Fall 9-20-2019

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

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### 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.

### 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 conservatism” (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 & Jenkins**

**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.

**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.

### 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

**Kennedy, Trofimovich, Blanchet, Bertrand**

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.

### 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 Jenkins 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 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?

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