



## Book Review

**The College Instructor's Guide to Writing Test Items: Measuring Student Learning**, by Michael C. Rodriguez and Anthony D. Albano, Routledge, New York: NY, 2017, 173 pp., \$123.90 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-1-138-88653-7

*The College Instructor's Guide to Writing Test Items: Measuring Student Learning* highlights the need for straight and clear guidelines and directions on test-item writing and development within several fields. With an emphasis on multiple-choice response items, higher education researchers, instructors, and graduate students will be provided with the tools and opportunities to potentially grasp, create, and employ assessment tasks in both EFL/ESL classes so that the instruction will be informed, learning and teaching process will be facilitated and constantly supported.

In an introduction to the book, the authors make a distinction between assessment and testing. The reasons why instructors need to know about measurement and testing are also expounded upon. Finally, common complaints about college tests are brought to readers' attention.

Chapter one begins with the introduction of the concept of validity with regard to test score, interpretation, and use. Then, common testing purposes accompanied by some typical examples of their applications with an emphasis on the test results are presented. Common uses of test results (formative and summative) are also explained. Moreover, the very basics of an effective grading plan and the way it can be informed by testing are discussed and common methods of testing are reviewed to allow more room for the description of test design and item writing and analysis. At last, the way to gather validity evidence both about test content and quality of test items is elaborated on.

Learning objectives written at the institutional, course, and instructional levels are compared and contrasted at the beginning of Chapter 2. The way instructional objectives can be utilized to back the learning and teaching process is then elaborated on. Furthermore, six levels of cognitive tasks: remembering, understanding, applying, evaluating, and creating are identified and exemplified. Eventually, creation and evaluation of instructional learning objectives including the conditions and criteria for a certain task or topic to determine learner performance are explored.

A framework for building a test blueprint is introduced and its distinctive characteristics are described in Chapter 3. The possible merits and demerits of selected-response items are then summarized. The potential differences among frequently-used item formats are also discussed. The Chapter ends with explaining the way multiple-choice items can be applied for the assessment of higher-order cognitive tasks.

A series of guidelines for developing Multiple-Choice (MC) items are first presented in Chapter 4. The way common learner misconceptions can be exploited to enhance MC items is then illustrated. Finally, the foundations of MC items are reviewed and detailed item-development recommendations and directions are provided.

Chapter 5 begins with reviewing various available tools for test development and writing test items. The fundamental features of Proola, a web application to make instructional learning objectives and develop test items through cooperation with peers, are then introduced. Furthermore, the Chapter explores the way test items can be rectified to line up with learning goals so that any major drawbacks of test items can be either fixed or removed. At the end, item-writing guidelines are provided to enable test-item

developers to effectively and critically evaluate peers' test items.

Test items collected from different fields such as Business, Health Sciences, Statistics, Sciences, Social Sciences are illustrated and exemplified in the penultimate Chapter. A small sample of online resources, websites and materials along with the ever-growing item banks in Proola are explored

Three main item analysis statistics (item difficulty, item discrimination, and distracter frequencies) are first identified and explained in Chapter 7. Moreover, the concept of reliability is defined and the way it relates to norm-referenced and criterion-referenced testing is described. The Chapter ends with a brief discussion on how results from item-response analysis can be utilized to enhance learning and instruction.

The book suffers from a few drawbacks in terms of format, organization, and content coverage. With regard to content coverage, more attention could have been given to important issues in test-item writing and development like how to provide continuous feedback on test-item analysis and development, test developers' motivation, capitalizing on their background knowledge and the role of context. Concerning organization and format, some suggested readings and a glossary of the key terms could have been included in the book as well.

One possible merit of the book can be the incorporation of learning objectives at the outset of each chapter which might serve as a good starting point for many readers and can provide them with a general overview of the entire chapter. Another advantage of the book is the inclusion of various practical examples from several fields, relevant figures and tables so that readers will know how to write and develop test items and actualize test analysis accordingly. The volume also enjoys a wide audience including instructors and would-be educators, professionals, and higher education researchers. As a result, item writers will possess a series of item-writing directions and guidelines that could possibly strengthen item development and validation (Haladyna & Rodriguez, 2013).

Test formats other than multiple-choice items can be emphasized for possible future research on test-writing developments, and reliability, validity, practicality issues can be further analyzed and discussed. Furthermore, three main item analysis statistics (item difficulty, item discrimination, and distracter frequencies) should be regarded as one potential line of inquiry for interested researchers within the field of language testing and assessment to delve into.

In sum, the book is an invaluable point of reference and a practical resource for test item writing and development, which will in turn enhance learning outcomes and serve classroom instruction.

### References

Haladyna, T. M., & Rodriguez, M. C. (2013). *Developing and validating test items*. New York, NY: Routledge.

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