

Language Assessment Matters Issue 7

March 2017

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



Noriko Iwashita (left) and Rosemary Erlam (right) were elected new Co-Presidents of ALTAANZ at the AGM in Auckland, November 2016. Both Noriko and Rosemary are re-joining the ALTAANZ committee with these new roles. Other than the retirement of Co-Presidents Ute Knoch and Angela Scarino the ALTAANZ committee remains unchanged from last year, with Megan Yucel and Xiaohua (Leo) Liu committing to another year each of Post Graduate Student representation.

Noriko Iwashita is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at The University of Queensland (UQ). Prior to joining UQ, she was a Research Fellow at the Language Testing Research Center (LTRC), The University of Melbourne. At the LTRC she was involved in a variety of projects ranging from language assessment to bilingual and foreign language education in ESL, Japanese and other languages (e.g., Chinese and Indonesian). She was involved with colleagues at the LTRC in three large ETS (Educational Testing Service, USA) research projects funded for the development of a new TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) speaking test. She taught Japanese at various levels in Melbourne for many years and taught Applied Linguistics courses and supervised undergraduate and graduate students' research projects at The University of Melbourne and Universities in the USA.

Noriko's research interests include the interfaces of language assessment and SLA, peer interaction in classroom based research and task-based assessment, and cross-linguistic investigation of four major language traits. More recently she has been working on analyses of discursal features in the projects funded by IELTS and The British Council (Aptis Assessment Research) and exploring narrative inquiry approach in language testing/assessment research.

Noriko was one of the start-up committee members for ALTAANZ and served as a treasurer till 2015. She was a convener of the ALTAANZ Brisbane conference in 2014. Noriko is looking forward to working with Rosemary as co-president, and especially hopes to reach out to a wider assessment community as well as fostering post-graduate students' community.

Rosemary Erlam is Senior Lecturer in Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland. Her first opportunity, as a PhD student, to work in the area of language assessment was her appointment as Research Assistant to Associate-Professor Cathie Elder. One of her responsibilities during this time was the 'trialing' and validation of DELNA, a Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment for first year and (in subsequent years) PhD students at the University of Auckland. In her current position Rosemary is involved both in teaching at postgraduate level and in supervising doctoral students in the area of language testing/assessment. At times she has opportunities to co-teach and co-supervise in this area along with her colleague Professor John Read.

Rosemary's PhD, completed in 2003, was an experimental study in the adolescent French language classroom, investigating the effectiveness of different approaches to focus on form. Rosemary's more recent research interests include, along with language assessment, teacher education and task-based language teaching. She is Academic Director of the TPLT program (Transforming Practice in Language Teaching) for teachers of languages other than English working in New Zealand schools.

Rosemary is not a complete stranger to ALTAANZ, she was Secretary from 2011 to 2013. She is excited about her new role as co-president and very happy to share this with Noriko. A particular interest of hers is supporting and equipping classroom teachers to implement best 'language assessment' practice.

MESSAGES FROM THE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

- 1) The ALTAANZ committee is currently updating the student membership of the association.

If you registered as a student member, we would appreciate it if you could confirm your current student/non-student status by sending a message to lxia617@aucklanduni.ad.nz at your earliest convenience. If you are no longer a student, you are also encouraged to re-register with the association as a full member (<http://www.altaan.org/joining-altaan.html>).

Registration is still free of charge. We look forward to your reply! Please ignore this message if you have already confirmed.

- 2) Calling all students!

We are the student representatives on the ALTAANZ committee. Following on from the successful student meet-up at the 2016 conference, we are hoping to organise more activities for students such as workshops, webinars, or online chat sessions. If you are studying language assessment and would like to find out more or offer your suggestions, please contact us at meganyucel@gmail.com.

The Applied Linguistics Conference
(ALANZ / ALAA / ALTAANZ)

27 – 29 November, 2017

Applied Linguistics in the New Millennium:

Multiple Theories,
Pathways, and Practices



Call for Papers Open Now!

<http://www.alanz2017.org/>

The conference is to be held in Auckland from Monday 27 to Wednesday 29 November, 2017, at the city campus of Auckland University of Technology (AUT), Auckland, New Zealand. The conference will be jointly supported by The University of Auckland, The University of Waikato, and the venue host, Auckland University of Technology.

We're already pleased to have a fantastic line up of keynote speakers from around the globe, including:

Marnie Holborow, Associate Faculty, School of Applied Linguistics & Intercultural Studies, Dublin City University, Ireland.

Heidi Byrnes, Emeritus Professor, Department of German, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C, United States of America.

Hilary Nesi, Professor in English Language, Coventry University, England.

Chris Davison, Professor of Education, University of New South Wales, Australia.

Jennifer Hay, Professor of Linguistics, University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Upcoming PLTA Issue.... Available online April 2017

Volume 6, Issue 1

Volume 6, Issue 1 of PLTA, which will be available in April, 2017 focuses on the issue of language teacher assessment literacy. As the following table of contents shows, the collection presents responses from a broad range of perspectives and contexts.

- Introduction (Kathryn Hill, Guest Editor)
- Understanding classroom-based assessment practices: A precondition for teacher assessment literacy (Kathryn Hill).
- Developing the assessment literacy of Australian teachers of languages: A conceptual and interpretive challenge (Angela Scarino).
- Assessment Literacy of Foreign Language Teachers around Europe: Research, challenges and future prospects. (Dina Tsagari & Karin Vogt).
- Developing assessment literacy in Singapore: How teachers broaden English Language learning by expanding assessment constructs (Rajenthiran Sellan).
- Assessment literacy for test preparation: the case of an interactive speaking test (Liz Hamp-Lyons).
- Learning-oriented Language Test Preparation: A contradiction in terms? (Tony Green).
- University English teacher assessment literacy: A survey-test report from China (Tracey (Yueting) Xu & Gavin Brown).

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.

Forward Planner: Upcoming Language Assessment Events

ALTE 2017, Bologna, Italy May 3-5

<http://events.cambridgeenglish.org/alte-2017/>

Learning and Assessment: Making the Connections

ALA 2017, Taipei, Taiwan June 21 – 23 www.alaawebsite.com

Earlybird registration until April 15 2017

Connecting assessment with teaching and learning: innovation and impact

Symposium on Second Language Writing 2017 Bangkok, Thailand June 30 – July 2

<http://sslw.asu.edu/2017/>

LTRC 2017, Bogota, Colombia July 17 – 20

<http://www.iltaonline.com/LTRC/index.php/ltrc2017>

Language Assessment Literacy across Stakeholder Boundaries

12th University of Sydney TESOL Research Network Colloquium

Sydney, Saturday 9th September

Call for papers closes Friday 30th June

The Applied Linguistics Conference

ALANZ / ALAA / ALTAANZ Auckland, New Zealand November 2017

(cfp open, dedicated testing and assessment stream, ALTAANZ AGM 2017)

<http://www.alanz2017.org/>

LTRC 2018, University of Auckland, New Zealand July 2-6 2018

The Teachers' Forum, ALTAANZ Conference 19th November, The University of Auckland

Modelled on *The Meeting of Minds Forum* at the 2014 ALTAANZ conference at the University of Queensland, practising primary and secondary school teachers raised assessment issues/dilemmas they face in their day-to-day work with English Language Learners. Researchers, language assessment specialists and Ministry of Education representatives responded from a variety of theoretical and practical perspectives.

The Session Chairs were Maree Jeurissen, Jenni Bedford and Dr Margaret Kitchen

Simon Crosby from Ormiston Senior College: *What assessment accommodations for ELLs in mainstream settings are valid and practicable?*

Dr Karen Ashton (Massey University) referred to Kieffer, Lesaux, Rivera, & Francis' (2009) meta-analysis of large-scale assessments. Only one accommodation - providing English dictionaries or glossaries - has a statistically significant effect on ELLs' performance, and this effect equates to only a small reduction in the achievement score gap between ELLs and native English speakers. Seven different types of accommodations were evaluated: simplified English, English dictionaries or glossaries, bilingual dictionaries or glossaries, tests in the native language, dual language test booklets, dual language questions for English passages, and extra time. Each accommodation is theoretically justifiable and valid for ELLs in that each accommodation is designed to address the language needs of the ELLs by minimizing variation in scores because of construct-irrelevant language abilities.

Karen emphasised that simplifying the language of assessment questions is a useful and valid accommodation that benefits all students.

Professor John Read pointed out the affective aspect of assessment for English language learners – can be very stressful for students and their parents who may be unfamiliar with teaching and learning and assessment in NZ. So, although accommodations may not affect the test outcomes, accommodations can benefit students in other ways such as self-esteem.

John also noted that accommodations are widespread in the USA, but many are not researched.

Jacqui Lindsay Northcote Primary and Inge Millard Windy Ridge Primary *How can we access or conduct bilingual or other assessments to identify specific learning needs of ELLs?*

Tjitske Hunter replied that the MoE bilingual assessment tool assesses in both the home language and English with appropriately adapted materials. The bilingual assessment is done by specially trained resource teachers for learning and behaviour (RTLb) and can bring to light where further investigation is needed regarding suspected learning difficulties. NZ-born students from a migrant background may not be fluent in their L1 and this is one reason why bilingual assessments are not used with this group of students.

Dr Peter Keegan suggested that while norm-referenced assessments have their place, teachers' own data arising from close observation and data collection are valid for making judgements. He encouraged teachers to trust their own intuitions.

Jan Tagaloa from Wiri Central School *How should standardized assessments be carried out in bilingual settings?*

Dr Peter Keegan suggested that teachers can share resources and collected data and that norms can be developed in this way.

Professor John Read pointed out that developing standardised norms requires large numbers of students, so this might be challenging for the different levels and small numbers in bilingual units. He also raised the problematic nature of using translated texts. Cultural issues may be critical, moreover text length and complexity may not be comparable.

Jenni Bedford from The University of Auckland *What needs to be taken into consideration when creating reading assessments for ELLs?*

Professor Barry O'Sullivan queried why teachers who had students over the length of a year needed to test. Teachers develop their own norms by knowing the students well. He recommended reading Khalifa & Weir (2009) "Examining reading".

Professor John Read emphasised the critical importance of text and topic selection. He pointed out that if students could answer the questions without reading the text with understanding (using general knowledge) then this is not a valid test of reading.

Rosemary Gillies from Sancta Maria College *What recommendations would you make for initial placement assessment for newly arrived ELLs?*

Dr Karen Ashton differentiated between "quick and dirty" assessment and closer assessment for diagnostic purposes, while recognising that schools often want tools that might cover both purposes. To augment the range of assessment a computer based test, for listening perhaps, could be added, or a skype interview.

Dr Ute Knoch recommended looking at the TEAL website (Victoria Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Australia): <http://www.insight.vic.edu.au>

Khalifa, H., & Weir, C. J. (2009). Examining reading: Research and practice in assessing second language reading. *Studies in Language Testing* 29. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Kieffer, M., Lesaux, N., Rivera, M., & Francis, D. (2009). Accommodations for English Language Learners Taking Large-Scale Assessments: A Meta-Analysis on Effectiveness and Validity. *Review of Educational Research*, 79(3), 1168-1201.

Many thanks to Dr Margaret Kitchen of The University of Auckland for this report and for the photos of the expert panel on the following page.



Panel members, left to right, Peter Keegan, Tjitske Hunter, Shanley Gamble, John Read, Karen Ashton and Ute Knoch.

Student Meeting, ALTAANZ Conference 19th November, The University of Auckland

As postgraduate students, we can sometimes feel a little isolated. Conferences provide an excellent opportunity to escape our cubicles and present our research findings, get to know others with similar interests, and extend our professional networks. With this in mind, the ALTAANZ student representatives organised a student meeting on the final day of the conference. The meeting was designed to be an informal get-together over lunch, giving student attendees the opportunity to get to know each other better while enjoying a meal.

We also invited two special guests, Ute Knoch (director of the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne and co-president of ALTAANZ 2016 committee) and Pamela Humphreys (deputy director of the Griffith English Language Institute and recent PhD graduate) to share their wealth of academic and professional experience. Our students greatly appreciated hearing Ute and Pamela's advice on their questions relating to various aspects of research and career planning.

We also took the opportunity to tell students about the proposed ALTAANZ student working group (SWG), an informal group which aims to support the research practice and professional development of graduate students specialising in language testing and assessment in Australia and New Zealand, and to foster communication and cooperation among students and other ALTAANZ members. The response was very positive, so we hope to pursue this idea in 2017 – watch this space!

Xiaohua Liu & Megan Yucel

(Student representatives of ALTAANZ 2016 - 2017)







12th University of Sydney TESOL Research Network Colloquium

In conjunction with the Centre for English Teaching (CET), University of Sydney
and the Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University

A Free Colloquium

Saturday 9 September, 2017

CALL FOR PAPERS

The *University of Sydney TESOL Research Network Colloquium* aims to provide a forum to discuss and share research in the area of TESOL as well as explore possible future research collaborations in the area. The Colloquium is a place for networking, for both established and new TESOL researchers. The Colloquium includes presentation sessions on a wide range of TESOL and TESOL-related research, both in progress and completed. It also includes a networking session for people working in the area of TESOL research. The aim of this is to provide the opportunity for TESOL researchers to talk to each other about their research and to explore possible future research collaborations.

Keynote Speakers:

- **Professor Diane Pecorari**, City University of Hong Kong, "*How unique is plagiarism?*"
- **Professor Peiyang Ji**, Fudan University, *TBA*

Proposals are invited for:

- 25-minute paper presentations (20 minutes for presentation followed by 5 minutes for questions/discussion)
- 90-minute symposia (80 minutes for presentation followed by 10 minutes for questions/discussion)

Instructions for submissions:

- **Individual papers:** A title, a 250-word abstract plus a 50-word summary of the abstract (plus your name, institution, email and telephone).
- **Symposia:** A title, a 500-word abstract plus a 200-word summary of the abstract (plus your name, institution, email and telephone).
- **Submission deadline:** Friday 30 June, 2017
- **Notifications on the acceptance of papers and symposia:** Monday 17 July, 2017
- **Proposal submission at:**
<http://faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/limesurvey/index.php?sid=16498&lang=en>

Free Pre-Colloquium Workshops on Friday 8 September, 2017:

- **Workshop (9.00am - 12.00 pm):** **Professor Diane Pecorari**, City University of Hong Kong, "*Examining intertextuality in second-language writing*"
- **Workshop (1.00pm - 4.00 pm):** **Dr Marie Stevenson**, The University of Sydney, "*Multilingualism and TESOL*"

Registration for the Workshops (register by Friday 25 August, 2017):

- <http://faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/limesurvey/index.php?sid=23859&lang=en>

Registration for the Colloquium (register by Friday 25 August, 2017):

- <http://faculty.edfac.usyd.edu.au/limesurvey/index.php?sid=18139&lang=en>

Inquiries

Contact Aek Phakiti (aek.phakiti@sydney.edu.au) for inquiries about the Colloquium and Workshops.