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Exploring the limits of LSP testing: The specific-purpose language test for health professionals

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Passing a test of English communication skills is a requirement for health professionals seeking entry to clinical practice in Germany, and in many English-speaking countries. It is the responsibility of testing these skills to ensure that the standards required for entry into clinical practice are met in the context of the clinical context.

The term used to denote such linguistic authenticity in a test setting is *authenticity*, although the concept has been defined by contributors to this journal have claimed that the concept of authenticity is chimerical (Spolsky, 1985; Steiner, 1998). The use of textualized and indirect means of presentation of authentic texts is now generally agreed that for tests to have some degree of authenticity is worth pursuing. Early discussions of authenticity were concerned with the question of whether these should, in the context of a test. Widdowson (1979) was particularly concerned with the question of the texts that was at issue but rather than with the author's intentions.

This notion of authenticity as involving the text or task was elaborated for tests of English communication, however, only one of several (potential) criteria of test usefulness and may not necessarily be the most important. In LSP (language for specific purposes) testing, the representation of the target context in the test is a key factor for communication in that context is a

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