

Language Assessment Matters ISSUE 3

April 2015

The Newsletter of the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand

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Congratulations to Professor Tim McNamara, recipient of the International Language Testing Association 2015 Distinguished Achievement Award.

See page 9 for an interview with Professor McNamara with questions about the award, his career, and advice he would give to early career researchers and PhD candidates.

Welcome to our third newsletter. In this issue we have reports from the 2014 ALTAANZ conference, including an article describing the processes involved in organising and the intent which inspired the Meeting of Minds forum at the conference also a 'getting to know you' meeting with new ALTAANZ co-president Associate Professor Angela Scarino of the University of South Australia, and an in-depth interview with Professor Tim McNamara. As always, please do let us know if you would like to contribute an item to the newsletter.



Denise Angelo (page 6), Cath Hudson and new ALTAANZ Co-President Associate Professor Angela Scarino (page 3) at the ALTAANZ 2014 conference.

ALTAANZ Committee 2015

The ALTAANZ AGM was held Friday 28 November 2014 at the ALTAANZ conference. Elections were held for President and Student Representative. Following the elections, the 2015 committee members are:

Co-Presidents: Ute Knoch (University of Melbourne) and Angela Scarino (University of South Australia)

Vice President: Aek Phakiti (University of Sydney)

Treasurer: Noriko Iwashita (University of Queensland)

Secretary*: Janet Von Randow (University of Auckland)

PLTA Editorial Representative: Sally O'Hagan (University of Melbourne)

Information Officer: Johanna Motteram (University of Adelaide)

Postgraduate Student Representative: Matthew Book (Victoria University of Wellington)

Postgraduate Student Representative: Naoki Ikeda (University of Melbourne)

Thanks were given to retiring Co—Presidents Cathie Elder and Peter Gu, and retiring Postgraduate Student Representative Sharon Yahalom.

*Martin East resigned his position as Secretary due to changed work conditions and subsequent increased work load in January 2015. The committee thanks Martin for his work as Secretary in 2014. Janet Von Randow agreed to undertake the role until the AGM in November 2015 when it is hoped that another Secretary will be elected.

The committee recognizes the current imbalance towards Australian members and hopes that more New Zealand based members will join the committee in November.

New Co-President, Associate Professor Angela Scarino

Associate Professor Angela Scarino of the University of South Australia and Ute Knoch of the University of Melbourne are the new co-presidents of ALTAANZ. Ute is well known to many members due to her long association with ALTAANZ. Angela Scarino was a plenary speaker at our last conference but may not be as familiar to ALTAANZ members. So Johanna Motteram met with Angela in Adelaide in early January for a conversation about Angela's career and the opportunities she sees for ALTAANZ over the next two years.

Angela's current role is as Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and Director of the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures at the University of South Australia. She has been at UniSA for 21 years working in different roles.

Her work has primarily been in Languages (other than English) with a focus on second language learning and assessment in the context of linguistic and cultural diversity. She has a particular interest in intercultural language learning and its assessment. She has led many major curriculum and assessment development and research projects in Australia. She has had a great deal of experience in working in diverse contexts including Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia.

Angela's work in language assessment is primarily in the area of learning-oriented assessment. It incorporates the understanding that language work involves an examination of the relationship between language, culture and learning. As assessment is crucial in learning, assessment experts should have a high level of accountability to learners and to learning.

When asked about her hopes for the next two years as she works with the ALTAANZ committee, Angela outlined the following areas;

Helping receivers and users of assessment information understand:

- How and why language assessment matters
- Why we need language assessment practices that are socially and culturally sensitive.

Also, to communicate with stakeholders that diversity in the world means we need to reconsider language assessment practices.

Angela hopes that ALTAANZ will be able to expand its communication with individuals and groups but beyond the field of language testing. The Meeting of Minds session at our last conference is an excellent example of expanding the dialogue.

Message from Noriko Iwashita, ALTAANZ 2014 Conference Organising Committee Chair

The 2nd biennial conference was held at The University of Queensland on 27-29 November, 2014. The conference attracted more than 120 people across the country and the Tasman Sea as well as quite a few from overseas including Germany, Cyprus, Canada, and the USA. The theme for the conference was 'Assessing second languages: linking theory, research, policy and practice'. The three plenary speakers, Professor Micheline Chalhoub-Deville, Associate Professor Angela Scarino and Professor Chris Davidson all gave inspiring plenary addresses. The Associate Dean (Academic) from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at UQ, Associate Professor Julie Duck gave a wonderful opening address. Pre-conference workshops conducted by the three plenary speakers were all full. It was a great opportunity to share assessment practice and research. The highlights of the conference include network group forum "Meeting of the minds" where assessment specialists and teachers discussed the issues teachers encounter in their particular contexts and a symposium "Teacher responses to Assessment at ICTE-UQ". Two students, Chao Han and Ali Rastgou received "The best student paper award".

A big thank you to all sponsors (ETS, IELTS, English Australia, Cambridge English and Pearson), volunteers, presenters, participants, conference organising committee members and their institutions. Please visit the ALTAANZ website for more pictures of the event.



Kerensa Townsend reports on her work in progress session at ALTAANZ 2014



Kerensa Townsend's work in progress session at ALTAANZ 2014 in Brisbane, Queensland

I had the pleasure of presenting my first works-in-progress session at the 2014 ALTAANZ conference last November. Prior to the conference, I was working on designing an Excel spreadsheet that would assist with quality assurance of our university language centre assessment items. I wanted to create a resource that would allow class teachers to input student responses to test items, and then facilitate basic statistical analysis of the individual items.

An excel spreadsheet was designed that automatically reported on basic item properties such as facility, discrimination, and Cronbach's alpha. It also provided very simple descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, and standard error. Information obtained from the spreadsheet was used mostly by test writers for evaluation of whole assessment items, but also was used by course co-ordinators to evaluate cohort performance. In addition, the spreadsheet generated student reports, which indicated student performance on each particular item type, and identified skills requiring more focus in the future. Teachers found these reports particularly useful in identifying areas of weakness and also for giving class feedback.

During the works-in-progress session, attendees gave valuable feedback on the spreadsheet, and together we discussed the role of certain item types, overcoming teacher resistance to the extra data entry and EAP assessment in general. I found the whole experience incredibly useful and really enjoyed the more informal arrangement of a works-in-progress session. Thanks ALTAANZ!

Meeting of Minds: Educators reveal issues in their diverse classroom contexts for language testing and assessment researchers



Cathie Elder hosting the Meeting of Minds forum

The *Meeting of Minds* proved to be a highly successful session at the 2014 ALTAANZ conference at the University of Queensland. The session was held in the afternoon of the final day of the conference in a one hour time slot, and succeeded in attracting both teachers and researchers. Indeed, with over 70 people in attendance, it was standing room only. This overview aims to capture the intent and the processes behind the *Meeting of Minds* initiative.

The *Meeting of Minds* was envisaged as a forum where teachers could advise researchers in language assessment and testing about real challenges and issues that are experienced in school contexts. I and my colleague Cath Hudson wanted to take a genuine step towards informing ALTAANZ members and other researchers about school contexts, and so commenced the long process of engaging researchers and educators with the idea. In particular, this seemed vital if ALTAANZ is to carry out its proposed charter of engaging with educators and advocating in this arena.

The *Meeting of Minds* went through various phases from inception to fruition. The first idea from Denise Angelo and Cath Hudson was a compered format, where a knowledgeable host works the audience for their questions, and invites audience members with knowledge in this area to respond. But, honestly, this was just too difficult, as the very premise of the session was to inform the language assessment and testing research community because so few were currently working in the area of schools. We finally settled on a hosted forum, with a list of educator issues organised well in advance, along with some invited researcher discussants.

But do not imagine for a moment that all we had to do was find a sensible format and a talented host (although they definitely help). We needed to “promote” the idea to the ALTAANZ 2014 conference planning and organising committee which entailed developing and clearly articulating the ideas for this new type of conference session. This took many, many emails and phone calls, so many, many thanks to the committee members for taking the time to listen to and support the process of working out these ideas. The format of *Meeting of Minds* is ground-breaking, as it

radically turns the typical university-based academic research paradigm on its head. Research is usually driven by research problems and questions posed by the researcher with whom knowledge is seen to reside. Yet, as demonstrated in the *Meeting of Minds* forum, many issues have been largely untouched by language testing and assessment research in Australia and New Zealand in recent times. The *Meeting of Minds* was therefore the first chance many of us would have to hear educators speak about language assessment and testing matters that arise in their working environment. The knowledge and power relations were thus reversed, so that researchers were placed in the position of learners who were trying to understand the problems as educators outlined them.

Not only did the format and the conceptual base of the proposed *Meeting of Minds* require much to-and-fro discussion, so too did the organisation of teachers' contributions. The process involved an initial "scoping" session, conducted by teleconference with language teachers and linguists of the Language Perspectives group working in diverse school contexts across Queensland. This provided a rich list of suggested school-based topics which were used as "prompts" in the next stage of organising the *Meeting of Minds* forum, where an email letter was sent to all teacher/school-based conference participants (reproduced in part here):

We are inviting you to contribute to this session by telling us briefly about a language assessment issue or challenge in your school context (about 2 minutes). To help us structure the session it would be helpful if you could fill out the following details, indicating the language assessment issue you'd like to raise. We have included possible issues that you may wish to talk about (by way of example), but please feel free to raise issues which are not on the list.

Once the written responses started flooding in, the third stage of this process commenced. Each educator was contacted, by phone and/or email, so as to clarify and discuss their "issue". This was a crucial step in many ways, as it gave educators the opportunity to prepare their issue for the language assessment and testing community: schools are a world away from academic research. Typically, teachers would not separate out issues of, say, pedagogy, curriculum and reporting from language assessment and testing since these areas are so intertwined. Some teachers' issues were couched in terms that would be unknown outside of (state) school contexts. Others assumed that an expert audience would have prior knowledge of, for instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language backgrounds, or Special Needs provisions/tests, or typical school enrolment processes. In some cases, educators suggested several issues, so just one was put forward on the basis of what was considered to be of likely interest. The clarification conversations primarily aimed to assist teachers with conveying the language assessment and testing "nub" of their issue in a manner that would be intelligible to a researcher audience.

While attention to educators' participation had begun to be organised, the *Meeting of Minds* collaborators turned their attention to encouraging researchers to attend the forum, including those for whom school contexts had not figured greatly in their academic work. This involved more conversations with the long-suffering conference organising committee (thanks again!) about timetabling of the forum optimally so that as many researchers as possible would be able to attend. Furthermore, our chosen host, Cathie Elder, from the University of Melbourne, invited individual researchers who were undertaking work in school contexts to be present, including the conference plenary speakers. These invitees had the idea of the forum explained to them, and most graciously accepted their invitation to attend.

The next stage (number 5) was to group the issues into a sensible flow for presentation at the *Meeting of Minds* forum. In particular what we were trying to achieve was a streamlining effect, so that each issue (scripted and timed to two or three minutes) would introduce the next one, and so forth. Given the time constraints around such a conference session, this seemed particularly important. The penultimate stage was to give the 'running list' to the host, Cathie Elder, and brief her on the school-based issues. In actuality, this part of the process was spread over a number of teleconferences that occurred after the initial scoping teleconference with teachers. Our host was updated regularly about the school issues that were being reported and she was given background information about these wherever possible.

The final stage involved Cathie Elder hosting the *Meeting of Minds* forum, which she accomplished with panache, with the aid of a PowerPoint listing the key issues on the running list to enable her to maintain momentum and cohesiveness throughout the forum.

In the end, there was a "full house" for *Meeting of Minds*. Most of the issues were touched on (amazing given the time constraints) and some of the invited researchers were also able to speak briefly from their experiences. ALTAANZ has since received very positive feedback about the *Meeting of Minds* forum.

As ALTAANZ develops its advocacy activities in various professional and ethical domains, it will need access to informed networks through workable strategies: The *Meeting of Minds* experience has much to offer here. Informed networks, where knowledge goes both ways, constitute a methodology of great significance. They are a means to ensuring that research projects become truly collaborative and representative of all available expertise. While expertise in the issues and technicalities of language testing/assessment are usually taken into account by us as researchers, this can be productively balanced and usefully augmented by knowledge and skills of practitioners, in this case educators in varying school contexts. A forum such as the *Meeting of Minds* provides ALTAANZ researchers with opportunities to be informed about critical issues in schools and can be the precursor to readying us to work with seasoned practitioners, such as educators, on negotiated issues.

In the spirit of practice-based research, then, a follow-on step for those language assessment and testing researchers amongst us who are interested in the schooling sphere would be to engage with educators' own ideas about research. Although such ideas were not expressly elicited in this 2014 *Meeting of Minds* forum, teachers usually have much to offer in this regard. In actuality, many teachers are already actively pursuing informal, in-class, school-based research projects, despite the fact that they would not generally be positioned as "researchers" by themselves or others. Furthermore, most issues raised in *Meeting of Minds* are truly complex and embedded in local contexts. So again, researchers are well-advised to reverse standard research practices, and begin by tapping into teacher networks, seeking out local teacher knowledges about critical language assessment issues, possible solutions and suggestions for research. For these reasons, the *Meeting of Minds* issues are not simply listed here with an invitation for us to sally forth researching them with our own research questions and methodologies. Instead, the *Meeting of Minds* forum highlights the vital need for an interactional research relationship between teachers and researchers so that outcomes of optimal quality and relevance are achieved.

Denise Angelo, PhD candidate, School of Languages, Literature & Linguistics, ANU

FEATURE INTERVIEW

Professor Tim McNamara speaks with ALTAANZ Postgraduate Student Officer Naoki Ikeda

Prof. Tim McNamara is this year's recipient of the Cambridge/ILTA Distinguished Achievement Award. Tim has certainly had a distinguished career and is recognized widely for this work in language testing and assessment. To quote one of his proposers to this award, "Tim's scholarship in language assessment has been exemplary. His 1996 book on L2 Performance Assessment, in my view, changed the field of language testing."

Tim first began his career as an EFL/ESL teacher and teacher-trainer in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Tim has taught Applied Linguistics at Melbourne University since 1987. He helped establish the graduate program in Applied Linguistics from 1987, and with Professor Alan Davies founded the Language Testing Research Centre. He has been widely published in the area of language assessment and he continues to write at present.

His language testing research has focused on performance assessment, theories of validity, the use of Rasch models, and the social and political meaning of language tests. He is currently researching the use of language tests in immigration and citizenship contexts, and in verifying the identities of asylum seekers. Tim kindly shares his career story with Naoki Ikeda (NI) as well as his plans for the future. He also shares some unique advice to students who are currently in or would like to enter the language testing field.

NI: Thank you for your time today, Tim. You have recently won the Cambridge/ILTA Distinguished Achievement Award. Congratulations! What does winning this award mean to you?

TM: Oh it means a great deal to me. I'm very honoured by the award. I'm honoured by the recognition of my colleagues all around the world and it feels like a culmination. I mean it's for someone who has had a long career and it's wonderful towards the end of my career, well I'm not at the end of my career yet but towards the end of my career to receive this recognition has been wonderful, really wonderful.

Tim's career, contributions, and advice for us

NI: You have had an interesting and varied career. Could you tell us about how you found PhD life?

TM: Well actually I did one and a half PhDs. I did half a PhD on a sociolinguistics topic on a language and identity topic...While I was doing that research I was working full-time.

NI: Were you working as a full-time ESL teacher?

TM: Yes, and a teacher-trainer. I then did a consultancy for the Australian Government to develop an English language test for overseas trained health professionals, which was the Occupational English Test (OET). Then I got a temporary job at the university without my PhD and the Dean wanted me to get my PhD very quickly and I realised that I could finish a

PhD in the area of language testing more quickly than I could finish the PhD that I was doing on sociolinguistics which had interview data. I had about seventy one- or two-hour interviews and the data was going to take a long time to analyse and write up. So I switched to the language testing PhD. It was about the validation of the OET using Rasch measurement.

NI: Oh, I see. And when was that?

TM: I started it in 1987 and submitted it in 1990.

NI: Was that when you started to research language testing?

TM: I started it a few years earlier in 1984-5. I did three consultancies for the Australian government about the OET and the last one became much bigger and became my PhD. My official supervisor was Dr Terry Quinn. He was my boss until he became very ill and had to retire. For six months I had Dr Geoff Masters as my PhD supervisor, who's now the director of the Australian Council for Education Research and a world expert on Rasch measurement. He was teaching in the School of Education here at that time and he supervised me for six months. He taught me quite a lot about Rasch measurement.

NI: At that time Rasch measurement wasn't as popular as it is nowadays, was it?

TM: That's right. It was very exciting to learn about it and its potential in language testing.

NI: Do you think it's possible for student researchers to learn Rasch measurement by themselves for example, just by reading a manual?

TM: Well I don't know, because I didn't have to do that. Geoff Masters, who gave me a few sessions explaining it, taught me it but I also

had an opportunity to ask Dr Ray Adams who had just completed his PhD in Chicago. He also taught me a lot after I'd finished my PhD. We were very lucky in Melbourne because there were many people in Melbourne who were among the world leaders in Rasch measurement; it was just an accident that they were here.

NI: I see. What about the introduction to Rasch measurement in other regions like the United States and the UK?

TM: Yes, well famously, when George Rasch came to the United States to give lectures he was invited by a professor at the University of Chicago, Ben Wright. Ben invited Rasch to give lectures in the School of Education in Chicago and they were unsuccessful because for other people working in psychometrics, they dismissed the Rasch model as too simple and for people who were not working in psychometrics, it was too difficult. So he ended up with only a very few students. But Ben Wright realized how important Rasch was, and it was through him that other people then learned about it in the United States; but it remained very controversial there, and in England for many, many years. I think the practicality of Rasch Measurement has helped it succeed, particularly in language testing.

NI: That was summarized in one of your papers called "The Rasch Wars", wasn't it?

TM: Yes, that's right. Ute Knoch and I wrote a paper about the history of Rasch measurement which appeared in *Language Testing*.

NI: Going back to your career, is there a memorable or unforgettable event in your previous teaching life in the UK?

TM: Yes, I spent ten years in London. I went there when I was 24 years old. In that ten-year period I taught English as a Foreign

Language to adults in private language schools in London and I trained teachers for what is now the Cambridge CELTA. It was known in those days as the Royal Society of Arts Preparatory Certificate in TEFL. Those years of teaching and teacher training were wonderful. I've many, many specific memories: teaching Algerian students in the 1970s in London; I remember when the communicative movement arrived. My boss had been to a seminar I think conducted by Professor Chris Candlin among others (Chris was one of the early theorists of communicative language teaching), and she came to the staffroom and left on the table the handouts from this conference and said, "This is how teaching will be in the future." And it was true.

NI: Was that before Canale & Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), wasn't it?

TM: Yes, it was before. It was probably in 1974 or 1975. So the British version of the communicative language teaching I became aware of at that time.

NI: Did you anticipate what would happen later?

TM: No, but I was curious. I was curious about these things.

NI: That's actually when "Pandora's Box" (McNamara, 1996) was opened, wasn't it?

TM: Yes, in a way.

NI: Do you have any general and/or specific advice for future student applicants to language assessment?

TM: I would say that language assessment is a very interesting area. It's much more interesting than it seems at first sight. It connects with many areas of research, of language, of policy and it's also very rigorous

from a methodological point of view and all of these things are very interesting and they're good to learn about. I would encourage people who want to study language assessment.

NI: Thank you. In my view, there are a lot of areas, such as the SLA area that have to use the methodology to collect and analyse data. So in that way, all of the fields may relate to language testing.

TM: Yes, I think that's true. I think that language testing is a place where certain concepts in other areas of applied linguistics can be turned into the possibility of empirical study because if you try to operationalize these concepts in the form of a test you can then get data which then helps you consider the question of how meaningful this concept was or how clear this concept was. And it could be in lots of fields, as you say.

NI: What nurtured your deep and wide insights into linguistics? Do you have any advice for students?

TM: I'm interested in linguistics, but I'm more interested I would say in language generally. Linguistics, yes, certainly as one way of studying and thinking about language but my original training was in literature. English literature and in Latin literature and I had a long training in reading poetry, actually, when I was an undergraduate student. In my work outside of language testing in the last twenty years I've realised that many people outside linguistics have been writing about language. Many theorists of language in the humanities are well-worth reading and I'm curious about language in general. Linguistics is certainly one source of insight about language. It's a very, very important one and it's very interesting but it's not the only one. Linguistics has detached itself from the humanities and I think that that's unfortunate

because I think that the study of language and the thinking about language in the humanities can be very powerful and very useful for people working in any area to do with language. But I also like new ideas, and my advice for students would be to keep reading widely. Don't read narrowly; don't be narrow. Take risks in your reading and in your thinking. The more risks you take the better.

NI: Is there any particular message about the risks?

TM: Well, when I got interested in language testing it was by accident. I was invited to run some workshops in language testing for an Australian language centre in Jakarta in Indonesia and I didn't know much about language testing at the time but I was curious about going to Indonesia. It was the first time I'd been there or to any developing country, actually. That was in 1985. I had to learn about language testing in order to run these workshops for teachers but my real motivation was to go to Indonesia, it wasn't to learn about language testing. And it was then very interesting. I was teaching English to immigrant doctors in a college here in Melbourne. The government wanted to improve the testing of the English of immigrant doctors and they advertised a consultancy and I applied for it and got it. I learned an enormous amount about testing that way, so I didn't learn about testing because I wanted to learn about testing. I learned about testing because of accidental reasons. As Cathie Elder once said to me, "People think that language testing will be boring. But when you discover it, it turns out to be really interesting, much more than you thought so it's like a double bonus".

NI: So coincidentally when you were in Indonesia, was that when the OET started?

TM: The year after I went to Indonesia. There was already an OET and two very important Australian colleagues, my boss and mentor, Dr Terry Quinn and Helen Moore, another well-known Australian person working in TESOL, were on a government committee for the OET; but they were asked to actually create the test in committee. And they said, "No, this is nonsense. We refuse to do this." And they went on strike, the committee went on strike and as a result the government commissioned a consultancy to reform the test. It was the direct result of the activism of these two applied linguists on this committee that the government introduced a consultancy to reform the test.

NI: So there was an earlier form of the OET?

TM: Yes, there were two earlier forms. The first form, which was before that committee, the committee I've just spoken about, was a completely discriminatory test. The pass rate was about 2% and it included literature passages and so on; it had nothing whatsoever to do with communication in health settings. Then the committee that Terry Quinn and Helen Moore were on created a more rational test but a very simple kind of test and it had cloze passages, and tests of knowledge of medical vocab and so on, but it didn't focus on real communication in clinical settings. It was not a performance assessment and it was not really based on all we know about communication in health professional settings.

NI: So it was quite passive, and had a very low pass rate.

TM: Yes, well the low pass rate one disappeared in the late 1970s and this one, the real precursor to the OET was developed in the late 1970s and in the early 1980s and it was then that the members of this committee refused to work on the committee because

they said the test needed to be completely rethought. That's how the consultancy was advertised. The first consultancy was conducted by a group at Lancaster University, headed by Charles Alderson, who made a recommendation that a new test should be created that was communicative and performance-based and focusing on clinical settings. The government then invited people to do that project and I was the successful tenderer. It was because I knew something about language testing by that stage and I was teaching English to doctors. So I had the specific purpose language side and I had the language testing side.

NI: Any other specific advice for students?

TM: Well I would say that I've always maintained my interest in language and identity, which was the topic of my first PhD, which I never completed. I'm now writing a book on language and identity and I teach a course on language and identity and I read and think a great deal about language and identity and that remains true for me. Among language testers, some of the language testers that I most admire also have an interest not only in language testing, but in sociolinguistics. Bernard Spolsky is one example, Alan Davies is another example and Elana Shohamy is another example. So they have two kinds interests in applied linguistics and I'm like them. I think that's good – if you focus only on language testing you can be rather narrow.

Tim's self-selected best three papers/books among his numerous works

NI: As you are widely published, Matthew (co-student officer of ALTAANZ) and I are curious about which of your publications you like the most. Can you choose three?

TM: I think certainly the most important one is the book in 1996, "Measuring Second Language Performance". It had a big influence I think and people still tell me that they learned about Rasch measurement by reading that book so that's a nice thing to hear.

As far as other publications are concerned, I published something in 1997 in Applied Linguistics, which is important to me.

NI: That was " 'Interaction' in second language assessment'-Whose Performance?"

TM: Yes, and that was a paper that I gave as a plenary speaker at the American Association for Applied Linguistics in Chicago the year before. That was a great honour for me and a great moment in my life. The paper was the fruit of my time at UCLA in 1992 when I was on sabbatical and I studied on the one hand with Lyle Bachman where I learned most of what is in the 1996 book. But at the same time, through my friendship with Sally Jacoby, who was a student of Elinor Ochs and Manny Schegloff in the discourse strand within the Applied Linguistics program at UCLA, I learned about discourse. That paper brought those two worlds together.

NI: Could you tell us more about the discourse strand?

TM: Within the Applied Linguistics program at UCLA there were three possible streams. One was a language testing stream, another was a second language acquisition stream and the third one was a discourse stream. The people who taught in these streams had very different orientations to language, to research and so on and the discourse stream was headed by Elinor Ochs and Manny Schegloff, who is the great founder of the field of conversation analysis. He was also very heavily involved in the discourse stream at

UCLA. So because of my time there, I learned about both the language testing stream and the discourse stream and I brought them together in the paper, "Whose Performance". I also edited a special issue of Applied Linguistics in 2012 entitled "Post-Structuralism and its challenges for Applied Linguistics" and I had to write an introduction to that volume explaining what post-structuralism is and that was one of the hardest things I've ever had to write because it needed to be accessible to a general readership but also it had to be accurate and sophisticated enough for people who were experts in that field, which I wasn't. So anyway, I'm proud of it because I think it works for both groups.

NI: Did you get any responses from the readers?

TM: Yes, I got responses from readers. The editor of the journal, Ken Hyland, was very sceptical of this area as being too obscure and too difficult for the readers of the journal but when he read the introduction he said it was very clear and very accessible and he liked it. Then on the other hand, people like Claire Kramersch and Anne Freadman who wrote papers in that special issue, both of whom have been experts in this field for thirty to forty years, and I'm a relative newcomer to that field, they both liked it as well, so that was great.

NI: This may be summarized in your recent paper, "30 Years on -Evolution and Revolution" (2014, Language Assessment Quarterly) but could you give us your view on what is the biggest development of language assessment in the past decades?

TM: I think the developments in technology are very important in language testing. It's not an area that I work in but I think that the automatic scoring of writing and speech is

changing the field. The development that I'm most interested in is the challenge from English as a lingua franca. I think that the field has not understood how radical is the challenge from English as a lingua franca because it forces us to re-think the criteria that we would need to use in judging performance. It takes away the privilege of the native speaker; all sorts of things that are assumed and have been assumed for 50 years I think have to change, and that's wonderful. Of course the other thing that I think is so important is the development that particularly Elana Shohamy started, she was not the only one, Spolsky, Alan Davies were before her, but particularly Elana, getting us to focus on the social and political and policy context of language testing, which has been very profound. Again, the field is very cautious about embracing this. It doesn't really have the conceptual tools to think about these issues because of the narrowness of the training that people get. So, people want to bury their heads in the sand but I think it's tremendously important for us to come to terms with that.

For the future

NI: Looking to the future, what do you expect language testing and assessment to be like in the next generation?

TM: Well again, the challenge of technology is very important and people will need to get their head around that. I think that tests are more and more used in society and more and more important. I think that we need language testers to be literate in the question of the uses of tests, not only in the development, in the conduct of tests, but the uses. The social power and influence of tests will grow. Technology will be part of that but I think also the challenge of English as a lingua franca needs to be faced; should be faced. I'm not sure if it will be but it should be.

Tim's management of work, and plan for the future, and message for all of us

NI: How do you manage your time doing multiple things and how do you refresh yourself?

TM: Well I came into academic life relatively late. I got my first full-time academic job when I was 38 years old and I had been working for many years before that in extremely busy jobs in the private English language teaching industry in London particularly, but also in Australia for three years. When I arrived in the university I loved the university. I loved the university context and so the fact that I was busy didn't bother me at all because I enjoyed what I was doing, I enjoyed what I was thinking, I enjoyed the opportunities for meeting people, for traveling. I was curious about ideas, new knowledge, new fields, all of this was wonderful for me. So, it gave me a lot of energy and I have a lot of energy I think, even today. I think in the last few years I've tried to get a better balance between my career and other things but I've always had many very wide interests in all sorts of things. So I refresh myself by other activities like reading, visiting friends. I cycle most days. I love cooking. All sorts of things but I'm always pretty busy, but I don't mind it.

NI: What is your plan for the next 5 years?

TM: Well I'm getting near the end of the career and I will have to retire at some point but I don't want to just yet so I'll probably work for another five years. I can imagine that. I have been recently elected as second VP of the AAAL so I'm organizing the conference in 2017 in Portland and then I'll

become the President of the Association so that will take me up until the beginning of 2019. I also want to finish this book on language and subjectivity. With Ute Knoch I'm going to write a new book on Rasch measurement. I'm interested in language and the asylum procedure and so I may do a further project in that area. My plan is to keep working, keep teaching, reading, thinking and more of the same, really.

NI: I think everyone expects you to be active for a long time.

TM: Well I hope so but that depends on my health of course, as always with people. If my health can stand it, then I'm happy to keep being busy.

NI: That's great to hear. Lastly, do you have any final comments that you'd particularly like to share with your colleagues and students?

TM: Yes, I would. I would say that I've been very, very lucky in my career to work with people that I have in language testing here in Melbourne. The existence of the LTRC and all of the people in it over many, many years, over 25 years has been a wonderful context in which to work. I've never been alone in language testing and I consider myself very lucky that way because many people who work in language testing are the only people in their program who work in that field but we've always had four or five or six or more people working in that field. It's been wonderful and I couldn't have achieved what I've achieved without the collaboration with students and colleagues, especially in the LTRC. It's been marvellous.

**ALAA/ ALANZ CONFERENCE 2015
WITH A DEDICATED LANGUAGE TESTING STREAM**

"Learning in a multilingual world"

Confirmed plenary speakers are:

Lourdes Ortega (Georgetown University)
Tim McNamara (University of Melbourne)
Jonathan Newton (Victoria University of Wellington)
Li Wei (University College London)
Amy Tsui (Hong Kong University)

And, ALTAANZ's invited speaker
Constant Leung (King's College London)

Adelaide, South Australia
Monday 30 November to Wednesday 2 December 2015

Conference hosted by the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures at the
University of South Australia.

The ALTAANZ 2015 AGM will be held during the conference.

Language Assessment Matters is the newsletter of ALTAANZ, the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand.

Do you have a Language Testing or Assessment related item you would like to have included in the newsletter? If so, please send your submission to altaanz@gmail.com with "newsletter" in the subject line. Possible contributions could include a report on work in progress, a PhD or Master's thesis report, a conference review or report, discussion of a current issue in language testing or assessment, a description of an assessment task which has worked well for your learners or an assessment-related anecdote that you think our membership would find interesting.