



Language tests for Citizenship: New demands, new realities

Miguel Fernández Álvarez y Jesús García Laborda

Citizenship and naturalization tests have been around for more than a century. Knowing their justification and their international importance implies their own review. This article begins by defining its main characteristics, focusing on their two main components: language and culture. The difference in levels of competence in the common European Reference Framework is especially relevant. Right after, we look at the different exams in different countries. A significant part of the work is directed towards the use of technology in the evaluation and preparation of exams emphasizing its benefits and difficulties. Additionally, the paper also highlights the opportunity at this time for its implementation on the network despite current academic and social problems.

Keywords: citizenship; computer-based tests; language tests; technology.

Exámenes de idiomas para ciudadanía: Nuevas exigencias, nuevas realidades. Los exámenes de naturalización y ciudadanía han existido desde hace más de un siglo. Conocer su justificación y su importancia internacional implica la revisión de los mismos. Este artículo comienza por definir sus características principales incidiendo en sus dos componentes: lengua y cultura. Es especialmente relevante la diferencia de niveles de la competencia en el Marco de Referencia Común Europeo. Posteriormente, miramos a los distintos exámenes en distintos países. Una parte significativa del trabajo se dirige hacia el uso de la tecnología en la evaluación y preparación de los exámenes enfatizando sus beneficios y dificultades. También se pone de relieve la oportunidad en este momento para su implementación en la red a pesar de los problemas académicos y sociales actuales.

Palabras clave: ciudadanía; exámenes asistidos por ordenador; exámenes de lenguas; tecnología.

1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon that has always occurred, as people have been in the need to move to a different place for a variety of reasons

(economic, social, religious, political or environmental, among others) since the beginning of civilization. Throughout history, we find thousands of migration waves influenced by historical factors. Early people, for instance, moved because of a lack of food or the search for a better climate. Later on, in modern history, people started to migrate in order to find new job opportunities and obtain a better quality of life. While the majority of people nowadays move for reasons associated with work, study and family, in many instances, migration has occurred “due to conflict, persecution and disaster” (International Organization for Migration 2019: 19). It was not until the end of the nineteenth century in the USA and early twentieth century in Australia that citizenship tests started being used as a way to control and limit immigration in those countries (Jupp 2002; McNamara & Roever 2006; Löwenheim & Gazit 2009). Canada was the first country to also include a literacy test in 1919 to limit access to citizenship to people who did not have a certain language proficiency level (Etzioni 2007).

Language tests have become an important component of most citizenship examinations worldwide (De Jong, Lennig, Kerkhoff & Poelmans 2009; Kunnan 2009). However, each country has its own policy and requirements (Laversuch 2008; McNamara & Ryan 2011; Loring 2012). We find examples of tests where candidates need to demonstrate a much higher proficiency level than others (which are much more lenient) (Kunnan 2009). In order to bring consistency to language tests in Europe, different governments asked the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) in the late 90s “to develop language tests for migration, residency or citizenship purposes” (Association of Language Testers in Europe 2016: 9) with the subsequent creation of the Language Assessment for Migration and Integration (LAMI) Group, which has been instrumental in the development of such tests during the last decades in Europe.

Traditionally, citizenship tests (including the linguistic component) have been delivered as paper and pencil tests, and test candidates were required to do the exam at a testing center for security reasons. However, the current fast-paced digital world we are living in is starting to have an influence on the way languages for citizenship purposes are being assessed. Some tests have already been transformed into computer-based tests that candidates have to take at a testing center (Cooke 2009), while others can be completed from any location. Web-based exams have become generalized in the last twenty years, but there has been a special need for online testing worldwide during the 2020 crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which will influence the way languages will be assessed.

The current paper focuses on how technology is shaping language tests for citizenship to respond to the new demands of stakeholders and to adjust to the new realities we are facing in the present era. An analysis of citizenship tests (with a focus on both the civics and the language components) is offered in the first section of the paper. After this initial overview, our attention turns to computer-based language citizenship tests and some of the issues associated with them, such as proctoring and security. In this section, we introduce and describe the concept of *e-securitization*, which brings together the fields of language testing, cyber security, and artificial intelligence. Before offering our conclusions and a brief overview of future areas for research, we present some examples of computer-based language for citizenship purposes used in several countries together with apps and resources available to prepare for such tests, including examples of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs).

2. Citizenship tests

Citizenship tests are tests that are intended to determine whether a person is qualified to become a citizen. However, research on these tests in several countries has evidenced that “rather than establishing qualifications for citizenship, [they] are instead very often used as a tool to control the level and composition of immigration” (Etzioni 2007: 353), which, according to Löwenheim & Gazit (2009: 146), is “a view that emphasizes that states employ these tests in response to populist and nationalist pressures to curb immigration from certain countries.” This is a matter that has had social and political implications in migration policies, and while they are out of the scope of this paper, it is important to consider them in order to understand the rationale behind citizenship tests, which in some cases do not follow the principles of testing.

Apart from their validity and reliability being questioned, in the case of the civics component of the United States Naturalization Test (Winke 2011), the Conocimientos Constitucionales y Socioculturales de España and the Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (DELE) tests in the case of Spain (Bruzos, Erdocia & Khan 2018) or the Australian Citizenship Test (McNamara & Ryan 2011), aspects related to the construct of these tests have been questioned. One of the questions to be answered is what determines a good citizen and how that can be assessed, as countries and governments have different conceptions of citizenship.

A review of citizenship tests in several countries reveals that they usually include two components, one part used to assess candidates’ knowledge of civics and a second part used to assess language (Dillon &

Smith 2018). Generally, governments consider the civics section to be the core component of the naturalization process, as that part usually outweighs the linguistic component. However, candidates must pass both parts in order to acquire citizenship.

2.1. Civics component

There is no specific name for this part of the citizenship test, and each country uses its own term. The Association of Language Testers in Europe (2016) uses the term *Knowledge of Society (KoS)*. However, we will use the term *civics* to refer to the section where candidates are assessed on aspects related to history, geography, economy, government, culture, or laws, among others. Also, both the number of questions and the length of the test vary depending on the country. The level of difficulty of this section also diverges depending on how strict or lenient the country is in terms of migration policies. In his work, Etzioni (2007: 355) reminds us that “in Europe, citizenship tests are by and large more exacting than they are in the United States and Canada, reflecting a less favourable and less accommodating attitude towards immigration.” However, other tests in countries such as the United States have been criticized on the one hand for “not being an accurate measure of citizenship, partly because of [their] focus on esoteric facts and residual questions from the Cold War” (Loring 2012: 199) and on the other hand for being “thin and largely cognitive” (Etzioni 2007: 360).

Some aspects can be considered essential in the civics component of a citizenship test, such as citizens’ responsibilities, which is slightly assessed in the British exam. But other facets tend to be controversial due to their ambiguity, difficulty, or even inappropriacy, such as a video in the Dutch exam that includes “sexually explicit scenes as well as depictions of crime-ridden immigrant ghettos in the Netherlands” (Etzioni 2007: 360). Denmark also includes five unknown questions about current affairs to ensure that candidates follow the news and are up-to-date on aspects related to society in general. All of these questions raise the concern that native-born citizens do not need to be tested on citizenship (Loring 2012), and if they had to, in many cases they would not be able to pass the exams that their countries use for naturalization purposes, as not all individuals know all details about the history of their country or follow the news on a regular basis.

What seems to be a matter of concern in the literature is how indicative passing the civics test is of integration into the society of the country (Shohamy 2009; Bruzos, Erdocia & Khan 2018). It is questionable whether memorizing a list of a hundred questions (for instance) would

demonstrate that the person who is adopting the new citizenship has the skills to be “a good citizen”, but those are issues that are out of the scope of this paper, as we will focus primarily on the language component. As Shohamy (2009: 57) states, “there is a need to determine more sensible criteria for what [a citizenship test] should include.” She further wonders if eligibility to become a citizen should be based on aspects such as “paying taxes, civil behavior, contribution to the community, participation, [or] introducing dimensions of multiculturalism.” In essence, each country focuses on different aspects, depending on the core values established by their governments.

2.2. Language component

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, Canada was the first country to include a linguistic component in their naturalization tests at the beginning of the twentieth century (Burkholder & Filion 2014; Pashby, Ingram & Joshee 2014). Since then, language has been one of the components of citizenship tests, as candidates need to demonstrate certain competence in the official language of the country where they want to become citizens. This is interesting in a country like the United States, where there is no official language, but candidates must demonstrate their ability to speak, read and write in English.

Generally, the language component weighs less than the civics part. In the case of Spain, for instance, candidates must get a minimum of 60% questions correct in the Spanish Culture and Society section and 40% in the language test, and in the United States, they only have to “read aloud and write one out of three sentences correctly to demonstrate an ability to read and write in English”, as stated in the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website (<https://www.uscis.gov>). Speaking is being assessed by the immigration officer during the eligibility interview. On the opposite side of the spectrum, we find examples of countries such as the Russian Federation, where the language component lasts three hours and 15 minutes and includes (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) vocabulary and grammar, (4) listening and (5) speaking, and a minimum of 65% passing rate is required in each subcomponent. In the case of Australia, both English language skills and what candidates know about Australia and Australian citizenship are assessed simultaneously in the same test (Commonwealth of Australia 2020).

The construct of the language component of citizenship tests has been questioned on more than one occasion in the literature (McNamara & Roever 2006; Etzioni 2007; Loring 2012). Shohamy (2009), for instance, wonders whether immigrants need to become flu-

ent in the national language of the new country, an argument that has been ratified by the fact that there are cases in which candidates do not need to do the language test if they meet some criteria, such as being older than 50 and having lived in the United States for 20 years, or in the case of Canada, just being 55 years or older. Shohamy's concern leads us to also question what is considered by fluency and proficiency, as there are multiple views on what governments expect in terms of the language performance for their candidates. European countries, where ALTE has regulated the guidelines for test development, tend to be more consistent, and they require a minimum CEFR B1 level in the language of the country, except for Spain, where level A2 is sufficient. However, there is more variation in non-European countries, which generally tend to be more lenient by requiring a more basic level. In the case of the United States, candidates just have to read and write one sentence in English (apart from answering the civics questions asked by the immigration officer, and in Canada, the minimum level expected in the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) is level 4, the equivalent as adequate proficiency for daily life activities. Australia requires a basic level of English as well.

Likewise, the contents and topics found in several tests show, once again, a great disparity. A more traditional view of language is present in exams that focus on vocabulary related to legislation. To prepare for the United States citizenship test, for instance, candidates can find such a list of vocabulary in the USCIS website (<https://www.uscis.gov>), and the ultimate goal of the exam is "to know how to act on basic commands, follow directions, and respond to questions during the naturalization interview" (USCIS 2020, Module 4), which does not necessarily mean that the candidate is going to be able to function without difficulty in English in everyday tasks or the workplace. European countries and Canada have a more communicative approach in their exams. However, we also find some incongruities between the intended use of the test and what is actually being tested. In the case of Canada, the goal of their exam is to assess "English abilities in a variety of everyday situations, such as communicating with co-workers and superiors in the workplace, interacting with friends, understanding newscasts, and interpreting and responding to written materials." Nevertheless, the required level of proficiency is only CLB level 4 (on a scale of 12 levels), which would not be sufficient to function appropriately in the workplace. According to the levels descriptors, a test taker might need to obtain a minimum of level 7 in order to demonstrate adequate proficiency in workplace and community contexts.

All these issues are related to the concept of *authenticity*, which seems to be flawed for several reasons. Authenticity focuses on how realistic an

exam is by integrating contents and tasks that resemble those that test-takers would normally do in their everyday life. This is what Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined as the interaction between the test and the Target Language Use (TLU), a process that is not present in all citizenship tests. It is true that defining the construct for a language test for citizenship is a challenging task, but that is not a reason to justify the lack of tasks that we would encounter in real-life situations in some cases. The Association of Language Testers in Europe, (2016: 31) reminds us that “it is not sufficient to state that a test is for the purposes of migration and citizenship because even within this area, there is a wide range of reasons for testing migrants.” This idea supports Douglas’ (1997) concept of authenticity, a key aspect in language tests for specific purposes, as it is a feature that differentiates these types of tests from more general-purpose language tests. This brings us to the notion that perhaps the underlying principle of the construct of such tests needs to be revised.

All these inconsistencies lead us to claim that aspects such as test *validity* and *reliability* are also in jeopardy. A classical definition of test validity refers to the “quality which most affects the value of a test, prior to, though dependent on reliability. A measure is valid if it does what it is intended to do, which is typically to act as an indicator of an abstract concept” (Davies *et al.* 1999: 221). Based on that definition and without the need for in-depth analyses, it can be stated that some language tests for citizenship lack content or construct validity. The simple fact of reading aloud one sentence is not a valid way to assess fluency and proficiency, regardless of how we want to define these two terms. Likewise, concurrent and predictive validity are also under question in contexts like Canada, where the level needed to pass the test differs from the expected use of language.

A comparison of different tests can help us have a broader view of the requirements for the language component in different countries. Table 1 includes information related to the exam(s) used to assess language proficiency, the components included in those tests, the minimum level required to pass the exam, and the format. The countries that appear in the table have been selected because they are listed as the top countries with more immigration in the year 2019 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2019). While immigration does not necessarily mean that the individuals would become citizens of the country where they migrate to, the number of people who acquire citizenship in these countries exceeds the average number found in other countries. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are two destinations with a large number of immigrants, have not been included in the table, as obtaining citizenship by naturalization is not an easy task in those countries.

	Exam	Components	Minimum level required	Format
United States	Interview with USCIS officer	Speaking: The ability to speak English is determined by the USCIS officer during the eligibility interview. Reading: Read aloud one out of three sentences correctly. Writing: Write one out of three sentences correctly.	Not specified	In-person with USCIS officer
	https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/the-naturalization-interview-and-test			
Germany	Any official exam that certifies CEFR Level B1. Recommended: • Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer A2-B1 (at level B1) • Zertifikat Deutsch B1 / telc Deutsch B1	Oral and written German language skills equivalent to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.	CEFR B1 level in German	Paper and pencil
	https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/migration/naturalization/naturalization-node.html			
Russian Federation	TORFL (Test of Russian as a Foreign Language)	Reading Writing Vocabulary and Grammar Listening Speaking	The base level of general proficiency in Russian	Paper and pencil
	https://www.icenter31.com/Russian-Citizenship-Test/			
United Kingdom	A Secure English Language Test (SELT). Any of these options: • IELTS Life Skills provided by IELTS SELT Consortium • IELTS provided by IELTS SELT Consortium • Integrated Skills in English (ISE) provided by Trinity College London • Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE) provided by Trinity College London	Reading Writing Listening Speaking	CEFR B1 level in English	Paper and pencil GESE and the Listening and Speaking parts of ISE can be done online
	https://www.gov.uk/english-language/approved-english-language-qualifications			

Table 1. *Language tests for citizenship comparison*
Continúa...

	Exam	Components	Minimum level required	Format
France	D+ Diploma or a certificate issued by an organization to which the label "français langue d'intégration" was issued. Recommended: • Test de connaissance du français (TCF), by France Éducation International • Test d'évaluation du français (TEF) Naturalisation, by la Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris Île-de-France	Reading Writing Listening Speaking	CEFR B1 level in French	TCF: Both paper and pencil and computer-based at a testing center TEF Naturalisation: Computer-based at a testing center
https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F2213				
Canada	Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP)	Listening and Speaking	Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 4 (Adequate proficiency for daily life activities)	Computer-based at a testing center
https://www.celpip.ca				
Australia	Language embedded within the civics test	Part 1. Australia and its people Part 2. Australia's democratic beliefs, rights and liberties Part 3. Government and the law in Australia	Not specified. The common Bond booklet states "Basic knowledge of the English language"	Paper and pencil
https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship/test-and-interview				
Italy	Any of these options: • CELI 2, by the University of Perugia • CILS B1, by the University of Siena	CELI 2: Comprehension of written texts; Production of written texts; Comprehension of oral texts; Oral production. CILS B1: Listening; Reading comprehension and grammar reflection; Written production; Oral production	CEFR B1 level in Italian	CELI 2: Paper and pencil CILS B1: Paper and pencil
https://www.interno.gov.it/temi/cittadinanza-e-altri-diritti-civili/cittadinanza/cittadinanza-invia-tua-domanda				
Spain	DELE, by the Instituto Cervantes	Reading Writing Listening Speaking	CEFR A2 level or above in Spanish	Paper and pencil
https://exámenes.cervantes.es/es/dele/que-es				

Table 1. *Language tests for citizenship comparison*
Continúa...

	Exam	Components	Minimum level required	Format
Switzerland	A Français, Italiano, Deutsch in Switzerland (FIDE) exam to demonstrate skills in one of Switzerland's national languages (German, French or Italian)	Listening Reading Writing Speaking	Written part: CEFR A2 level Oral part: CEFR B1 level	The language tests are only available where the language is spoken within Switzerland Interview with the applicant
	https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/countries/eda-all/en/faq-aufenthalt-und-niederlassung-sprachnachweis_EN.pdf			

Table 1. *Language tests for citizenship comparison*

As seen in Table 1, the delivery method is another characteristic to consider when categorizing language citizenship tests. While some countries are concerned about the security of their tests by offering only a paper and pencil version, there are other countries where the tests are computerized or where candidates can opt for either version, which is gradually becoming the norm.

3. Computer-based language citizenship tests

In the previous section, we talked about some important aspects of language tests. If principles such as validity or reliability are violated, a language test cannot be considered good enough to be used in any given context. However, it is also necessary to consider the concept of *practicality* (Bachman and Palmer 1996; Brown 2004), which can be considered equally important both in test development and delivery. For Cately (2014), practicality is essential for a language test, as “features such as time constraints, financial limitations, and easiness in administration and scoring are paramount factors.” From these words, we need to pay special attention to the notion of administration and scoring, as they are critical aspects that help us in our justification for the need for more computer-based language citizenship tests. In his state of the art of language tests in the digital era, Fernández Álvarez (2016: 62) reminds us that “computer-based tests (CBTs) started being developed and implemented to simplify the administration and scoring of the tests,” which is only one of the many reasons why CBTs can be used.

The literature reveals a number of benefits and advantages associated with CBTs, such as (1) faster scoring, reporting, and access to results (Kikis-Papadakis & Kollias 2009), (2) accuracy, consistency, and relia-

bility of results (van Lent 2009), or (3) better quality of sound in listening tasks through the use of headphones from the part of test-takers (Parshall 2001), among others. In fact, these types of tests are prevalent in many educational contexts as a reflection of the instructional and technological changes that are occurring nowadays (OECD 2010; Genç 2012; Kate Tzu 2012). For Scheuermann & Pereira (2008), as cited in Yan Piaw (2012: 655), CBTs are considered as “a catalyst for change, bringing transformation of learning, pedagogy, and curricula in educational institutions.” However, evidence shows that countries are still somehow reticent with the use of computerized tests for naturalization purposes, as seen in Table 1, where almost half of the countries included in the analysis still prefer to assess their prospective candidates with a paper and pencil test.

However, several countries are already assessing the language proficiency of their candidates with the use of CBTs in their naturalization tests, which is the case of the United Kingdom, France, Canada, or Italy. In some European countries, candidates have the option to choose the exam they want to do, and there is usually an exam that has been adapted to be delivered on a computer. In the case of the United States, while the country asserts that the test is delivered with the help of technology, the only advance is that the sentence that the candidate has to read is shown on a digital tablet, which will also be used to write out the sentence that the immigration officer reads out. The website <https://examenexam.com> is a useful tool that may help us find the delivery mode of different language exams, including tests used for citizenship purposes.

3.1. Test Security and proctoring

Test security is one of the main concerns for citizenship tests, which is one of the reasons why paper and pencil tests are still the priority in some countries. As a matter of fact, the term used in the United Kingdom to refer to these tests is *Secure English Language Tests*. This perception of paper and pencil tests being safer than CBTs is contrasted by van Lent’s (2009: 86) argument about security in computerized contexts, where both form security (by “prevent[ing] unauthorized access to test forms prior to administration”) and item security (by “prevent[ing] examinees who have already tested from assisting those yet to test”) are safeguarded. To expand on the idea of test security, Harding, Brunfaut & Unger (2020:666) talk about *securitization*, a concept first proposed by Buzan *et al.* (1998) and later expanded by Bigo (2002) and Huysmans (2006, 2014), to refer to the “connection between border security and language testing policy and practice.” Thus, we could talk about what we define as *e-securitization*, a concept that goes

beyond physical borders to also include boundaries related to cyberspace, virtual environments, and the Internet. For Fernández Álvarez (2016: 69), “security, identity, and authentication” are aspects that need further exploration, a concern that is also shared by Harding, Brunfaut & Unger (2020: 667):

there is a lack of research on how language testing is positioned with respect to security concerns and the way in which language testing as a process, language testers as professionals, and test-takers as learners are constructed through discourse around security in official documentation.

In his list of benefits of CBTs, van Lent (2009: 86) mentions that computerized tests can help “standardize test administration conditions and improve exam proctoring,” which is crucial during the testing process. We can see that online proctoring is common in educational contexts due to the increase of online and virtual courses, which has been affected by the world COVID-19 pandemic. It is common to find institutions all over the globe that are looking for new ways to ensure their online tests are secure and proctored. Simple proctoring techniques include video surveillance with services like Skype®, Blackboard Collaborate®, or Zoom®, among many others. However, there are more advanced protocols based on monitoring software that allows proctors to communicate with candidates when specific behaviors are identified. At the same time, the software has the capacity to detect voices, candidates tilting heads, missing faces, multiple faces, or background noises (D’Souza & Siegfeldt 2017; Weiner & Hurtz 2017). Two of the questions that need further research are whether (1) online proctoring supports and improves test security and (2) it represents a cost-effective model (Karim, Kaminsky & Behrend 2014; Weiner & Hurtz 2017).

In the case of language tests for citizenship, nowadays proctoring is mostly done in person due to the security reasons and impact implications (Rios & Liu 2017). It is true that some of the tests are computerized, but candidates are required to go to a testing center to do the test, where there is no need for virtual proctoring. This is something that will rapidly change as countries introduce new testing delivery methods to adapt to the new times, realities and conditions. At the moment, candidates can only prepare for the tests online or do mock exams from the convenience of their home, but testing conditions will soon allow candidates to also test from a remote location which does not necessarily have to be a testing center. In that case, online or remote proctoring needs to go a step further in order to increase and ensure test security and e-securitization, as we mentioned above. Here is where the fields of language testing, cyber security and artificial intelligence need to collab-

orate to create tests that allow test-takers to complete their language tests from anywhere at any time with rigor and above all, e-securitization. This is a whole new area for research in the coming years.

4. Technology and citizenship tests

In this section, we present some examples of (1) language citizenship tests that are CBTs, (2) phone apps that help candidates prepare for their citizenship tests used in several countries, and (3) a few MOOCs developed to prepare users for naturalization tests and citizenship criteria. The examples include a brief description of their sections, use and resources.

4.1. CBTs

Some countries have integrated technology in the delivery of their language for citizenship tests for several years, but many countries still use paper and pencil tests. It seems that exceptional circumstances must happen so that changes occur. The situation created by the pandemic has made testing companies adapt to the new situation and convert their tests. It is not uncommon to see messages like “Same exam, different delivery,” in testing companies’ websites, such as Trinity, which indicates that “In response to the situation created by COVID-19, we have introduced a way for you to take your English speaking and listening test in a Trinity SELT test centre during this time of pandemic” (SELT test centres and COVID-19 - what to expect, 2020). This is achieved by introducing a one-to-one online speaking and listening test with an examiner via video conference. The length, content, and skills assessed are not modified.

Here we present information about the tests used in several countries from Table 1, presented in alphabetical order:

4.1.1. Canada

Developed by Paragon Testing Enterprises, the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP) is the exam approved by the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office for citizenship purposes (Wu, Stone & Liu 2016). There are two versions of the test, and the one used for naturalization is the CELPIP - General LS Test, which evaluates the test taker’s English speaking and listening skills. The exam is delivered by a computer and has a duration of one hour approximately. Some of the features included in the exam

are a personal timer, word counter, and spell-check. At the moment, this exam can only be taken in Canada, but there are more than 40 locations within the country where candidates can do it every week, prior to registration. The listening part includes six different parts and has a duration of 47-55 minutes. On the other hand, the Speaking component has eight tasks that must be completed within 15-20 minutes. In order to pass the test, candidates need to achieve Level 4 in the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) scale, which is adequate proficiency for daily life activities.

Candidates can access free online sample tests from their website <https://secure.paragontesting.ca/InstructionalProducts/>. Figure 1 below is an example from one of the sample tests, which is similar to the real test. As shown in the figure, instructions and a link to the audio are presented on the left side. On the right, candidates get a multiple-choice item with four options accompanied by a timer that indicates the time left to answer this item.

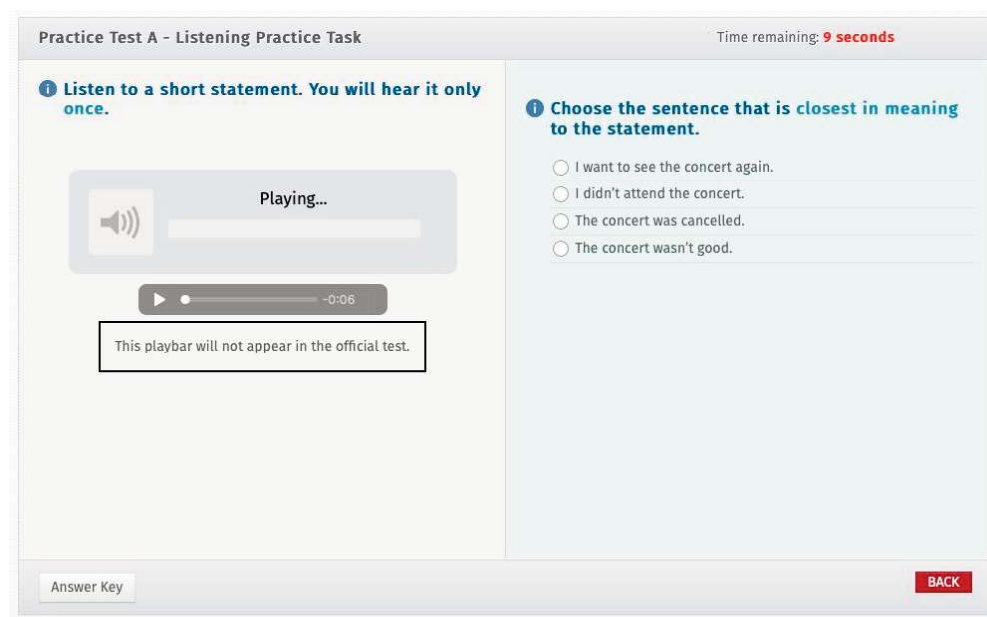


Figure 1. *Sample CELPI listening task*

4.1.2. France

The Test d'évaluation du français (TEF) Naturalisation, with a duration of 90 minutes, is one of the exams recognized by the French Ministry for the Interior to apply for French citizenship. It is a computer-based exam that focuses on the four skills: oral/written comprehension and oral/written expression in French. Reading, listening and writing are completed on the computer. Speaking, however, is a role-play with the

examiner related to a short document about daily life. The exam has to be taken in any of the more than 200 certified testing centers all over the world. Candidates need to achieve a minimum CEFR level B1. On their website <https://prepmyfuture.com/tef-english>, candidates can access a platform to prepare for the exam. Figure 2 shows a sample reading task with a prompt followed by a multiple-choice item taken from the online learning platform, similar to tasks in the real exam.

COMPRÉHENSION ÉCRITE

QUESTIONS 2 / 50

Promenades à cheval sur la plage
Informations au vieux port

On peut lire cette information

A en ville

B à la mer

C à la montagne

D à la campagne

VALIDER

Figure 2. *Sample TEF Naturalisation reading task*

Another alternative to assess French proficiency is the Test de connaissance du français (TCF), by France Éducation International. This is a paper and pencil test that offers the option to be done on a computer at an approved testing site. This test has two parts: listening (30 minutes) and speaking (12 minutes). The format is similar to the TEF Naturalisation, as shown in the sample listening task in Figure 3, which includes an image to provide visual support. The task is taken from the test simulator tool found on the following website: https://apprendre.tv5monde.com/en/tcf/simulation-du-tcf#tcf_header.

7/80 88:48

COMPRÉHENSION ORALE

Écoutez les 4 propositions. Choisissez celle qui correspond à l'image et cliquez sur le bouton correspondant.



Cliquez sur votre réponse

- A Réponse A
- B Réponse B
- C Réponse C
- D Réponse D

Arrêter le test
Question suivante →

Figure 3. *Sample TCF for French nationality listening task*

Additional resources to prepare for the test are available on multiple websites, such as <https://www.france-education-international.fr/tcf-tout-public/comment-sy-preparer>.

4.1.3. United Kingdom

From all the tests that the United Kingdom accepts to certify English proficiency, the Integrated Skills in English (ISE) and the Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE) Secure English Language Test are the only two tests that offer the option of computer-based delivery. They are both developed and provided by Trinity College London. The ISE exam includes the four skills, while GESE focuses only on speaking and listening. Candidates can do the exams at any of the 16 Trinity SELT centers across the United Kingdom. Candidates must obtain a minimum CEFR B1 level.

The ISE exam includes two different modules. The Reading and Writing part lasts two hours, and the Speaking and Listening part has a duration of 18 minutes. On the other hand, the GESE exam assesses only listening and speaking. This exam is 10 minutes long and has two parts: a presentation about a topic for discussion with the examiner and a short conversation with the examiner about two subject areas. The GESE exam and the speaking and listening part of the ISE are offered online due to COVID-19. Candidates are allowed to do the one-to-one parts with an examiner via video conference in a testing center.

4.2. Phone apps

Additional resources to prepare for citizenship exams are provided in certain countries via apps for cell phones. The majority of the available

apps are designed to help candidates prepare for the civics component of the tests. In Spain, even though the exams are delivered by paper and pencil, we find a free app developed by the Instituto Cervantes to prepare for the CCSE (conocimientos constitucionales y socioculturales de España) exam that includes 300 questions from the exam preparation guide. The app simulates the exam and includes both multiple-choice and true-false questions.



Figure 4. *Sample item in the CCSE test preparation app*

A similar app is offered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to help candidates test their knowledge of U.S. history and government. This app has the peculiarity that provides audio, which allows users to hear the questions. Even though the official exam is in English, users also have the option to change the language to Spanish in the case they want to study and practice in their native language. The practice test offered in the app includes 20 questions with feedback at the end for both correct and incorrect answers.

Among the commercial apps, we want to highlight an app called ‘Life in the UK 2020 Test’, developed by Deedal Studios Inc., originally created to prepare for that particular test. However, it now includes questions for the tests in Australia, Canada, and the United States. The free version offers a limited number of questions in each test, and more features such as flashcards, a larger pool of questions, or access to courses, are added in the upgraded paid version.

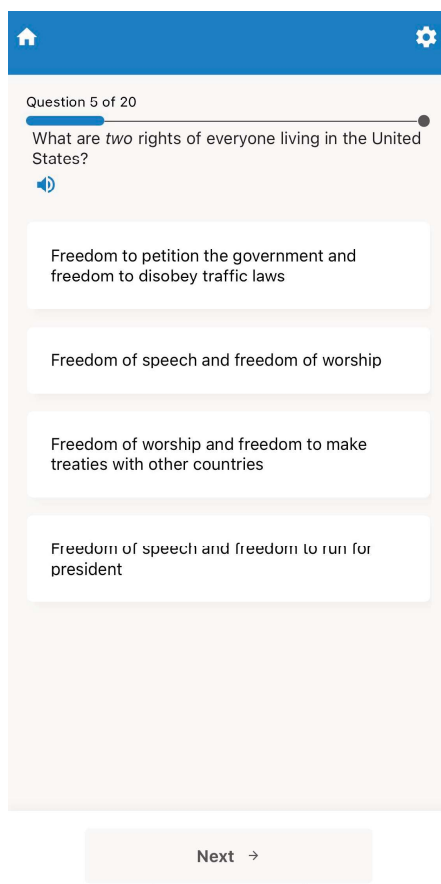


Figure 5. Sample item in the USCIS test preparation app

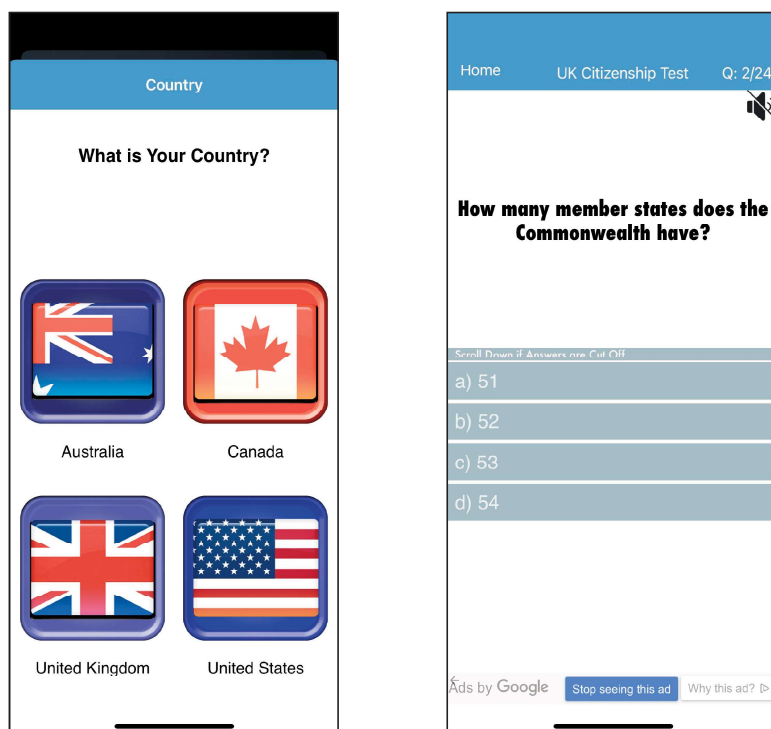


Figure 6. Life in the UK 2020 Test app

The only app that focuses on language preparation for citizenship purposes is found in France. It is called Français 3.0, and it is developed by the Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris Île-de-France to prepare for the TEF exam. The app is designed for users to test their level in general French and to practice for any of the different versions of the TEF test, including TEF for Naturalisation. The app simulates the real test and includes items to practice both listening and reading comprehension together with grammar and vocabulary and is similar to the platform shown in Figure 2.

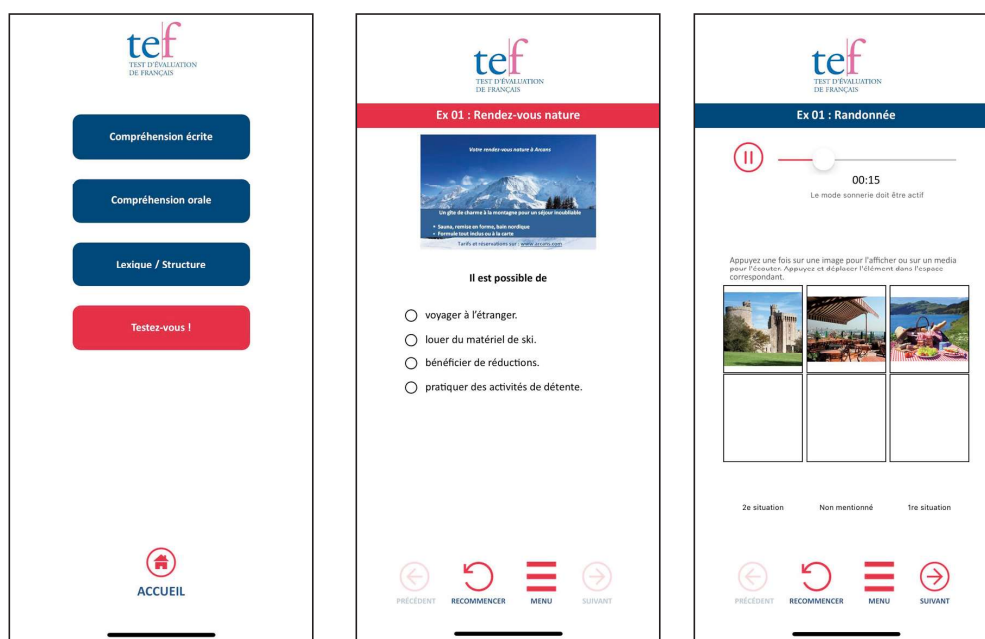


Figure 7. Sample Français 3.0 app tasks

With the help of this app, candidates can locate testing centers and register for any available tests. Additionally, there are grammatical explanations organized around certain topics that can be useful in case users want to review any aspect in particular.

4.3. MOOCS for citizenship test preparation

While there are some Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) aimed at preparing for citizenship tests, indeed, its variety is not too large. In this section, we present a quick overview of those MOOCs that are provided for that purpose. The list is very limited, which proves that there is a need for more work in this area.

In the case of the United States, we can only find one MOOC offered to prepare students to pass the naturalization test. The title of the course is ‘U.S. Citizenship Test Preparation Course’, and it is offered by Alison with the aim of preparing candidates to pass both the

language and the civics components of the naturalization test. With only one module and a total duration of two hours, this course offers the possibility of obtaining a certificate after successful completion with a score of at least 80% and paying a fee. Even though this resource is advertised on the Alison website as a MOOC (<https://alison.com/course/u-s-citizenship-test-preparation>), its content and format differ from a typical MOOC. This is just another resource with a practice naturalization test.

On the other hand, Coursera offers the course ‘Citizenship and U.S. Immigration’, provided by the University of Emory. While the topic of this course is citizenship, its focus is on the law for the acquisition of citizenship, immigration law, the role of the federal government in terms of immigration, and reforms of immigration law. It is a good resource for users to have a better understanding of the process, but the main objective is not test preparation. As opposed to the first MOOC, this one is divided into modules and has a duration of five weeks. It can be accessed from <https://www.my-mooc.com/es/mooc/immigration/>.

Canvas offers a three-module MOOC to prepare for the Australian Citizenship test. The course, found at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/1374946>, includes a list of resources, practice quizzes, and discussion forums where participants can interact with other users. The grade book allows students to track their progress throughout the course, and badges are earned when specific tasks, such as the introduction discussion or the module quizzes, are completed.

Wellesley College offers the course ‘Italian Language and Culture: Advanced’ on edX. The course can be accessed from <https://www.edx.org/course/italian-language-and-culture-advanced-2019-2020>. The contents of the course include both language and cultural aspects that will allow participants to prepare for both the CELI 2 or the CILS B1. The language part includes videos, podcasts, grammar charts, video lessons, readings, and a discussion board to communicate with other students. The culture part focuses on a variety of topics from economy, politics, art, music, literature and immigration, and the Italian citizenship law.

4.3.1. Citizenship Language Pack for Migrants in Europe (L-Pack)

Perhaps, the most noteworthy MOOC that is available in the ‘Citizenship Language Pack for Migrants in Europe (L-Pack)’ training course, and that is the reason why we present it in a separate section. This resource can be accessed from <http://www.l-pack.eu>. Funded by the European Commission, it is the product of the collaboration between several European adult training organizations that joined to develop materials addressed to adult migrants who want to learn and practice any of the following languages: Italian, Spanish, German,

Lithuanian, Greek, and Czech. From the project home page, shown in Figure 8, users can choose the target language they want to prepare. All the contents, independently of the language, are similar. They include written materials with dialogues, exercises, grammar, and cultural information together with a series of videos and audio tracks that correspond to the dialogues in those materials. The project contains also two guides (one for teachers and one for learners) on how to use the materials.

The course is divided into 12 modules that focus on everyday situations that immigrants would face, such as applying for a job, going to the doctor, finding an apartment, or communicating with an officer or some school personnel. The list of topics is common to all the language versions of the course.

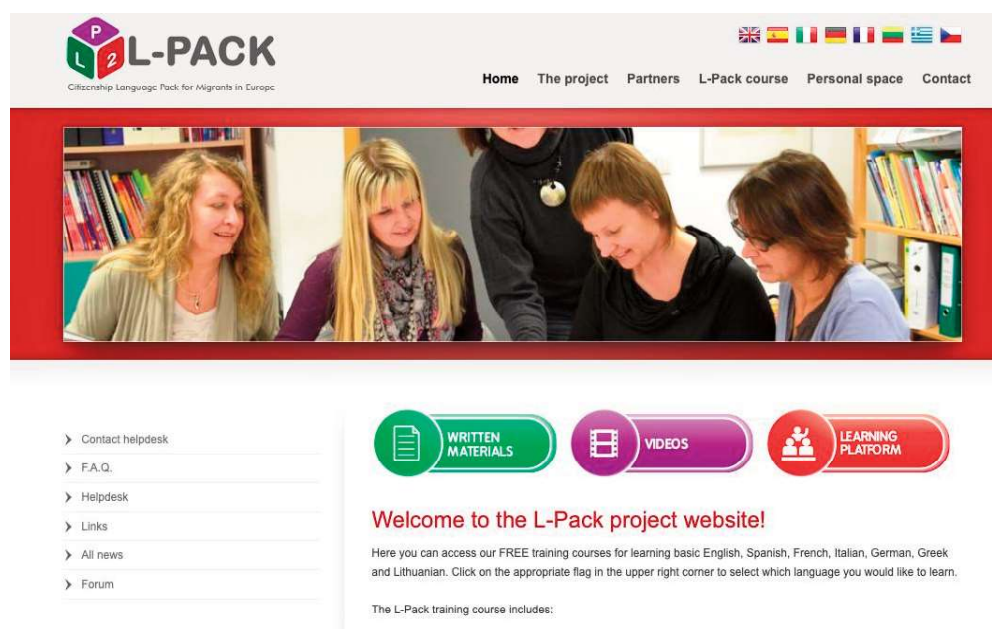


Figure 8. *Citizenship Language Pack for Migrants in Europe (L-Pack)*

Figure 9 shows a sample from Module 5, which focuses on health. The situation depicted is based on a visit to the doctor. In this case, users have to watch a video where a doctor and a patient interact. A series of comprehension activities are presented to the students once they watch the video.

Another feature of the course(s) is that users have access to an online platform where they can practice their pronunciation by recording their voices. In this platform, they can also communicate with other users and create their own learning plan. Perhaps the learning plan is one of the most interesting aspects of the platform. It is designed to help users track their progress and set goals for a certain period of time. Based on the self-evaluation that the student does at the beginning of the learning

period, a series of objectives with recommended activities are presented to help them achieve those goals.

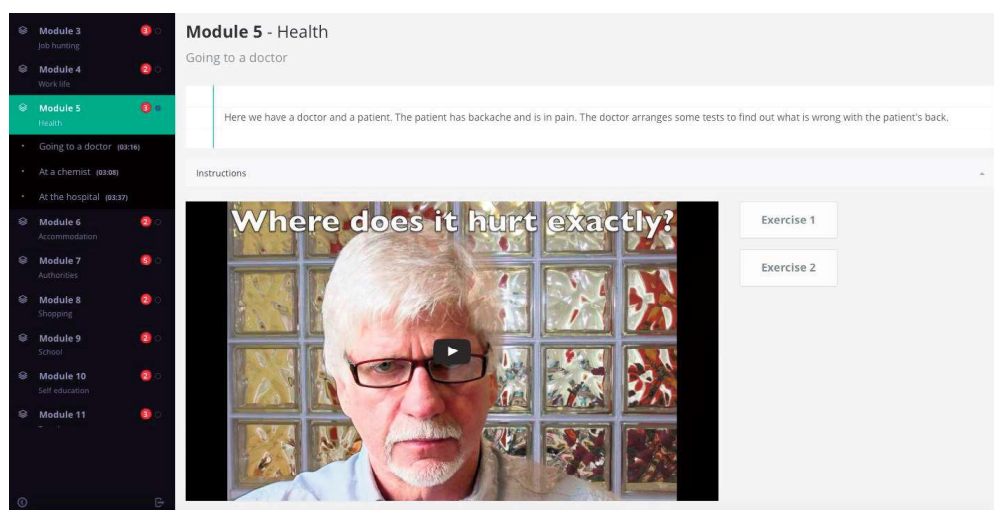


Figure 9. Sample L-Pack module

6. Conclusion and future directions

As we start the third decade of the 21st century, we can clearly realize that we are living in a world that is rapidly changing. However, there are fields where evolution seems to be at a different pace. One of the difficulties we still encounter is the lack of interdisciplinary collaboration (Moirano, Sánchez & Štěpánek 2020), which is evident at different levels, and that is one of the challenges we must face in a new era. On the one hand, we have the field of language testing, which has experienced enormous advances during the last decades (Fernández Álvarez 2016), but language testing as a discipline cannot function in isolation in many cases. On the other hand, advances in other fields such as migration policies and governance (Castles 2004) or language policies and planning (Strani 2020) are affected by politics. All these differences create gaps that are difficult to fill without a strategic plan that is based on collaboration among disciplines.

Technology is a common nexus that can bring solutions, but it cannot be effective if foundational principles, such as a clear construct and impact validation, are missing. Any language test, regardless of its intended purpose, first needs to adhere to the guidelines for test development established by international language testing organizations. Second, we need to take into consideration Bachman's (1996) conceptualization of Target Language Use in order to establish criteria to determine both the construct of the test and the expected outcomes on the part of the users. Finally, aspects related to the delivery of the test need to be reeval-

uated in order to adapt and adjust to the new trends in the field of testing in general. The analysis presented in this paper shows a mismatch between theory and practice at these three facets. We find language tests for citizenship that lack the principles of validity and reliability, others that are valid tools but not for citizenship purposes, and others that rely on the traditional paper-and-pencil delivery method. In other words, when tests are not designed properly and they do not follow any principles, the delivery method becomes something secondary. An additional issue would be the need to define what being a citizen is and what does it really imply.

One of the arguments in favor of the use of paper-and-pencil tests is security. Tests for citizenship fall within the category of high-stakes tests and that serves as the justification for in-person test delivery. However, that is just a small step in the whole process of naturalization. Sooner or later, users will need to participate in an interview with an officer or delegate where they can demonstrate their civic behavior and adequacy to become a citizen. The question here is at what point language proficiency has to be assessed, how and what for. Computer delivery, as we have seen, facilitates the process and ensures validity and reliability, but just a few countries have taken the step of using CBTs for their language component. It is true that if the inclusion of a language test was a gatekeeper to avoid immigration from certain countries at the beginning of the 20th century, why wouldn't the use of technology and CBTs be another gatekeeper in the 21st century to limit migration from areas with a high percentage of computer illiteracy? This is a question that needs to be further explored but it is also related to culture, education and also to socio-economics.

If security is one of the issues, then we need to put our attention on how to ensure not only that test takers are correctly identified but also that the tests are being done under the best conditions. E-securitization can only be ensured with adequate proctoring. Here, again, we see the need for collaboration among fields, and both cyber security and artificial intelligence play a very important role. The future of online proctoring depends much on how these two fields develop. Research on the use of multi-modal biometrics will be the key to improving aspects such as facial recognition to deter impersonation, keyboard behavior analysis and patterns of unusual responses, to mention just a few.

There is a sentiment that criteria for naturalization need to be revised to adapt to the new century and to adjust to the global society we are moving towards. Citizenship tests need some revision, as has been argued in the paper, but perhaps they should also be complemented with the completion of other tools and resources like the L-Pack project. If the main reason why language is assessed in citizenship tests is to

ensure that users can function as citizens and communicate in the language of the country, then the assessment process needs to be as authentic as possible. Completing a course and a final exam can be much more effective and useful for a citizen than just writing a sentence or passing a certification test based on topics that have nothing to do with everyday life. But again, there is a lot of work ahead of us. All in all, we are in a critical moment when technology can mean a step forward in citizenship tests but it needs to be supported by research and better analyses of what being a citizen in reality means.

Miguel Fernández Álvarez
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid
m.fernandez@upm.es
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6420-8500>

Jesús García Laborda
Universidad de Alcalá-Instituto Franklin
Jesus.garcialaborda@uah.es
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0125-4611>

Recepción: 07/05/2021; Aceptación: 17/09/2021

References

- Association of Language Testers in Europe. 2016. Language tests for access, integration and citizenship: An outline for policymakers. "http://www.alte.org/attachments/files/alte_lami_language_test_policy_booklet_web_en_0%20m4wh.pdf" http://www.alte.org/attachments/files/alte_lami_language_test_policy_booklet_web_en_0m4wh.pdf [consulted on 21 July 2020]
- Bachman, L. F. & Palmer, A. 1996. *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bigo, D. 2002. "Security and immigration: Toward a critique of the governmentality of unease". *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 27. 63-92.
- Brown, D. H. 2004. *Language Assessment: Principles and Practices*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.
- Bruzos, A., Erdocia, I., & Khan, K. 2018. "The path to naturalization in Spain: Old ideologies, new language testing regimes and the problem of test use". *Language Policy*, 17. 419-441.
- Burkholder, C., & Filion, M. 2014. "Educating adults for citizenship: Critiquing "adequate" language practices and Canada's citizenship test". *Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education*, 27:1. 1-13.
- Buzan, B., Wæver, O., & de Wilde, J. 1998. *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Castles, S. 2004. "The Factors That Make and Unmake Migration Policies". *The International Migration Review*, 38:3. 852-884.
- Catelly, Y.-M. 2014. "Optimizing language assessment – focus on test specification and piloting". *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 128. 393-398.
- Commonwealth of Australia. 2020. "*Australian Citizenship. Our Common Bond*". Belconnen: Communication and Engagement Branch of the Department of Home Affairs.
- Cooke, M. 2009. "Barrier or entitlement? The language and citizenship agenda in the United Kingdom". *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 6:1. 71-77.
- Davies, A., Brown, A., Edler, C., Hill, K., Lumley, T. and McNamara, T. 1999. *Dictionary of Language Testing. Studies in Language Testing 7*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- De Jong, J. H. A. L., Lennig, M., Kerkhoff, A., & Poelmans, P. 2009. "Development of a test of spoken Dutch for prospective immigrants". *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 6:1. 41-60.
- Dillon, H., & Smith, A. 2018. *Life in the UK Test: Study Guide 2019 Digital Edition: The essential study guide for the British citizenship test*. U.K.: Red Squirrel Publishing.
- Douglas, D. 1997. "Language for specific purposes testing". In *Encyclopedia of language in education. Volume 7: Language testing and assessment*, C. Clapham & D. Carson (eds.), 111-120. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.
- D'Souza, K. A. & Siegfeldt, D. V. 2017. "A Conceptual Framework for Detecting Cheating in Online and Take Home Exams". *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 15. 370-391.
- Etzioni, A. 2007. "Citizenship Tests: A Comparative, Communitarian Perspective". *The Political Quarterly*, 78:3. 353-363.
- Fernández Álvarez, M. 2016. "Language Testing in the Digital Era". In *Technology-Enhanced Language Learning for Specialized Domains. Practical applications and mobility*, E. Martín-Monje, I. Elorza & B. García Riaza (eds.), 61-72. New York: Routledge.
- Genç, H. 2012. "An evaluation study of a call application: with belt or without belt". *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11:2. 44-54.
- Harding, L., Brunfaut, T. & Unger, J. W. 2020. "Language Testing in the 'Hostile Environment': The Discursive Construction of 'Secure English Language Testing' in the UK". *Applied Linguistics*, 41:5. 662-687.
- Huysmans, J. 2006. *The Politics of Insecurity*. London: Routledge.
- Huysmans, J. 2014. *Security Unbound: Enacting Democratic Limits*. London: Routledge.
- International Organization for Migration. 2019. *World Migration Report 2020*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Isbell, D. R. & Kremmel, B. In press. "Test review: Current options in at-home language proficiency tests for making high-stakes decisions". *Language Testing*. First Published July 16, 2020 at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0265532220943483> [consulted on 10 June 2020]
- Jupp, J. 2002. *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Karim, M., Kaminsky, S. & Behrend, T. 2014. "Cheating, Reactions, and Performance in Remotely Proctored Testing: An Exploratory Experimental Study". *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 29. 1-18.
- Kate Tzu, C. C. 2012. "Elementary EFL teachers' computer phobia and computer self-efficacy in Taiwan". *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 11:2. 100-107.
- Kikis-Papadakis, K. & Kollias, A. 2009. "Reflections on Paper-and-Pencil Tests to eAssessments: Narrow and Broadband Paths to 21st-century Challenges". In *The Transition to Computer-Based Assessment. New Approaches to Skills Assessment and Implications for Large-scale Testing*, F. Scheuermann & J. Björnsson (eds.) 99-103. Ispra, Italy: European Commission.
- Kunnan, A. J. 2009. "Testing for citizenship: The U. S. naturalization test". *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 6:1. 89-97.
- Laversuch, I. M. 2008. "Putting Germany's language tests to the test: An examination of the development, implementation and efficacy of using language proficiency tests to mediate German citizenship". *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 9:3, 282-298.
- Loring, A. 2012. "The Meaning of 'Citizenship': Tests, Policy, and English Proficiency". *The CATESOL Journal* 24:1. 198-219.
- Löwenheim, O. & Gazit, O. 2009. "Power and Examination: A Critique of Citizenship Tests". *Security Dialogue*, 40:2. 145-167.
- McNamara, T. & Roever, C. 2006. "Language Tests and Social Identity". *Language Learning*, 56:2. 149-202.

- McNamara, T. & Ryan, K. 2011. "Fairness Versus Justice in Language Testing: The Place of English Literacy in the Australian Citizenship Test". *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 8:2. 161-178.
- Moirano, R., Sánchez, M. A. & Štěpánek, L. 2020. "Creative interdisciplinary collaboration: A systematic literature review". *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 35. 1-14.
- OECD. 2010. *PISA Computer-based assessment of student skills in science*. Retrieved November 9, 2020, from <http://www.oecd.org/publishing/corrigenda>.
- Parshall, C. 2001. "Audio Computer Based Tests (CBTs): An Initial Framework for the Use of Sound in Computerized Tests". *Educational Measurement Issues and Practice*, 20:2. 5-15.
- Pashby, K., Ingram, L., & Joshee, R. 2014. "Discovering, recovering, and covering-up Canada: Tracing historical citizenship discourses in K-12 and adult immigrant citizenship education". *Canadian Journal of Education*, 37:2. 1-26.
- Scheuermann, F., & Pereira, A. G. 2008. "Towards a Research Agenda on Computer-based Assessment. Challenges and Needs for European Educational Measurement. JRC Scientific and Technical Report, 23306 EN". Retrieved October 30, 2021, from <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3f075ad3-f25b-4ed4-a16f-7dafbb225042#> [consulted on 30 October 2021].
- SELT. 2020. "Test centres and COVID-19 - what to expect". Retrieved November 11, 2020, from <https://www.trinitycollege.com/qualifications/SELT/SELT-centres-what-to-expect>. [consulted on 11 November 2020].
- Shohamy, E. 2009. "Language tests for immigrants: Why language? Why tests? Why citizenship". In *Discourses on Language and Integration: Critical Perspectives on Language Testing Regimes in Europe*, G. Hogan-Brun, C. Mar-Molinero & P. Stevenson (eds.), 45-59. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Strani, K. 2020. "Multilingualism and Politics Revisited: The State of the Art". In *Multilingualism and Politics. Revisiting Multilingual Citizenship*, K. Strani (ed.), Palgrave Mcmillan: Cham, 17-46.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2019. "Population Facts No. 2019/4, September 2019: International migrants numbered 272 million in 2019, continuing an upward trend in all major world regions". https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/populationfacts/docs/MigrationStock2019_PopFacts_2019-04.pdf, [consulted on 28 September 2021].
- USCIS. 2020. "Adult Citizenship Education Strategies for Volunteers". Retrieved <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/resources-for-educational-programs/educational-products-for-educators-and-program-administrators/adult-citizenship-education-strategies-for-volunteers>. [consulted on 28 September 2021].
- van Lent, G. 2009. "Risks and Benefits of CBT versus PBT in High-Stakes Testing. Introducing key concerns and decision making aspects for educational authorities". In *The Transition to Computer-Based Assessment. New Approaches to Skills Assessment and Implications for Large-scale Testing*, F. Scheuermann & J. Björnsson (eds.), 83-91. Ispra, Italy: European Commission.
- Weiner, J. A. & Hurtz, G. M. 2017. "A Comparative Study of Online Remote Proctored versus Onsite Proctored High-Stakes Exams". *Journal of Applied Testing Technology*, 18:1. 13-20.
- Winke, P. 2011. "Investigating the Reliability of the Civics Component of the U.S. Naturalization Test". *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 8:4. 317-341.
- Wu, A. D., Stone, J. E., & Liu, Y. 2016. "Developing a validity argument through abductive reasoning with an empirical demonstration of the latent class analysis". *International Journal of Testing*, 16:1. 54-70.
- Yan Piaw, C. 2012. "Replacing paper-based testing with computer-based testing in assessment: Are we doing wrong?". *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 64. 655-664.