

Preface

Our experience with language assessment began as teachers—Lia in a community literacy/ESL program in Texas and Atta teaching EFL at a university in Egypt. Over the years, we have taught in many other contexts as well—Atta in U.S. Arabic language programs and Lia in intensive English programs in Ohio and Iowa. We met in graduate school at the University of Iowa where we both specialized in language assessment. Both of our dissertations compared integrated reading-writing assessment with independent writing assessment. Atta focused on the scores and reliability of the two test forms using advanced statistical analysis, while Lia considered what writers did as they composed the two kinds of tasks. Our shared interest in integrated assessment led to collaboration on several research projects over the years. Along with this research, we both continue to work with language teachers—Atta working with MA TESOL students at the American University in Cairo and Lia with Foreign Language and ESL teacher education and graduate students at the University of Iowa. These experiences have grounded our assessment work in research and also provided us with practical implications and applications for the classroom.

Writing this book together was a valuable experience. Sorting through the myths, the research, real-world examples, and applications illuminated the multiple voices and worldviews that exist in the field of language teaching and assessment. For this reason, some of the myths may not ring true for readers holding differing presumptions. Even between the two of us, at times we had to debate our beliefs as we developed these chapters. In the end, we wrote a book that represents our shared knowledge, understanding, and thoughts about language assessment and teaching. We hope, through this book, to offer teachers and students an understanding of the multifaceted discipline of language assessment.