Instructional Development Grants   Office of Faculty Development

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American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC)

Magda Tigchelaar
Western Michigan University, magda.tigchelaar@wmich.edu

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2018-2019 Instructional Development Project/Travel Grant Award

About the conferences

The **AAAL conference** is one of the foremost conferences in the field of second language learning and assessment.

The International Language Testing Association's Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) is a conference specializing in questions related specifically to second language testing.

Both conferences were held in Atlanta, Georgia in 2019. The conferences were scheduled back to back, as they are every year, since most second language testing professionals are also applied linguists, and participate in the Assessment strand at AAAL.

LTRC 2019
41ST LANGUAGE TESTING RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM
4-8 March 2019 ❖ Atlanta, Georgia USA
LANGUAGE TESTING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

The AAAL conference included a colloquium sponsored by ILTA on assessing English as a lingua franca competence. This was organized by Luke Harding (Lancaster University) and included papers from Canagarajah; Kennedy, Trofimovich, Blanchet, and Bertrand; Jenkens and Leung. The discussant was Tim McNamara.

I also attended a colloquium organized by Paula Winke at AAAL on assessing young learners of English. This included presentations by Kim-Wolf and Papageorgiou.

AAAL/ILTA joint colloquium: Assessing Lingua Franca Competence

Organizer: Luke Harding, Lancaster University
Discussant: Tim McNamara, University of Melbourne

Abstract

Despite increasing prominence within applied linguistics research, lingua franca approaches to communication are yet to permeate the field of language assessment at a deep level. The reasons behind this are complex, and include practical and conceptual challenges in assessment design, as well as ideologies around language and language use that appear to support an "institutional conservativism" (Harding & McNamara, 2018). However, recent conceptualisations of lingua franca communication provide opportunities for an enriched approach to assessment which takes into account the fluid and dynamic nature of interaction across a range of settings, leading to more authentic assessment methods that arguably would have greater power in predicting communicative success across a range of domains. Given the range of lingua franca contexts in which language assessments are regularly employed—higher education, aviation, healthcare, call centres— the need for such assessments is long overdue.

Leung & Jenkens

Predicting future performance: Rich messy data rather than simplistic standardized test scores

"Examples of situated language use should form the basis of deciding whose language skills are appropriate for study in a specific university setting, including the skills of native English students."

e.g., self-assessment including the types of lectures and writing tasks that prospective students could expect to encounter at the university.

Kennedy, Trofimovich, Blanchet, Bertrand

Assessing French as a lingua franca: Teachers' and learners' perspectives

Researchers from Concordia University in Montreal presented on
Teacher, self- and peer- assessment of French use in Montreal

They were the only presenters to avoid using the term "native speaker," and instead described their participants' first and second languages: L1 French, L2 English; L1 English, L2 French

UNIVERSITÉ Concordia UNIVERSITY

Harding

Assessing lingua franca competence in academic settings: From theory to design

Harding presented ELF assessment tasks (e.g., a crossword task) designed to be completed by native and non-native speakers of English.

Canagarajah

Assessing lingua franca interactions as performative

Research focus: Group interactions with international research assistants and their professors

Recommendation:
Test dispositions: willingness to negotiate meanings; treating diversity as the norm; and adopting a functional orientation to communication.

Objectives for Teaching

My goal in attending these two conferences was to find papers that would be of interest to my Master's level students in the MA TESOL and ESL Certificate programs. Specifically, I used some of the information presented at these conferences to share with students in my ESL Teaching Methods (TEL6310) and ESL Assessment (TEL6320), and Advanced Assessment (TEL6320) classes.

The following are tasks and discussion questions that were developed after my participation in the AAAL and LTRC conferences:

Question for TEL6220: Create a description of what the young ELLs in your class can do (individually) compared to their NS peers

Task for TEL6220: Based on Jenkens and Leung's suggestion to include authentic examples of situated language use as part of admissions processes, design three self-assessment tasks for international students at WMU that they could evaluate to determine whether they would be suitable participants in the MA TESOL program.

Task for TEL6220: Kim-Wolf reported that high level ELs may not be distinguishable from non-EL students. Compare a WIDA level 5 Kindergartener with a NS peer; what differences do you see?

Task for TEL6320: Papageorgiou reported that at ETS they've found that CEFR B2 is the ceiling for young learners. Compare the B2 descriptors with the WIDA proficiency descriptors and Can-Do statements at the top level. What correspondence do you see? What differences?

Question for TEL6310: What is a native speaker and how do definitions of this influence English as a lingua franca competence?

Contact information

Magda Tigchelaar
Assistant Professor of TESOL

Special Education and Literacy Studies
1903 W. Michigan Ave.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

T: 269-387-3552
F: 269-387-2882
E: magda.tigchelaar@wmich.edu