

PREFACE

I have been involved with English language testing since 1960. During that time I have scored, developed, written, constructed, pretested, and evaluated English as a Second Language (ESL) tests. Many who speak English as a second language have been my friends and colleagues as well as my students.

Many students of English are required to show that they can perform successfully as students in such fields as architecture, business, engineering, medicine, music, social work, etc. However, they are not sure of the proficiency level they should have reached in English to do this. Also, they are not sure what will be on the English test they are required to take.

These students wonder about the content of the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) test. They ask how to prepare for it. They are worried, and obviously what they need is a sample test to show them the format and difficulty level of the actual test, so that they can evaluate themselves.

Some of these students are proficient in English and should not worry about their performance on the test. They do not need more English instruction or practice, but they do need a self-assessment test and a model test to give them an idea of the content, the level of difficulty, and the testing method used in the MELAB. On the other hand, some students may have weaknesses of which they are not aware. They also need self-assessment so they can work to improve performance on their weak areas.

It is for all these students that I have written this book. I, and other test writers, want students to perform at their optimum—that is, do the best they can do—on our tests. We do not want students to get low scores just because they are not familiar with the test format or directions or have difficulty timing themselves. We hope students will familiarize themselves with these processes so that they can do their best. We don't want students to be afraid of the test. We want them to be familiar with its content and format and to be prepared.

This test book is not, therefore, designed to be memorized but to be studied as an approach to a certain kind of task or testing method. The best way to prepare for any test is to be competent (skilled and knowledgeable) in the *subject matter*. The best way to study for the MELAB, or any other English language test, is to study English, rather than to study or memorize a test preparation book. Memorizing the sample tests in this book will not guarantee success on the MELAB or

any other ESL test; studying and using English for reading, writing, listening, and speaking, over a long period of time, is the best way to become an expert user of English.

I wish to thank those who so generously supported me in this project: Sue Reinhart, who helped with the grammar commentaries; Joan Morley, who advised me on the listening portions, and her students, who critiqued the listening test; the two anonymous reviewers, for their insightful and substantive comments and suggestions on the preliminary manuscript; and my colleague Sarah Briggs and my husband David, who provided motivation and support.

PREFACE TO THE 2ND EDITION

Since the first edition of this book was first published in 1992, several changes have taken place in both the content of the MELAB and in its administration. Most notable are changes to the Listening section, and the fact that much more information about the MELAB is now available on its website. Students, teachers, and MELAB administrators have asked that an updated version of this book be made available. I am pleased, therefore, to present this new edition.

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