

Assessing English Proficiency for University Study

John Read



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Also by John Read

ASSESSING VOCABULARY

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John Read

University of Auckland, New Zealand

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Preface

The focus of this book is on post-entry language assessment (PELA). This is both a term and a form of assessment that is distinctively Australian in nature, growing out of public and institutional concerns over the last decade or two about the levels of English proficiency and academic literacy among students enrolled in degree programmes in Australian universities. However, the basic issues that PELA sets out to address are of much wider concern. They arise not only in institutions of higher education in other English-speaking nations but also in the rapidly expanding number of countries that have adopted English as the medium of instruction in universities. Do students have the language ability that they need to cope with the language demands of study at this level?

Of course, universities in the major English-speaking countries have a long history of addressing this question in the case of international students through requiring them to take a major proficiency test such as IELTS or TOEFL. Although their limitations are well recognized, these tests will continue to play an important role in helping to ensure that students from around the world have achieved at least a threshold level of academic proficiency in English before being admitted to an English-medium degree programme. However, one motivation for the introduction of a PELA is the recognition that it is no longer just international students whose academic language ability may be a cause for concern. Many domestic students from a variety of language backgrounds also find it challenging to cope with academic reading and writing tasks, and thus a significant part of the purpose of a PELA is to identify such students and provide them with opportunities to develop their academic language ability as they undertake their degree studies.

There are other ways in which post-entry assessment is not simply another form of language proficiency testing. Since by definition a PELA is administered after students have been admitted to the university, the stakes are lower than for a proficiency test that controls entry to the institution as a kind of gatekeeping device. The overall aim is to enhance the students' prospects of achieving their academic potential by addressing their language needs at an early stage. Implicitly, by introducing a PELA the university is accepting a responsibility to work with students to reach this goal.

Maintaining the quality and security of their proficiency tests worldwide is very costly for the major testing companies, as reflected in the substantial fees that they charge for taking the test. By contrast, a PELA is typically a local initiative within a single institution, which pays for the costs of the assessment from its own budget as part of a commitment to addressing the language needs of its incoming students. This means that the assessment can be designed and administered in a way that is appropriate for the students entering that university, or particular academic programmes within it.

Whereas for proficiency tests the primary focus is on the student's overall score, a PELA offers at least the potential of richer diagnostic information on individuals or groups of students, which can be used in advising them on enhancing their academic language skills or in building appropriate language support into their degree programmes. Thus, post-entry assessment is not an end in itself – and certainly not just a means to place students in 'remedial' classes – but should be part of a larger strategy adopted by the university to raise standards of academic literacy, at least for students for whom English is an additional language, if not throughout the student body.

These, then, are the basic ideas that will be developed through the succeeding chapters of the book.

Chapter 1 defines the broad context of PELA through a survey of trends in English-medium higher education around the world. It focuses in particular on the impact of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL), who are typically both international and domestic students in the country concerned. In addition to exploring the big picture, the chapter looks at two specific cases. One is the changing role of English in universities in Malaysia, reflecting the contested nature of the national language policy over an extended period. The other case is that of Western Europe, where English-medium education at the post-graduate level is increasingly common, especially in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries. This leads to a discussion of the critical perspective on English as an international language, which raises concerns about the continuing status of other European languages as media of higher education and scholarship.

In Chapters 2 and 3, there is a detailed account of PELA in Australian and New Zealand universities. Chapter 2, on Australia, first traces the development of the Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA) at the University of Melbourne, one of the earliest PELAs in that country. In addition, there is an account of other assessments that have been used at Melbourne at various times, as well as the new Academic English

Screening Test. The second part of Chapter 2 draws on two recent national surveys to describe the nature and scope of PELAs in Australian universities, together with profiles of a number of assessments that are currently in use in particular institutions.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) at the University of Auckland, the only significant PELA at a New Zealand university. This assessment was partly an adaptation of the DELA at Melbourne, but it has expanded to meet a broader range of needs at Auckland and has been implemented in a particularly comprehensive fashion. One feature of the DELNA programme has been the substantial amount of research it has generated, and these studies are discussed both in this chapter and in Chapter 10, on the validation of PELAs.

The scope of post-entry assessment is extended beyond Australasia in Chapter 4, which presents case studies of four programmes around the world offering alternative approaches to this form of assessment. They are the Test of Academic Literacy Levels, used by four universities in South Africa; the Canadian Academic English Language Assessment (CAEL) at Carleton University in Canada; the Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment (DELTA) administered at three universities in Hong Kong; and the Oral English Proficiency Test (OEPT) at Purdue University in the United States.

Building on the previous three chapters, Chapter 5 analyses the factors to be considered in deciding whether to introduce a PELA at a particular university. It begins with a discussion of alternative ways of achieving some of the goals of post-entry assessment and, conversely, reasons that a PELA may still be justified. Among the issues that arise are who the target student population should be and whether the assessment should be mandatory or voluntary. Particular emphasis is given to the need for a robust decision-making process that looks at the assessment as part of a more general strategy to address students' language and literacy needs, including most importantly appropriate courses and programmes to enhance their academic language ability as they proceed through their degree studies.

The remaining chapters of the book are concerned with the design and development of a PELA, once the decision has been made to implement one. A key question in the Australian literature on post-entry assessment is what the underlying construct should be: how do we conceptualize the language knowledge or skills that a PELA is designed to measure? Terms such as 'competence', 'proficiency', and 'academic literacy' are used in a somewhat inconsistent manner, and there is a real

need to clarify them. Thus, Chapter 6 tackles the construct of academic language proficiency and the complementary construct of language competence. This chapter looks at the constructs through an account of developments in the field of language testing since the 1960s and in particular the ways that the constructs have been operationalized in the major proficiency tests developed in the United Kingdom and the United States in the last 50 years.

Chapter 7 investigates the construct of academic literacy, or academic literacies, as many authors would prefer to term it. There is some discussion of the theoretical basis for the construct as well as a review of empirical evidence supporting the argument that academic literacies is a more valid way of characterizing the language abilities required for undergraduate study than academic language proficiency. The chapter includes an account of work on academic vocabulary that is relevant to distinguishing the two constructs. The operationalization of academic literacies for assessment purposes is illustrated through Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS), a PELA developed at the University of Sydney. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of professional communication as an additional construct that has a bearing on post-entry assessment.

The term 'diagnostic' is often used in relation to PELAs, notably in the names of DELA and DELNA. In the light of the recent upsurge of interest in diagnosis in language assessment, Chapter 8 explores the extent to which these post-entry assessments can be considered diagnostic in nature. It looks at some examples of diagnostic language tests, including the web-based DIALANG system for adult learning of European languages, which gave rise to Charles Alderson's influential work on language diagnosis. There is also some discussion of Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment and other contemporary approaches to diagnosis, with a view to elucidating the distinctive features of this form of language assessment. Contrasting diagnostic measures with conventional proficiency tests provides another useful perspective.

This leads to Chapter 9, which looks at the design options for PELAs and other types of academic English assessment. It begins by outlining the process of test development, as currently practised by language testers. The current state of computer-based assessment is reviewed and then the range of test formats available is systematically discussed, drawing on concepts and examples from earlier chapters, especially Chapter 6. Although skills-based language use tasks have had a dominant role in current proficiency tests, the diagnostic perspective presented in Chapter 8 prompts a reappraisal of the contribution that

measures of language knowledge can make to the assessment of academic language ability.

Chapter 10 addresses the important question of how a post-entry assessment can be validated. In terms of contemporary validity theory, the question is not simply whether the PELA measures the students' academic language ability adequately but also whether it has the intended impact on the enhancement of students' language skills and their subsequent academic achievement. This involves constructing a validity argument, based on theoretical rationales and the available empirical evidence. The chapter adopts an argument-based validity framework developed by Ute Knoch and Cathie Elder especially for PELAs and applies it to the validation of DELNA, which is perhaps the best documented assessment programme of this kind.

Note on terminology

The term 'language support' has traditionally been used to refer to courses and programmes provided to improve students' academic language ability. However, the alternative terms 'language development', 'language enhancement' and 'language enrichment' are now widely preferred. The four terms are used interchangeably throughout the book, partly depending on which one prevails in the educational context being discussed.

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This book project began as a collaboration with Cathie Elder. We jointly prepared the original proposal for the book and worked closely on the initial chapters. Cathie was the primary author of Chapters 2 and 4 and has been acknowledged as such in the relevant sections of the book. Although she decided for various reasons to withdraw as co-author of the volume in 2012, she continued to provide valuable feedback on draft chapters and to offer advice and support. From a broader perspective, I want to acknowledge the immense contributions she has made to the field of post-entry language assessment in both Australia and New Zealand. She led the successful implementation of the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) at Auckland during her term as an associate professor in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics (2000–04) and she subsequently served as a principal investigator, researcher, and consultant on numerous other PELA projects as Director of the Language Testing Research Centre at Melbourne. Her insistence on theoretical rigour and sound empirical evidence has been influential in setting high standards of quality in the PELA initiatives she has been involved with.

Cathie and I would like to thank those who provided the source material for the case studies in Chapter 4: April Ginther, Janna Fox, Alan Urmston, and Albert Weideman. We also acknowledge Ute Knoch's work in developing the validity framework that forms the basis for Chapter 10 and her fine body of research on post-entry assessment in both Auckland and Melbourne.

Janet von Randow is the driving force behind the continuing achievements of DELNA at Auckland. Her job title as DELNA Manager scarcely does justice to the range of activities that she engages in. Quite apart from the efficient, day-to-day administration of a complex assessment programme, she tirelessly promotes a better understanding of DELNA through networking across the university, she is active in researching the impact of the assessment, and she frequently presents at national and international conferences to disseminate the findings. She has not only been an inspiration to me but also a source of useful information and feedback on parts of the book.

I did much of the early writing for the book during the three months I spent in 2010 as a Visiting Fellow in the School of Languages and

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List of Main Acronyms

AEST	Academic English Screening Test
CAEL	Canadian Academic English Language Assessment
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
DELA	Diagnostic English Language Assessment
DELNA	Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment
DELTA	Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ELTS	English Language Testing Service
ESB	English-Speaking Background
EPTB	English Proficiency Test Battery
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETS	Educational Testing Service
iBT	Internet-based TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language)
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LTRC	Language Testing Research Centre, University of Melbourne
MASUS	Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students
OEPT	Oral English Proficiency Test
PELA	Post-entry language assessment (also sometimes post-entrance language assessment or post-entry English language assessment)
PTE(A)	Pearson Test of English (Academic)
TALL	Test of Academic Literacy Levels
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

1

The Context: Students in English-Medium Universities

Introduction

The main focus in this book is on universities in Australia and New Zealand, as well as the other predominantly English-speaking countries: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. Traditionally most if not all of the students entering universities in these countries were essentially monolingual in English, having completed all of their previous education through the medium of the language and having demonstrated a high level of literacy through their performance in upper secondary school examinations or standardized aptitude tests. Furthermore, the students were overwhelmingly drawn from the upper strata of their society in social and economic terms.

This generalized account needs to be qualified to some degree. In Canada French has had equal official status with English throughout the country since 1969 and there is a long history of French-medium university education, especially in Québec, the one province where the great majority of the population is French-speaking. Both the oldest (Université Laval) and the largest (Université du Québec) universities in Canada are Francophone. In addition, a number of institutions, such as the University of Ottawa, are bilingual in English and French. This means that, at least for a minority of universities in Canada, academic literacy in French rather than English is an issue.

And in the United States, through its complex structure of colleges and universities, there has been until recently a higher level of participation in post-secondary education than in other English-speaking countries, reflecting a commitment to educational opportunity as a vehicle for upward social mobility. One by-product of that broader participation by students with a range of academic preparedness has

been the widespread provision of required composition courses for freshman students to develop their writing skills. The professional body for scholars and practitioners in this field, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, was founded as long ago as 1949. Thus, in the American context at least, addressing the academic literacy needs of undergraduate students is not a new phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the general pattern that universities in English-speaking countries used English as their sole medium of instruction and served predominantly students who were both monolingual and highly competent in the language persisted to varying degrees until relatively recently. However, a cluster of demographic, economic, and social trends over the last 40 years or more have dramatically changed the language backgrounds of students entering the universities and have posed new linguistic challenges for the institutions in maintaining high-quality teaching and learning programmes. It is useful to review the major trends as the basis for understanding the need for universities to assess the language ability of incoming students and to introduce programmes to enhance the students' language skills where appropriate.

International students in English-speaking countries

1950s to 1980s

The first important trend is the flow of international students to universities in English-speaking countries. The United States was an early leader in the 1950s and 1960s in attracting what were then generally known as foreign students, especially high-achieving graduate students who were drawn to study in well-resourced and prestigious American research universities as a pathway to successful careers in government, the professions, business, or academia in their own countries. The emergence of the United States after World War II as a superpower and the parallel growth of English as an international language were key factors in this development. Since a high proportion of the foreign students came from non-English-speaking backgrounds, it was soon recognized that robust assessment procedures were needed to determine whether their English proficiency was sufficient to meet the language demands of academic study. Spolsky (1995) outlines some early initiatives to develop suitable tests in the 1950s, at the University of Michigan and American University. However, by 1961 there were 48,000 foreign students in the United States and, at a conference organized by the Center for Applied Linguistics in that year, both university admissions officers and government agencies sponsoring students from abroad expressed

frustration at the lack of a widely available test they could rely on to assess the students' English before they were admitted to the country (Spolsky 1995, pp. 220–1). As it turned out, the conference laid the groundwork for the development of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which was introduced in 1964 and became for many years the dominant international test for this purpose.

In the United Kingdom during this period, there were also considerable numbers of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds but, in the British case, the focus was more on providing educational and training opportunities for people from the former colonial territories which now formed part of the (British) Commonwealth, as well as from other parts of the world that were targeted for overseas development assistance. Thus, a high proportion of foreign students in the UK were recipients of British Government scholarships. The newly independent Commonwealth nations generally inherited from the colonial authorities an English-medium education system, at least in the form of secondary schools and tertiary institutions for the political and economic elites (for a critical perspective, see Phillipson 1992, 2009c). This meant that the English competence of scholarship holders from the Commonwealth was often very high, but the levels of competence were sufficiently variable that it was considered necessary to develop formal English language assessment procedures.

Therefore, in the 1960s and 1970s the British Council, which administered a number of scholarship programmes, commissioned the English Proficiency Test Battery (EPTB) and then replaced it in the 1980s with the English Language Testing Service (ELTS) (Davies 2008). These tests will be discussed further in Chapter 6, but it is important to note that their primary function was to provide Council officials with a valid basis for determining, not so much whether students and trainees could be admitted to their proposed programme of study, but rather whether they would first need to improve their English language proficiency and, if so, for how long. Any required English language tuition was seen as an integral component of the scholarship award. In this sense, then, the function of the EPTB and ELTS had something in common with the post-entry language assessments which are the main focus of this book. They were not intended as gatekeeping devices so much as diagnostic procedures to help identify and address academic language needs among students who had already been selected for an academic or technical study programme.

A similar pattern, albeit on a smaller scale, could be seen in Australia and New Zealand in the post-war period up until the 1980s.

International students in these countries were almost all either on government scholarships under development assistance programmes such as the Colombo Plan, or they entered the country through bilateral arrangements with Commonwealth countries in the Asia-Pacific region such as Malaysia and Fiji. Both countries developed their own English tests, such as the Language Achievement Test for Overseas Students (LATOS) in New Zealand in the 1970s (St George 1981), and the Short Selection Test (SST) in Australia in the 1980s. However, by that time a decisive shift was occurring in the flows of international students globally, which we will discuss further in a moment.

Trends since the 1980s

By the end of the 1980s, Australian universities, through their International Development Program (now IDP Education Australia), had become full partners with the British Council and the Cambridge Examinations Syndicate in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which was introduced in 1989 as the successor to ELTS. IDP was already adopting an entrepreneurial approach to the recruitment of international students for Australian universities, and the organization was influential in shifting the use of IELTS away from mainly government-sponsored students to a much higher proportion of private fee-paying ones. In a similar fashion to its major rival TOEFL in North America, IELTS quickly became the English test that international students needed to 'pass' as a prerequisite for being admitted to a tertiary academic programme in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and other countries. This pre-admission gatekeeping function of IELTS came to overshadow the post-selection diagnostic role performed by its British predecessors, the EPTB and ELTS.

As noted above, the United States and the United Kingdom have long been the dominant destinations for international students, not just among English-speaking countries but in the world at large. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2014), the two countries retained the top two positions in 2011, with 709,565 and 419,946 'mobile students' respectively out of a worldwide total of three and a half million tertiary students studying outside their country of origin. Australia had the fourth largest population of these students (262,597), just behind France. Collectively, the five main English-speaking countries accounted for 45 per cent of all international students. The current figures reflect a large growth in numbers over the last 30 years, particularly in relative terms in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which have opened their doors to private fee-paying students from a wide range of countries,

through liberalizing visa procedures, actively marketing institutions and academic programmes, offering pre-entry intensive courses in English for Academic Purposes and test preparation, and providing support services for the students in their host institutions.

In Australia the expansion of international education dates from 1985, when the Government announced a new policy of promoting export education services and offering places in Australian tertiary institutions to students from throughout the world who could pay full tuition fees. The growth in international student numbers since then has been spearheaded by IDP Education Australia, which had its origins in 1961 as a cooperative scheme among Australian universities to provide development assistance to their counterparts in Southeast Asia. IDP moved decisively to take advantage of the new policy and now has a network of 80 student placement centres in 25 countries, recruiting students not just for Australian universities but for others in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom as well (www.idp.com). Although still half-owned by the Australian universities, it operates on a commercial basis, with the other 50 per cent in the hands of SEEK Limited, an online employment and training company. IDP also delivers English language training services and manages the administration of IELTS in Australia and abroad. According to the UNESCO (2014) figures, the result of the recruitment drive by IDP and the export education industry as a whole is that international students accounted for more than 20 per cent of all enrolments at the tertiary level in 2011.

New Zealand has followed a similar pathway to Australia since the late 1980s, although on a smaller scale. The universities have all established international offices and developed recruitment strategies to attract full fee-paying students, with an initial focus on East and Southeast Asia. There is no direct equivalent of IDP, but Education New Zealand (www.enz.govt.nz) operates as a peak body for the export education industry, incorporating not just tertiary institutions but also secondary schools, private language schools, and other education providers. It promotes the 'New Zealand Educated' brand, works cooperatively with education agents, organizes participation in education fairs, and so on.

English language proficiency requirements

As previously indicated, universities in the English-speaking countries now set minimum scores on proficiency tests (particularly IELTS and TOEFL), which international students must achieve in order to be admitted to a degree programme. In this market-driven era in higher education, universities tend to align their requirements with those of other institutions

in their own country. In the case of IELTS, the majority of Australian universities require an overall band score of at least 6.5 for undergraduate admission, often with a higher level for some if not all postgraduate programmes. On the other hand, the standard pattern at New Zealand universities is 6.0 for undergraduate study and 6.5 at the postgraduate level.

The official guidelines for IELTS (n.d.) state that students gaining just Band 6 need further English study before undertaking a degree programme. A score of 6.5 is 'probably acceptable' for courses which are considered linguistically less demanding, such as those in Agriculture, Pure Mathematics and Technology, but it is only at Band 7.0 that a student is probably ready for more demanding courses in disciplines like Medicine, Law, and Linguistics. Clearly the New Zealand university requirements fall below the recommended minimum proficiency levels. In their national survey of IELTS preparation courses in New Zealand, Read and Hayes (2003) interviewed teachers of such courses, who confirmed that students who obtained just 6.0 or 6.5 were likely to struggle to meet the language demands of their degree programmes. It can be argued that, if a university sets its proficiency standards low, a good proportion of international students admitted on that basis are at risk of failing their courses and thus the institution has an obligation to provide ongoing language support for these students to assist them in coping with course demands more adequately.

Of course, it is also true that the predictive power of English proficiency tests is a matter of ongoing debate and research. In the 1990s and early 2000s, a number of small-scale studies were conducted in various universities in Australia to compare IELTS test scores with academic achievement, as measured by grade point averages (GPAs) and other indicators. Cotton and Conrow (1998) found no significant relationship, whereas other researchers (for example, Elder 1993, Feast 2002, Hill, Storch, & Lynch 1999, Kerstjens & Nery 2000) obtained correlations which were generally significant but weak. In New Zealand Bellingham (1993) found a somewhat stronger relationship in a study that involved a single non-degree programme and included a number of students with scores below IELTS Band 6.0. These findings are consistent with the results of earlier research involving American proficiency tests such as TOEFL (Graham 1987, Light, Xu, & Mossop 1987) and the ELTS test in the UK (Davies & Criper 1988, cited in Davies 2008). Based on the ELTS Validation Study and the other evidence, Davies (2008) argues that .30 is about the level of correlation one can reasonably expect, given the number of factors that influence academic performance, apart from English language ability as measured by a proficiency test.

Another notable development in Australia and New Zealand in the last 15 years has been the opening up of new pathways to university entry. It is no longer the norm that international students come directly from their own countries to begin their degree studies once they have been accepted by the university, having achieved the required score on IELTS or TOEFL before they arrive there. Both universities (usually through an associated institute or language centre) and private language schools offer courses in English for Academic Purposes, Foundation Studies programmes, and bridging courses, which are all designed to provide international students with a broader-based preparation for academic study in a new educational environment than they typically gain in an IELTS preparation course where they merely engage in intensive practice of the test tasks (Read & Hayes 2003). In Australia the leading providers of such courses are the ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students) colleges, which are represented by their national organization, English Australia (www.englishaustralia.com.au).

Often students who complete such programmes must still take IELTS in order to meet the university's English language proficiency requirement, but an increasing phenomenon in Australia is the Direct Entry Program (DEP) (Agosti & Bernat 2009), whereby universities accept that the assessment procedures used in the ELICOS college can validly determine whether the student has achieved a standard of English proficiency equivalent to the relevant IELTS score. The argument is that, having worked intensively with the students for a lengthy period, the DEP staff have a much richer basis for assessing their academic language abilities and can use assessment tasks and tools which are not included in proficiency tests, such as researched essays, writing portfolios, oral presentations, and extended listening and reading tasks. However, it is essential that processes are in place to ensure that the appropriate standards are established and maintained. O'Loughlin (2009) describes the procedure he followed to benchmark the written examination of the University of Melbourne English Language Bridging Program (UMELBP) against the IELTS Academic Writing Module. On a broader scale, Read and Hirsh (2007) undertook a project to determine how to moderate standards for a range of assessment tasks across Foundation Studies programmes in four New Zealand university centres.

Recent developments in Australia

The need to monitor non-IELTS-based pathways to university study in Australia was highlighted by a Monash University academic Bob Birrell (2006), who received wide media coverage for his criticisms

of universities for admitting students with low English proficiency to degree programmes. He cited evidence that a good proportion of international students applying for permanent residence in Australia after completing a degree in accounting or IT were unable to achieve Band 6.0 in the IELTS test as required by the immigration authorities. Tracing the root of the problem, Birrell pointed to the fact that students could enter the country initially on a visa that allowed them to study at a primary or secondary school, take a vocational (VET) or non-award course, or study English at an ELICOS college. Such visas required IELTS scores of 5.5, 5.0, or even just 4.0, depending on the proposed course of study. Having completed their course, many of these students could obtain a higher education visa for degree-level study without having to take IELTS again.

As a result of the ensuing public debate, the Department of Education, Science and Training, through its agency Australian Education International, set up a National Symposium on English Language Competence of International Students (AEI 2007) to review policy and practice in this area and recommend actions to address the problem areas that had been identified. The actions that were most directly relevant to the theme of this book were the following:

Institutional and Program Priorities

- Strengthening of in-course language and academic support for international students (and domestic students).
- A more generalised use of English language diagnostic tests (for all students) including postentry.
- Embedded, integrated approaches to English language learning. Support services in this area are best delivered not by stand-alone ELP [English language proficiency] specialist learning support staff but by teaching teams that include both ELP and discipline-specialist teaching staff working together.
- The embedding of language and academic support within the formal curriculum.
- The monitoring, evaluation and if necessary action to ensure that international students maintain an adequate level of English competence during and at the point of completion of study. (Australian Education International 2007, p. 17)

Another outcome of the symposium was a project by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) to develop Good Practice Principles

for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities (AUQA 2009). The successor agency to the AUQA, the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA), now uses the Principles as a tool in its regular cycle of quality audits of Australian institutions. The principles have much in common with the key actions recommended by the AEI Symposium, emphasizing the need not only to assess the English proficiency of students appropriately at the time of their admission but also to provide ongoing opportunities for English language development, which should preferably be integrated into the delivery of degree courses. Two principles that are most relevant to this book are these:

4. Universities ensure that the English language entry pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies.

7. Students' English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment.

(AUQA 2009, p. 3)

Thus, universities have come to recognize that their responsibility for determining the English proficiency of incoming international students is not discharged simply by setting minimum scores on major proficiency tests. There is clear evidence that the tests are limited in their ability to predict which students will have difficulty in coping with the language demands of their degree courses. Apart from that, there are now multiple pathways by which students can enter academic programmes in the university, some of which allow them to bypass the normal proficiency test requirements. This means that there is a case for some form of post-entry English assessment to identify those students whose academic English skills require further development.

Immigrant students in English-speaking countries

Closely linked to the growth in international students are the changing patterns of migration in the modern world. The major English-speaking countries outside of the United Kingdom have received large numbers of British immigrants at various periods in their history, and a strong preference for settlers from the mother country persisted in Australia and New Zealand well into the post-World War II period. The