

5. Standards in testing

One area of increasing concern in language testing has been that of standards. The word 'standards' has various meanings in the literature, as the Task Force on Language Testing Standards set up by ILTA discovered. One common meaning used by respondents to the ILTA survey was that of procedures for ensuring quality, standards to be upheld or adhered to, as in codes of practice. A second meaning was that of levels of proficiency - what standard have you reached?. A related, third meaning was that contained in the phrase 'standardized test', which typically means a test whose difficulty level is known, which has been adequately piloted and analyzed, the results of which can be compared with those of a working population: standardized tests are typically norm referenced tests. In the latter context 'standards' is equivalent to 'norms'.

In recent years, language testing has sought to establish standards in the first sense (codes of practice) and to investigate whether tests are developed following appropriate professional procedures. Groot argues that the standardization of procedures for test construction and validation is crucial to the comparability and exchangeability of test results across different education settings. Alderson and Buck and Alderson *et al.* describe widely accepted procedures for test development and report on a survey of the practice of British EFL examining boards. The results showed that current (in

