no longer accepted). Various universities in the UK require an IELTS score as high as 7 or 7.5 for some programs. The test is also obligatory for obtaining immigrant status in Australia. Under the aegis of IDP, the BC and UCLES--the triad forming a kind of examination 'trust'--it is likewise a profit-making exam. China is now the fastest-growing segment in the IELTS market. Although other exams from UCLES, the MELAB[13] and now defunct APIEL (sec. 8.4) compete in this arena, it may be fair to characterise TOEFL/IELTS as a virtual assessment duopoly for much of the world.

4.1 Unanswered Questions: A Complex Aporia

Among the many facets of this testing industry that require critical examination are some of the following:

Arbitrary Cut-Points?

Why and how are these minima set by university admissions offices? To what extent do they exclude promising applicants whose scores fall under the hatchet, despite their other qualifications?[14] Surely more flexible evaluation of candidates rather than a minimum numerical score can be built into the assessment mosaic for admission of international students.

Excessive Pricing?

For students from lower-income economies, the cost for these exams can be prohibitive. Effective from July 2003, the price tag on the TOEFL exam is a uniform US\$130. IELTS runs from US\$110 upwards, reaching 160 € (ca. US\$195) in West European testing venues. Its fee in some testing venues in the IELTS Network China can run up to US\$150.[15] Moreover, this pricing mechanism remains confidential, non-transparent, and can be changed without prior notice. The ETS Test of Spoken English, now used for selecting and certifying health professionals, especially in the U.S., has nine questions, lasts 20 minutes and costs US\$125. How is that fee determined? The British Council refuses to divulge any information on why IELTS is priced the same (or slightly more) in Sweden or the Netherlands as in Moldova, the

Ukraine, Vietnam, Laos or Nepal.[16] ETS likewise declines to reveal its pricing criteria to the public.

Much of the cost will likely be defended on the basis of the external packaging of the exam, especially the great care taken in creating a 'secure venue' for testing and reporting results. The now defunct APIEL exam (sec. 8.4) tried to introduce more flexibility into the concept of secure venue, decentralising the exam. The concept of 'secure venue'—and its rigid definition is of course in the absolute commercial interest of those who own and control the test. The TOEFL Institutional Testing Program (TOEFL ITP) permits individual schools and colleges to administer 'retired' versions of the current test, at a cost of about one-third to one-quarter the normal TOEFL fee (see sec. 6.1). In effect, ETS here itself introduces a notion of more than one type of 'secure venue'[17]

A critical testing ethnography seeks to determine why these tests are so costly, and whether graduated pricing landscapes can be developed, with transparency, geared in effect to average salary levels in a given economy. In Bulgaria, fees for TOEFL and IELTS (virtually identical at US\$ 130) are currently equivalent to the after-tax monthly salary of a senior lecturer in higher education, and far exceed the monthly salary of most teachers in secondary education and many other public employees. A similar situation exists in many imploded East European economies, and a broad band of low-income countries across the South.

Possible Conflict and Confluence of Interest?

IELTS may be administered by the same institutions that officially prepare students to take the exam, as in the case of some Australian language centres financed and operated by the IDP--now a total of 92 IELTS centres, including the China IELTS Network. Questions are repeatedly raised in the profession about whether it is possible to 'influence' the grade achieved by a student on IELTS or TOEFL through corrupt practices, even at what is considered a supposedly 'secure' test venue. This is a barely researched area worth exploring, potentially part of the pandemic of 'academic corruption' spreading through diverse educational systems (Altbach 2004). Rumours about possible collusion between examiners and students at some IELTS 'secure venues' in certain countries are not uncommon.[18] Tales of TOEFL irregularities are,

by contrast, extremely rare. Such phenomena are of course also a powerful expression of resistance by test takers (and some testers) to the examination, its perceived material and psychological extortion and alien discourses (Canagarajah 1999: esp. chaps 2-4).

Arbitrary Score Expiration?

Moreover, the test score self-destructs. TOEFL exam scores are valid for 24 months, when the now 'stale' record is erased from the ETS data base and the test must be retaken if a test taker wishes to have the score reported to another institution. IELTS is also valid for two years. Why? Can more flexible options be created, where schools themselves decide whether in the case of a given applicant an older score is 'admissible'?

Exam Marathon?

For numerous test takers unfamiliar with standardised assessment, the IELTS exam (5 hours) or TOEFL (3.5 hours in most versions) often constitute a psychological shock. What is the impact of test stress on performance? Are students from educational systems where standardised (and psychometric) testing is uncommon put at a decided disadvantage? Evidence from my own teaching on several 'peripheries' in Eastern Europe, South Asia and Southeast Asia indicates that they are. For a number of my own students (and colleagues), TOEFL was the first standardised test they had ever taken in any subject.

Reading Cultures and their Impact

The absence of cultures of reading in the national language in a significant number of societies throughout the Two-Thirds World—where oral cultures and styles of auditory learning strongly oriented to the spoken word prevail—likely impacts very negatively on the performance of students in English reading comprehension under high-stakes exam stress.[19] This culture-specific dimension needs much further research.

Electronic Downsides?

The computer-adaptive version of TOEFL introduced in 1998 is now spreading rapidly around the planet, but can be offered only in select centres. This e-version, which now costs the same as the paper format, may put students with little computer savvy, as in vast areas of Africa and rural Asia, at a decided disadvantage.

Concomitant computer anxiety may be another factor. Moreover, it may reward test-taking skills such as pacing and strategic guessing even to a greater degree than the paper-based format. The advantages of its so-called 'adaptive' format are a matter of much debate and extensive research (Dunkel 1999; Brown 1997)[20]

A key question for assessment analysts is this geography of testing locations, usually in major urban centres: do arrangements at a limited number of 'secure venues' act to penalise significant numbers of students, imposing an array of burdens, physical, financial and psychological, on test takers from areas redefined as 'outlying'? Is this a mode of core/periphery dynamics introduced into the very administration of the exam? The economic geography of the computer-based exam reproduces this.

Generally offered only in certain major urban centres, it places extra burdens on students in many countries who must contend with limited transportation and may have to spend several days at a hotel in order to take the test. For example, in Bulgaria the computer-based exam is available only in the capital Sofia. Candidates in Laos wishing to take the computer-based exam must travel abroad for the test, to Bangkok. The exam is offered by the American Embassy in Vientiane solely in a paper-based version once a year, so that some Lao take the costly trip to Bangkok even for the pencil-and-paper exam.[21] As of early 2004, the computer-based exam is not as yet available in the PR China, the prime 'bonanza market' that beckons. When established there it will likely be available only in a select network of larger cities, following the nodal patterning of Capital in the new Chinese economy.

Whose English?

A much-discussed question inside the TEFL profession is the nature of the varieties of English on these exams, to what extent 'artificial' English may be tested, especially in 'canned' oral comprehension sections, or varieties quite different from those being taught and used in particular societies in Africa, South and East Asia, the Caribbean

and elsewhere. Clearly TOEFL in a sense imposes an 'American' standard on the globe, IELTS a basically British educated variety. This is a highly complex issue that goes beyond the scope of the present paper but is central to any critique of the linguistic 'content' of the exams and their skewing.

5. Washback into an EFL Industry

Impacts of a standardised, high-stakes exam culture on the EFL classroom and teaching profession are substantial. The washback/impact in a material sense is manifest in (a) a proliferation of private courses and schools, (b) a veritable supermarket of teaching materials and (c) an expanding array of program designed to train EFL teachers, often limited to a course of 110 contact hours. The professionals emerging from such diploma mills are a kind of pedagogical equivalent to the '30-day wonders', 'instant' lieutenants turned out by the American Army in WWII. An emergent 'EFL industry' is in part geared solely to teaching for such exams, with more and more teachers indeed 'specialising' in TOEFL/IELTS preparation. TOEFL coaching schools in many urban areas across the English-learning world are recruiting university teachers for weekend instruction, and more and more secondary schools and colleges are offering special IELTS and TOEFL preparation courses. Better empirical pictures of these dynamic developments are needed.

But these tests act to infect teaching at multiple levels, implanting ideology, 'standards', scripting content from above and without. Certainly EFL teachers throughout the world are faced by ever more students who want to know: will this lesson help me to score higher on a standardised exam? Concomitantly, a classificatory discourse is spreading among students and teachers alike where a more advanced student is pigeonholed as 'roughly TOEFL 470' without ever having taken the exam. It is becoming a deformative template through which to view all student 'achievement'. This is indeed a kind of interpellation of students as subjects of a dominant classificatory ideology and its labels.

5.1 Regimenting Instruction?

Do such weightings compress and repress space in EFL instruction for critical thought or discussion about alternative futures—and indeed 'meaning-making', which should

be central in any language classroom (Hill 2003) TOEFLising of EFL teaching at certain levels may serve to “rob teachers of the best part of our time on the job: creative interactive time with students as we discuss and inquire into issues and problems that command our authentic interest!” (Brosio 2003). Opportunities to engage in meaningful critical analyses are compromised in the EFL classrooms ever more preoccupied with getting a TOEFL 550 or an IELTS 6, and the associated 'hidden curricula'. Boxley (2003) underscores trends of monitoring by teachers of their own pedagogy, where "teachers are aware that the very ways in which they themselves relate to their students are being constrained by the expectations of performative measurability". Introspective techniques of 'reflective teaching' (Richards & Lockhart 1994) through critical lenses (Canagarajah 1999) can perhaps shed needed light on whether such claims of professional disempowerment and concomitant alienation have any substantive basis.

5.2 Materials Glut and its Resistance

Under a kind of Total Quality Management in the EFL steeplechase for credentials, teachers are recast as deliverers of skills measurable by TOEFL/IELTS and TOEIC. The partial subordination of EFL teaching to the dictates of a system ruled by numerical performance on commercial multiple-choice exams is a prime example of this dialectic of de-professionalisation more generally, as teaching materials proliferate and easily assume 'control' of what is being done in classrooms. Never have so many textbooks, course sets and their paraphernalia been available to teach any language on the planet as are at hand today for ELT in the better-resourced teaching venues, a commercial bonanza for a specific stable of well-placed BANA publishers. The counter-movement of 'Dogme ELT' that has arisen over the past three years is a spirited iconoclastic reaction to this commodification of EFL teaching and the materials-driven classroom (Thornbury 2000) more generally.[22] Yet in many more 'peripheral' schools and classrooms in low-wage economies, especially rural, only the teacher may have a textbook. There is clearly an 'EFL resources divide' that is isomorphic with the topography of local Capital and growing wider.

6. 'Expand, Expand, Expand' — Testing as Big Business?

Have the dictates and priorities of Capital intruded into the very core of EFL testing, shaping its epistemological paradigms and agendas? A critical ethnography of testing needs to better examine the actual operations and corporate anatomy of the principal firms that control and market test batteries.

Let us look briefly at a few publicly known contours of ETS. With revenues estimated at \$700 million for FY2002, ETS is now administering more than 12 million tests worldwide. ETS International BV (Europe) headquartered in Utrecht, The Netherlands, is a new ETS subsidiary, opened under CEO Landgraf and geared to penetrating the European testing market.[23] In September 2003, ETS also launched a majority-owned stateside subsidiary for education in business Capstar, which bills itself in precise education-managerial vocabularies, introducing the “new standard in measurable, results-driven learning and competency management”, promoting what it terms “Enterprise Competency Management™ (ECM), a systematic approach for aligning workforce goals, knowledge, skills and abilities with business objectives”. [24] In the frame of critical education policy analysis (Hill 2003), the ETS conglomerate can be seen as a virtual paragon of powerful trends toward managerialism in education and 'results-driven learning'.

Under its new CEO Kurt Landgraf, who took over the corporate helm in 2000, ETS has embarked on an aggressive expansion into overseas markets, which potentially dwarf the now saturated U.S. testing terrain. The main gridiron for TOEFL and IELTS is China, where they are already in a fierce duel. Landgraf came to ETS from DuPont Pharmaceuticals, where he was CEO and with the company for two decades. He gained a reputation there for "maximizing income through global sales. Not surprisingly, he has already told reporters that his main agenda for ETS is to ‘increase revenues’ and mentioned potential expansion into K-12 education as well as testing for the military and corporations" [25] It is perhaps emblematic of broader trends in managerial intrusion into education that a pharmaceuticals executive with no previous experience in educational assessment should be heading the planet’s largest test-maker corporation.

Moreover, ETS corporate salaries, with an intake of nearly half a billion US\$ annually[26] reflects their capital-corporate mould: in 1997, “President Nancy Cole received \$378,232 in salary plus \$45,716 in deferred compensation. All told, more than 800 employees were paid more than \$50,000 annually”. [27] Are such corporate salaries justifiable? Do they help to account for the high pricing of their 'test product'? Can we demand more transparency from the private firm that has literally built its dominion within our professional house?

6.1 Changing Times

TOEFL under Landgraf is diversifying its products, and will introduce a “new generation” of the TOEFL in September 2005, billed as much “more than just a test.” Its pricing has not yet been announced.[28] In September 2002, ETS unveiled the innovative classroom learning product, LanguEdge™ Courseware, accessed via network server, priced at a minimum of US\$550 for five computers. [29] Another money-maker called the Institutional Testing Program is a shorter test based on TOEFL ‘retired versions’. A school can be licensed to administer this exam, which costs from US\$20-45 per person.[30] Though cost is comparatively low for the test taker, this exam can act to washback into various levels of instruction, reconfiguring them to the TOEFL format. A younger cousin of this test is the Pre-TOEFL, designed for students at introductory and low-intermediate levels of EFL learning. As a kind of ‘dry run’ at lower cost, it can help students acclimate to the rigors of the ‘real’ test. Some 1,500 institutions worldwide are now administering more than 300,000 tests annually under this ITP umbrella. A critical ethnography of EFL testing should be exploring the impact, often subtle, of these tests on classroom realities, textbook choices, prioritised testing procedures, producing a 'TOEFL'd generation' of EFL learners.

6.2 Spillover Effects: the Test Prep Industry

The burgeoning 'coaching' industry in TESOL, as around SAT, the GRE and similar high-stakes ETS exams, preparing students and inculcating test-taking 'strategies', needs to be researched along several parameters, including its political economy and power to enlist teachers in its ranks. The fees and time invested in such commercial courses across the planet are substantial, a capital outlay of many millions in

aggregate, and often an enormous sacrifice for the students and their families unless they come from privileged backgrounds. Indeed, the exam itself, preparation courses plus associated expenses for materials, and necessary travel outlay to get to the exam venue, which may even mean crossing an international border, can amount to well over US\$ 500. A critical ethnography of TOEFL/IELTS needs to assemble hard data on what the *actual* monetary costs of such exams is in a typical test taker biography, part of the political economy of the testing hurdle.

6.3 Multimedia Galore - the Cash Nexus

Concomitant with the burgeoning of this teaching industry for these high stakes exams, a huge new market has developed in textbook and other materials (multimedia with CD-ROM) to prepare specifically for TOEFL and IELTS. This has proved a major windfall for publishing houses like Barron's, but has now spread to an entire platoon of academic publishers (such as Longman in the UK) cashing in on this linguistic bonanza—and of course ETS itself, offering a diversified package of 'learning tools' for its own exams. Much of this 'tie-in support material' offered on the Internet requires a credit card, which few if any students in the lower-income economies will own. As teachers, we become complicit in this entire venture by our own use of expensive test-preparation texts and appurtenances the publishing industry offers, a tendency much criticised by Dogme (see fn. 22) for the EFL profession as a whole.

In what senses are EFL teachers becoming cogs in this broader industry, which exists to make a profit off our students? We are arguably functioning as unwitting agents of its expansion. Critical testing ethnography needs to craft an accurate analytical picture of the dynamics of this commercial market and how it shapes our teaching and assessment. It is a vast private business cashing in directly on our praxis and shaping a host of priorities in the classroom.

7. Corporate Agendas — English in the Global Workplace

Another exam battery that has come to occupy an increasingly more central roost within the profession is the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), the ETS flagship multipurpose EFL proficiency exam, first established in

1979 at the behest of Japanese corporate interests. The 2-hour test consists of 200 multiple-choice questions (listening and reading), and in most venues costs US\$65. It has now become the most widely used single exam in the EFL testing field, with close to 2 million tests administered worldwide in 2002, employed primarily for assessing EFL proficiency in the international corporate workplace.[31] There are also many applications in the United States—for example, as part of the battery to license foreign-born professionals in a variety of fields, and admission to some colleges. In Europe it is now ever more common to see a TOEIC score included in job descriptions or job offers in major firms such as Airbus, Coca Cola, Renault, Unilever, NEC Computer International. In Japan, Honda, Toyota, Nissan, Ricoh are all on board. More and more companies are demanding a TOEIC score from their present and future employees. Each test taker receives an ‘official diploma-quality’ TOEIC Score Certificate, a frameable credential. The exam is currently used by several thousand firms and other institutions across the planet, and making rapid inroads. Inside firms, specific score requirements can be set for different job categories, depending on the level of English required, while “periodic testing helps verify that individuals are indeed improving their English ability”. [32] Incorporation of the test inside Hyundai is indicative of trends, [33] in that commercial EFL test scores here serve to channel advancement up the internal career ladder for promotion and lateral job changes. Critical ethnography of testing is faced here with a major challenge in analysing the penetration, impact and effectiveness of this exam, and its gatekeeping and filtering functions inside corporate hierarchies, a powerful ongoing dynamic behind virtually closed high walls.

7.1 Building Bridges Down the Curriculum

The TOEIC Bridge Test for elementary and intermediate learners in junior and senior high schools and colleges, a cousin of Pre-TOEFL, is being vigorously promoted in Japan, Europe and South America. With fees from US\$27 to \$40, it has become a big-time income generator for ETS. Here again is a test that can potentially virus public and private programs in EFL in a number of countries, reconfiguring instruction outcomes in its washback. Given the comparatively low cost, especially for elite students, the test is proving highly marketable in Japan and Western Europe.

7.2 Research Outsourcing

The Institute for International Business Communication (IIBC), the ETS affiliate in Japan, has entered the research arena, and now invites research proposals from organisations and individuals using TOEIC, TOEIC Bridge and their related services. It is seeking proposals for a variety of subjects, including score interpretation, curriculum development, innovative response formats, and the definition of language constructs. Here scholars can in effect climb aboard the ETS wagon, assisting in 'improving' the exam.[34] What is the ethics of such inquiry, funded by ETS? It constitutes a primary site of the penetration of corporate interests into language assessment research.

8. Are There Alternatives?

8.1. In-House Testing

Assessment professionals will agree that EFL tests for overseas students should meet five basic criteria: (1) validity, (2) reliability, (3) accessibility on an international scale, (4) test security and score reporting security and (5) financial viability for test takers in developing economies. But is it possible to avoid the whole problem of such international, high-cost testing? One alternative is in-house testing, where individual colleges and universities test their own applicants through locally preferred means by teachers on local staff.[35] Such exams, increasingly more common and often deemed more accurate instruments, could be administered through modalities in cyberspace, even to applicants from abroad. Some educators believe that the best alternative to the high cost of standardised international tests is to have an institution accept 'multiple' inputs for admission application, perhaps including overseas national tests, like the new Malaysian university-entrance EFL exam touched on below, portfolio assessment and even local high school and college course grades in EFL. The goal can be a 'mosaic evaluation system' better calibrated to the diversity of applicants, their backgrounds and language-learning biographies. Low-cost in-house clones of the TOEFL ITP can be developed and administered. As one TESOLer put it in a recent listserv posting:

College admissions executives set TOEFL policies and enforce them rigorously, though I wonder how many of them have ever seen a TOEFL test or read the

literature on them. Adopting TOEFL as an exit test lets the tail wag the dog, since the curriculum has to match the test. How much do the TOEFL people know about our schools' needs?[36]

8.2 Accuplacer

The new Edlearn Consortium in Seattle, a joint venture of Washington State U, City University and five Seattle community colleges and offering A.A. degrees to international students online, has indicated it could perhaps decide to waive the minimum 530 TOEFL score it requires of students and, proceeding on a case-by-case basis, administer the Accuplacer online English placement exam and then work out a program of courses to strengthen the EFL skills of weaker overseas students once admitted. [37] Accuplacer has a very nominal fee. Significantly, City University is also using it for admissions at its campuses in Eastern Europe.[38] Designed primarily for native speakers of English, Accuplacer can be adapted for non-native speakers. Empirical assessment research needs to probe the effectiveness of this exam as a low-cost computer-based alternative for international applicants. Other prototypes can be developed where 'test security' is a paramount consideration. Online alternatives may be an answer to curbing the dangers of corruption, even at purportedly 'secure' venues in some part of the world.

8.3 MTELP

Another low-cost 'non-secure' option is the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) developed by the English Language Institute at the University of Michigan, used by a number of U.S. colleges on campus to assess EFL skills.[39] The college can itself supplement parts of the test, such as the essay question topic, a key diagnostic component. These tests can be ordered in packets of 20 by educational institutions anywhere in the world. Costs work out to about US\$4.50 to cover materials for a single test taker. Why can't they be worked into a more flexible mix of methods to evaluate a candidate, including ever more stress on imaginative use of portfolio (see 8.7)

8.4 The Experiment that Failed: APIEL

One international option in commercial testing is a more 'democratic' international exam with hands-on local involvement—TOEFL and IELTS are run without the input of educators or expertise outside BANA—lower-priced and administered at venues more convenient for test takers outside the largest urban areas. Just such a venture was launched in the 1997 by the College Board, their challenger to TOEFL/IELTS, the exam APIEL (Advanced Placement International English Language). It became popular with teachers and students in a number of locales, especially in Germany and France. In late 2001, it was indeed beginning to be seriously considered by the authorities in China (Hong 2002) as a better, cheaper (by ca. 30%), more easily administered and 'democratically constructed' exam, overseen (unlike TOEFL and IELTS) by an international advisory team of high school and university teachers from six countries, including China.[40]

APIEL was unexpectedly discontinued by College Board in May 2002, with little explanation. CB cited heavy economic losses on the exam, suggesting it was forced to discontinue under the weight of the competing condominium, leaving many students and teachers literally in the lurch. There has been no public report issued on its folding. The entire complex of the rise and demise of APIEL needs detailed investigation. What, for example, was the effect of an international advisory team in its construction? Did this lead to a more 'context-sensitive' assessment? How effective was its highly decentralised geography of test venues? In a brief eulogy, a German web site notes: "All the participating institutions in Germany regret this decision enormously. APIEL was an excellent exam—past tense".[41]

8.5 MUET

An exam developed with exclusive local control, introduced in SE Asia in December 1999 and now gaining in influence is the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) developed and administered by the Malaysian Examinations Council, a government statutory body. It is required for all students in Malaysia for entrance to public and private universities there, and is also recognised in Singapore.[42] Perhaps it could become a low-cost regional variant acceptable elsewhere, and a prototype for new initiatives. What is its applicability beyond Malaysia and Singapore? What is its

reliability, validity and utility in comparison with other test instruments? Do students in Malaysia find this a more acceptable, less stressful assessment battery?

8.6 Introducing Testing Handicaps

One inventive corrective is to "borrow an approach from that bastion of socialism, the world of golf" (Bérubé 2003), introducing so-called 'testing handicaps' depending on a mix of background factors, such as socioeconomic status, quality of education system, gender, education of parents and several other factors in a kind of social calculus.

Bérubé proposes this for SAT, giving the example of a black girl from rural Alabama whose parents did not graduate from high school and make less than 10K, he works out a handicap of 452 to be assigned to her for SAT. As Bérubé argues,

if only the SAT were as well organised and as egalitarian as the U.S.G.A., every high-school student would be assigned a handicap. We already have all the numbers we need; all we need to do is to combine 'region' and 'parental education' with the race-gender-class triad, and we can issue remarkably precise handicaps.

Despite its complexity and occasional injustice, Bérubé contends that golf is a game that has "much to teach the College Board." Could this idea be experimentally applied for TOEFL, IELTS and other such language proficiency scores? Individual colleges could begin to consider such a working formula. Educators can experiment with trial handicaps as part of the flexible mix of entry hurdles for international students, especially from 'peripheral' backgrounds, and their more egalitarian assessment. It can create a specific lever for flexibility.

8.7 Learner-Directed Assessment / Portfolios

In addition to in-house alternatives, portfolio pedagogy and other forms of evaluation not dependent on arbitrary quantitative standardised testing can be encouraged within an 'assessment mosaic'. Portfolios in second-language learning

“represent a fundamentally different approach to language assessment an approach that emphasises performance assessment rather than the traditional summative assessment found in many testing situations. This kind of assessment underscores what students can do rather than just what they know” (Ekbatani and Pierson 2000: p. 8).

More universities should suggest the inclusion of EFL portfolios in applications from abroad. The very creation of such an option will spur greater interest in portfolio teaching internationally (Hamp-Lyons & Condon 2000). The field of TEFL can also experiment with appropriating the European Language Portfolio concept of the Council of Europe for English learners in the lower-income economies.[43] There is growing interest in more integrative and authentic assessment alternatives at all levels (Bailey 1998; O'Malley & Valdez-Pierce 1996). More egalitarian options are needed beyond quantitative standardised assessment regimes and instruments, their ideologies and deformations. These need to be, as Shohamy (2001a) stresses, collaborative, dialogical, interactive and based on constructive and interpretive approaches that empower the test takers.

9. Towards Counter-Hegemonic Advocacy

Imperative now is advocacy to get this entire regimen and its abuses more centrally onto the sounding boards. It should build on solid empirical research but like Fairtest or PsyACT, speak out systematically. An initiative can begin locally, at your own institution, bottom-up, articulated by teachers from an array of disciplines.

9.1 Raising Demands and Consciousness

Questioning the Cut-Point

One feasible reform achievable now is to build discussion inside the profession and throughout BANA higher education on the rationale for arbitrary cut-points. Educators can press for eliminating such cut-points for foreign applicants as policy at their own institutions. For starters, form a taskforce to raise this question about IELTS/TOEFL norms where you work and at colleges and universities in your region. Is there flexibility? If not, why not? Suggest the alternative of multiple modes of evaluating prospective students whose L₁ is not English, including some experimentation with ad hoc score 'handicaps'. And even perhaps some local research to help assess such alternative pathways for great equity in dealing with international applicants. For example, the U.S. Government Fulbright Program deals flexibly with TOEFL scores of its foreign candidates from certain regions, where a 550 (cut-point for most stateside graduate programs) is an almost impossible hurdle for even the best

applicants. It may recommend a candidate with 525 or 530 (after sitting the exam twice) and suggest supplementary language work during the M.A. program stateside.[44]

Demanding Reform of the 'Pricing Mechanism'

More concerted efforts should be taken by educators, in solidarity with test takers, demanding that ETS and IDP/BC/UCLES reform the pricing scheme, gearing it to local income levels. This would ease one immediate burden and work for greater equity in examination access—and the chance to repeat the exam if a candidate is not satisfied with the score. Evidence suggests many would repeat the exam if its cost were not so exorbitant. These demands should come from educators throughout international academe. Perhaps a small 'action committee' can be set up at country level to press the case.

Proactive Advocacy Network

The EFL profession needs to form something like the new coalition PsyACT (mentioned above). Its grassroots advocacy agenda focuses on starting with relatively easy actions: "we wish to build on small wins and generate more powerful and effective actions as the coalition grows in numbers and experience" (ibid., web site). They are utilizing letters to the editor in student and other newspapers, op-ed pieces, teach-ins and community activities to address a range of issues. Other paradigms are the Radical Psychology Network (www.radpsychnet.org) Psychologists for Social Responsibility (www.psysr.org), and the very broad-ranging National Coalition of Education Activists (www.nceaonline.org). Such a heterodox coalition or network among TESOLers could set up an 'action committee' on international testing. The new and innovative association Asia TEFL, which brings together EFL practitioners from the Middle to Far East, is a pristine forum in which to raise such issues (www.asiatefl.org). The special interest group TESOLers for Social Responsibility inside TESOL, Inc. has to date barely addressed this entire complex. What is needed is a new open networking global coalition. The annual Language Testing Research Colloquium can be one node of input in an advocacy net, in tandem with some people inside the International Language Testing Association.

9.2 Redistributing the Burdens of Cost

For starters, advocacy could be organised calling for TOEFL to be administered cost-free to all interested candidates by U.S. embassies, IELTS by British, Australasian and Canadian embassies, in all lower-income economies. Create a 'waiver system' open to all. This demand should be raised by teachers and students internationally and by educators in the BANA countries, as a high-priority focus. At present, only candidates for scholarships are exempted from paying the high exam fee.

9.3 Taxing Linguistic Privilege

Such a demand raises a broader issue. In challenging the costs of learning (and testing) English worldwide, one strategy for longer-term fundamental egalitarian change is projecting alternatives for shouldering the huge financial burden entailed by the global hegemony of English more equitably. New modalities are needed to pay for the skyrocketing bill, tantamount to a kind of linguistic 'odious debt' for many of the world's lower-income economies (Templer 2002a). The vast asymmetries and extraordinary advantages inherent in the 'English as a native language privilege' (ENLP) enjoyed by virtually all middle-class and elite strata in populations where English is L₁ should be acknowledged. Demands should be raised for global Capital to foot the specific and quantifiable costs for learning its imposed language of wider communication, especially in the low-income South.

One proposal deserving organised advocacy is a tithe or tax on linguistic imperialism and ENLP, where in effect international corporate capital and ENL governments are pressed to contribute to a new EFL Subsidiary Fund, perhaps administered by UNESCO, its revenues earmarked to subsidise all quantifiable budgetary costs associated with EFL teaching & testing in public schools and higher education in all low-income economies (Templer *ibid.*).

Faced with planetary projects for meritocratic education in and through Leviathan's language, this is a space for counter-hegemonic contestation of Capital that needs to be widened.

Notes

[1] On BANA, see Holliday 1994.

[2] Whether a cartel in a technical economic sense can be established is a separate question. Similarity in pricing and a kind of slicing of the global pie regarding where the two major tests predominate, and the fate of the APIEL exam pioneered in the late 90s and then discontinued (see sec. 8.4) might suggest some elements of cartelisation.

[3] For a grim picture of that industry in Japan, centered on the growth of the *eikaiwa* EFL chain schools, see McNeill 2004. He notes:

Like the ubiquitous fast-food restaurant, *eikaiwa* schools can now be found next to the station in most neighborhoods, bringing a convenient but low-nutrition product [] Lessons have morphed into sleek, bite-sized delivery systems staffed by teachers who are being transformed into the pedagogic equivalent of burger flippers.

[4] Prakash and Esteva (p. 2) stress the need to create solidarity with communities and groups suffering the

most marked and vicious discrimination of our times—imposed by the educated as professional assistance, aid, or help upon the three contemporary (lower) castes: the miseducated, the undereducated or the noneducated, who constitute the majority of people on earth, the Two-Thirds World.

In Indonesia, the world's 'third largest democracy', only a tiny elite has any chance of developing English language skills. In the PRC, the world's fastest-growing EFL megamarket, much of that teaching & testing is urban, following the contours of Capital. A large segment of the 69% rural population is effectively excluded.

[5] My own spot surveys indicate that many educators and EFL practitioners outside BANA academe are totally unaware that TOEFL is run by a profit-hungry private corporation that has simply taken over the space of credentialised assessment.

[6] Canagarajah (1999: 47-55) develops notions of a 'critical ethnography' of EFL that "foregrounds[s] the voices and acts of the periphery subjects in their context" (p. 51), unravelling their hidden cultures. Suggestive for examining the geopolitical

implications of EFL proficiency assessment and its dominant epistemological paradigms is Canagarajah (2002).

[7] See the many links, archive maintained by Glenn Fulcher on their resources page: <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/languagestudies/lttest/ilta/ilta.html> The ILTA has been strongly influenced by the 'ethical' move in testing over the past decade, far less so by the 'radical move' in the social and political contexts of testing FL proficiency (not just English) being developed by Shohamy and others. McNamara (2000) provides a succinct comprehensive overview of testing and these latest more sociopolitical turns.

[8] The new journal *Language Assessment Quarterly* (Erlbaum, 2004-) also plans to deal with socioeconomic dimensions of testing, communication from the editor, A. Kunnan, May 19, 2003.

[9] Personal communication from Bob Schaeffer, Public Education Director, FairTest, May 28, 2003. FairTest, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, is an advocacy organization "working to end the abuses, misuses and flaws of standardized testing and ensure that evaluation of students and workers is fair, open, and educationally sound". It has a no. of interesting 'fact sheets' on its web site, including 'Ten Myths about the SAT' <http://www.fairtest.org/facts/myths.htm> , retrieved March 10, 2004. These critiques are based on empirical investigations.

[10] See www.tesol.org .

[11] Some U.S. community colleges and less prestigious state campuses eager to attract fee-paying overseas students may admit applicants with scores of 450-460. The paper-based test score range is 310-677.

[12] Cambridge ESOL is under the umbrella of UCLES (Univ. of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate), a tripartite business unit attached to the University, with each sub-unit offering a "distinct product range"; URL: <http://www.CambridgeESOL.org>. What its corporate structure is and how it is managed as a profit-making venture are aspects not visible to the public and deserve research. Various CESOL exams such as the Cambridge Proficiency Exam and Cambridge Advanced Exam are accepted by universities in the United Kingdom in

lieu of IELTS. The UCLES complex cannot be dealt with in the scope of this paper. The British Council operates a network of examinations offices in over 100 countries. Their IELTS site is IELTS@britishcouncil.org. How much income IELTS generates for the BC is not public information. On the development of IELTS, see Clapham & Alderson (1996). IDP Education Australia, established under another name in 1969, is Australia's international education organisation, owned by 38 Australian universities (out of 39) and run as a 'non-profit' organisation. It undertakes a broad range of activities from student advisory services and educational publications to project consultancy and English language teaching and testing, see <http://www.idp.com> Central to its raison d'être is the marketing of Australian education abroad and the attracting of international students to Australian institutions. Its turnover for 2001 was in excess of AU\$108 million, with a growth in turnover of more than 20 percent annually (see "Facts at a Glance 2002", IDP web site).

[13] The Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) is an upscale alternative marketed by ELI at the Univ. of Michigan, a 'secure test' equivalent to TOEFL. It can be taken only at a small number of authorized exam centers in the U.S. and Canada and costs US\$80 without the speaking test, \$US120 with the speaking component. Its decided advantage over TOEFL is the test of communicative speaking skills it incorporates, which cannot be taken separately.

[14] On cut-pointing, see Jaeger (1989).

[15] Communication from an IELTS administrator, September 2003.

[16] Communication from the British Council to the author, May 2003.

[17] The ITP score is considered only valid for the institution where it is taken.

[18] As in the case of all educational corruption, these allegations are often difficult (or even dangerous) to research.

[19] This lack of a native language reading culture and the powerful presence of 'secondary (electronic) orality' is strongly suspected as a factor behind low reading score performance of TOEFL examinees from Laos and Thailand, often for many the weakest single section on the exam.

[20] Whatever the findings of Kirsch et al. (1999), it should not be forgotten that this is ETS-internal research on their own 'product', an aspect Brown (1997) does not take into consideration.

[21] Diagnostic of the close connective between ETS and Washington is the fact that the American Embassy is the official TOEFL administrator in a number of countries, providing a maximally 'secure' test venue and a special cache of prestige to the exam.

[22] The Global Issues Special Interest Group of IATEFL had a long discussion on its listserv (gisig@yahoogroups.com) in Jan. 2004 of 'Dogme' as a 'here & now-oriented' exercise in abstinence from an overly mediated and over-resourced syllabus and methodology. Of course, such surfeit of materials might only be dreamed of by many learners in the Two-Thirds World.

[23] See <http://www.ets.org/etseurope/index.html> , retrieved March 10, 2004.

[24] See <http://www.capstarlearning.com> , retrieved March 10, 2004.

[25] See 'Int'l. Drug Sales Exec. To Head ETS', *FairTest Examiner*, summer 2000.

[26] Of this some \$82 million is income from TOEFL, and expanding.

[27] See 'ETS Finances: Fat Salaries at The Top, Cutbacks at the Bottom', *FairTest Examiner*, spring 1999.

[28] See 'Next Generation TOEFL to Premier in September 2005', <http://www.ets.org/news/03022501.html>, retrieved March 10, 2004.

[29] These and other EFL extras, including the new SLEP (Secondary Level English Proficiency Test), can be viewed at www.toefl.org.

[30] An overview of ITP can be found at <http://www.toefl.org/onsitetst/itpabout.html>, retrieved March 11, 2004.

[31] For an introduction, see <http://www.toeic-usa.com>, retrieved March 10, 2004.

[32] Ibid.

[33] See http://www.toeic-usa.com/Managers_Home.htm for a detailed Hyundai report, retrieved March 10, 2004.

[34] See <http://www.toeic.or.jp/toeic/research/research02.html> . The TOEIC Newsletter in Japan makes interesting reading at http://www.toeic.or.jp/toeic_en/ , retrieved March 10, 2004.

[35] I am indebted to Karen Stanley (Central Piedmont CC, Charlotte, NC) for her insightful remarks on EFL testing and the need for and feasibility of in-house alternatives.

[36] D.K., AssessESLEFL listserv, 21 May 2003.

[37] Communication, Edlearn, July 9, 2003. The Accuplacer tests reading skills, English grammar and mathematics. It is a CAT (Dunkel, 1999) and self-paced (no time limit). For a sample, see <http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/AssessCtr/studyguide.htm>, retrieved March 10, 2004.

[38] City University (Seattle), in the vanguard of American colleges staking out Eastern Europe, has established programs taught in English for business & management studies in the Slovak Republic, Prague, Bucharest and Bulgaria. Its 2,500 Euro tuition fee in Bulgaria is double the annual income of many university lecturers there, but it has decided to do without the required hurdle of TOEFL or IELTS. Its Accuplacer fee ranges from 5 to 23 Euros.

[39] For an introduction to the Michigan Test, see

<http://www.montgomerycollege.edu/Departments/AssessCtr/Michigan-Practice.html> , retrieved March 10, 2004. Another upscale alternative marketed by ELI at U of Michigan is the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB), a ‘secure test’ equivalent to TOEFL. It can be taken only at a small number of authorized exam centers in the U.S. and Canada and costs US\$80 without the speaking test, \$US120 with the speaking component. Its decided advantage over TOEFL is the test of communicative speaking skills it incorporates.

[40] See <http://www.eaie.org/pdf/3023.asp> , accessed March 10, 2004.

[41] See <http://www.klemm-site.de/fts.php?criteria=APIEL&x=11&y=18>, accessed March 10, 2004.

[42] For an overview of MUET, see <http://www.studymalaysia.com/is/english.shtml> , retrieved March 10, 2004.

[43] Templer (2002b; 2004) discusses this option for Thailand and Turkey.

[44] Information on practices in SE Asia, personal communication from a local educator (2004).

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