

Language Assessment Matters

Issue 11, April 2019

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

Welcome to the 11th Issue of the Newsletter of the Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand.

It has been a busy six months for many ALTAANZ Members since the last issue of Language Assessment Matters. The committee has been working hard behind the scenes to secure our relationship with ALAA and ALANZ, as a result we will again combine forces at the Applied Linguistics conference, this year in Perth, November 25 – 27. **We will support two assessment related colloquia: One on Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA) organised by Dr Rosemary Erlam and Morena Botelho de Magalhães with Professor John Read as discussant, the other on the Assessment of Pragmatics organised by Distinguished Professor Rod Ellis and Associate Professor Carsten Roever. Furthermore, ALTAANZ will review the papers for a dedicated Language Assessment Stream at the conference.** Our AGM will also be held in Perth, we hope to have many members join that meeting, either in person or via the virtual AGM set up.

We have conference reports from Wollongong NSW, Hamilton NZ, Atlanta GA, Singapore, Bangkok, and Mexico City in this issue. We also have the first of a series of interviews with recently graduated PhD Candidate members. Diep Tran spoke with our erstwhile Student Representative from New Zealand, Xiaohua (Leo) Liu about his PhD experience. If you have recently completed your PhD and would like to share your experience (and joy!) please get in touch with our student representatives, Diep Tran and Ivy Chen via altaanzstudents@gmail.com to organise your grilling!

We also have a report from Susy Macqueen of a very recent event in Melbourne, a celebration of Professor Tim McNamara's work during his tenure at the University of Melbourne.

Enjoy!



ALTAANZ Members at LTRC 2019

L-R Jason Fan, Ute Knoch, Johanna Motteram, Cathie Elder, Luke Harding and Noriko Iwashita

CROSSING DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES: CHALLENGES FOR LSP TESTING

ALTAANZ Colloquium at the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) Conference in Wollongong, 28 November 2018

Report by Susy Macqueen

In a November week of wild weather in Wollongong, I joined a group of people equally excited by assessment matters at the interface of specialist content and language ability to participate in the ALTAANZ-sponsored colloquium titled 'Crossing disciplinary boundaries: Challenges for LSP testing'. Our purpose was to address how efforts to assess *Language for Specific Purposes* (LSP) sit, sometimes uncomfortably, between fields of practice and communities of users. An obvious but perennially challenging boundary for LSP assessment is often drawn between language ability and the ability to communicate in the domain of interest, for example, the difference between an assessment construct that taps into English proficiency and one which taps into nursing-in-English ability. This is a tension at the heart of the assessment: the construct. Another tension arises around the scores, which get pulled in various directions by different communities of users who rely on them for different things. In the five colloquium papers (listed below), the challenges of the boundary-dwelling nature of assessment constructs and test scores were drawn together in the following questions:

- How does the **LSP construct** represent the values and genres of a professional or academic field? What are the issues that govern selection among a rich and varied set of possibilities?
- How are **test scores** and the constructs they represent used by different score user communities in the construction of public policy, especially in the notions of "licensing" and "readiness?"

Despite some concern that the colloquium presenters would be stranded, anxiously clasping their damp USBs on the wrong side of the rising creek, everyone made it over and the two questions were given a good airing.

On the tensions around the **construct**, Cathie Elder talked about how their research team went about developing criteria for a health-specific writing task (for the Occupational English Test) which reflect what nurses and doctors value in professional communication. The rating scale development procedure she outlined is a valuable model for anyone wishing to incorporate the perspectives of domain experts in a construct represented through a rating scale. Incorporating domain perspectives within the practical constraints of rating performances emerged as a key tension in the project. A different kind of construct-related boundary was explored by Janne Morton, who took us into the domain of architecture where a regular feature of training is a discussion-based critique of students' designs. Through a close analysis of the discourse, the task emerges in the nexus between education and profession, demonstrating differences, as well as valued characteristics of both. Both my presentation and the one presented by Kellie Frost focused on the uses of **test scores**. We considered the trajectories of academic English test scores which can become detached from their academic constructs through policies applying them to various

non-academic uses, such as permanent residency, professional registration, and employment. In our papers, we presented evidence that test-takers and policy makers understand and use scores in ways that may be unrelated to the test construct for personal (test-takers) and institutional (policy makers) goals. In summing up, Robyn Woodward-Kron drew attention to the range of different aspects of test construct that dwell at the boundaries of domains and user groups: authenticity, test-taker practices, assessment criteria and policy discourse. She surmised that the crossing of disciplinary boundaries tended to be uni-directional, with little engagement with test construct, for example, by policy makers.

The colloquium provided an opportunity to think together on the nature and use of assessments for entry to or socialization into specific educational or professional domains. These kinds of assessments have become increasingly consequential, especially in English-speaking skilled migration and higher education contexts. The question of the (in)separability of language and content is certainly not a new challenge, but the colloquium highlighted the fact that we are edging closer to assessment practices which manage the specificity compromise in principled ways.

After all that thinking, perhaps it was appropriate that we disappeared into the fog.

Papers presented as part of the ALTAANZ-sponsored colloquium:

Disparate discourses? An analysis of a genre that mediates between the academy and the profession in the domain of architecture

Janne Morton, University of Melbourne

Operationalizing an expanded construct of writing proficiency for an occupation-specific test: from workplace criteria to a workable rating scale

Cathie Elder, Ute Knoch, Eleanor Flynn, Elizabeth Manias, Robyn Woodward-Kron, University of Melbourne

Test construct in policy and practice: Score-user perspectives on occupation-related language skills.

Susy Macqueen, Australian National University and John Pill, Lancaster University

Subjectivity, agency and test constructs: Test taker perspectives on the meanings and use of IELTS and PTE A scores for skilled migrant selection in the accounting profession.

Kellie Frost, University of Melbourne

Convenors: Cathie Elder, Ute Knoch

Discussant: Robyn Woodward-Kron

Applied Linguistics Association of New Zealand (ALANZ) Annual Symposium

A brief report from Morena Dias Botelho de Magalhães

The 2018 ALANZ symposium was held on 1st December at Waikato Institute of Technology, Hamilton. The symposium theme was “Is business as usual enough?”. The day started with a plenary delivered by Gary Barkhuizen and two of his PhD students, Xiaoming Xu and Jovan Cavor. The trio presented stories about language teaching and learning while raising questions about ‘business as usual’ in individuals’ own teaching, working, and research contexts. Their presentation was stimulating and set the tone for a rich and diverse programme. There were three streams of parallel sessions, with the ALANZ AGM taking place at lunch time, and another plenary closing the day. A number of parallel sessions focused on the symposium theme and instigated fruitful discussions amongst the delegates. Several sessions were presented by doctoral candidates, including Diep Tran, our New Zealand student rep. Diep gave an outstanding presentation on her study about the listening component of VSTEP, the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency. The closing plenary was a lively and interesting account of ELT from 1978 to 2018 through the personal experiences of the speaker, Robert McLarty.

The symposium finished on a high note, reflecting the friendly and relaxed atmosphere of the day, with attendees looking forward to the next event, the joint ALAA, ALANZ & ALTAANZ Conference 2019, to be held at Curtin University in Perth, Australia, in November 2019.

PLTA: Call for submissions

PLTA publishes original research papers, essays/discussion papers on theory, research digests, and reports on work-in-progress. We welcome submissions from new and experienced researchers, including teachers and research students. For further information visit <http://www.altaanzt.org>

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

(please contact us at altaanz@gmail.com to add your event)

ICTE-UQ UECA Assessment Symposium

Brisbane, Australia 13-14 July 2019

Call for papers in mid-April

ueca.edu.au

TESOLANZ Assessment Symposium

Hamilton, New Zealand 13 July 2019

Building the knowledge base: Connecting Research to Practice in Assessment and EAP

CfP open <https://www.facebook.com/pg/Tesolanz.assn/posts/>

The 6th International Conference of the Asian Association for Language Assessment (AALA)

Hanoi, Vietnam, October 16-18, 2019

Call for papers open, extended to April 20th, 2019

The Applied Linguistics Conference

ALAA / ALAANZ / ALTAANZ

Perth, Western Australia, 25-27 November 2019

Call for papers opening soon

<http://alaa-alanz2019conference.com/full-papers>

British Council New Directions in Language Assessment East Asia

Yokohama, Japan, 8-9 December 2019

Call for papers open now

<https://www.britishcouncil.jp/en/new-directions/call-for-papers>

LTRC2020

Hammamet, Tunisia, 9– 13 June 2020

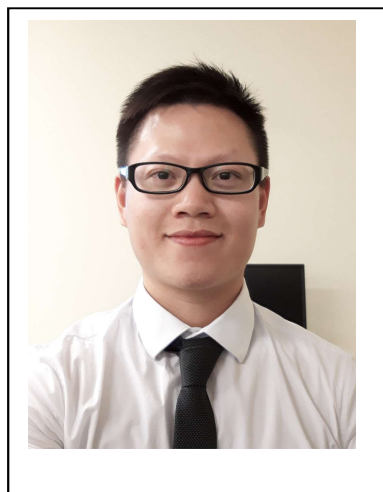
Further information can be found at

<https://www.iltaonline.com/page/LTRC2020CFP>

An interview with Xiaohua Liu – our former NZ student rep

Xiaohua Liu is a young researcher from China who received his PhD last year from Auckland University. He was the NZ student representative for ALTANZ in 2016 and 2017. This interview with Xiaohua is a recount of his challenging yet rewarding PhD journey.

Profile



Full name: Xiaohua Liu

Thesis Title: [Establishing the Foundation for a Diagnostic Assessment of Reading in English for Academic Purposes](#)

Supervisors: [Professor John Read](#) and [Professor Gavin Brown](#)

Year of completion: [25th September 2018](#)

Diep: Hi Xiaohua, or should I say Dr. Liu ! Thank you very much for taking the time today to share with us your PhD experience. So, how have you been? How has your life changed since you finished your PhD?

Leo: [Thank you for inviting me, Diep! I have had a great time with my family and old friends since returning from my PhD studies in New Zealand. During this period, I got to do a number of things that I didn't have time to do as a student. So, life seems to get busier for me at times. I hope it's changing for the good.](#)

Diep: Now, back to your thesis! I found the title “Establishing the Foundation for a Diagnostic Assessment of Reading in English for Academic Purposes” very intriguing. Could you tell me more about it, please? What sparked your interest in the assessment of Reading for Academic purposes?

Leo: [Well, there has been a growing interest in diagnostic assessment in the field of language testing and assessment over the past two decades or so, due to a general shift of attention from large-scale standardised proficiency tests to assessments that can have more roles to play in teaching and learning, coupled with the introduction of sophisticated techniques of data analysis such as cognitive diagnostic modelling from general education. Unfortunately, most projects on diagnosing reading and listening skills in our field have focused on retrofitting existing proficiency or achievement assessments through reanalysing assessment tasks. In spite of its general success in producing finer grained assessment results,](#)

this approach runs the risk of producing information that cannot meet assessment users' needs, because all you can get is what is already assessed by those assessment tasks. Seeing this potential problem, I was quite interested in exploring a more systematic way of designing diagnostic language assessments that can produce truly useful information for students, teachers and programme administrators, through methods such as needs analysis.

Diep: What did you enjoy most about your PhD? And what were the greatest challenges you faced doing your research?

Leo: There were a lot of things that I liked very much during my PhD research. The part that I most enjoyed would be doing interviews with university students. I like the way how I got to communicate with those students and listen to them telling me about their reading experiences and concerns about their reading problems. The most challenging part would be about learning all those quantitative analytical methods. Like many scholars in our field, I came from a background of language studies and statistics was not something I was very good at. Even my supervisors had the impression that I was scared of statistics at the beginning. But through months of reading books and articles and watching YouTube videos, I finally got the hang of how to analyse my data using different software. Of course, my supervisors and my fellow PhD students also gave me a lot of help during this process, and I still feel very grateful towards them. What I really want to say to those who share the same fear I used to have is that statistics is not as scary as it seems to be.

Diep: Well, it's been wonderful talking to you about your PhD journey. I'm very much inspired by your story. One last question! Do you have any advice for new PhD students who venture into Language Testing and Assessment?

Leo: I'm not sure if I'm qualified to provide answer to this question, but it seems that I've already been giving advice at the end of my answer to the last question. Haha! So maybe here I want say again to some of the new PhD students in our field – or even to those from the wider field of applied linguistics – that it is better to overcome your fear of doing statistical analyses and learn to do them, instead of avoiding them and potentially putting yourself at a disadvantage.

Another thing that I think is worth mentioning is that PhD research requires a lot of independent work and decision-making, based on my own experiences and the experiences of my student fellows as well. It is very important to follow your supervisors' advice, but there are also times when your supervisors cannot give a definitive answer, or when your supervisors' answer is not what you expect, or even when your supervisors disagree with each other on certain points of your research because they approach them from different perspectives, which are not necessarily wrong. These are the times when you need to make your own decisions, and in making such decisions, you have to be very clear about your research questions and what you want to achieve through the research. Also, it is important to keep your supervisors well-communicated about your choice and why you made that choice – your justifications. I believe such processes are crucial components of a PhD programme that transform us into an independent researcher of the future.

The last thing I want to recommend is to actively engage yourself with the research community, through platforms such as conferences, seminars and professional organisations of the field. These are good opportunities for us to keep ourselves updated on what is going on in our field as well as for networking. Joining the committee of professional organisation is also a good way of social practice. I was very fortunate to serve as one of the student representatives of ALTAANZ for two years during the PhD studies. This voluntary work not only gave me the chance to understand how such professional organisations work, but also improved my communication and event organising skills. I believe these are also essential for our future jobs, either in academia or in other fields.

Diep: Wonderful advice. Thank you very much, Xiaohua and all the best for your future career! Hope to see you again soon.

Leo: Thank you for having me! Also, best of luck with your PhD studies!

2019 UECA Assessment Symposium

The 2019 UECA Assessment Symposium will take place in Brisbane at ICTE-UQ on Saturday 13th July. It is a full day event featuring a range of speakers giving concurrent sessions on aspects of English language assessment with specific focus on the Australian University English language Centre context. We plan to run concurrent sessions throughout the day as well as offer several key speaker plenaries. The call for presenters will be published in mid-April.

We also have a new initiative for 2019. In addition to the Saturday symposium, we are holding an 'item writer workshop' on Sunday 14th (9.00-12.00 half-day). This is practical, hands on, item writer training workshop presented by a very skilful and experienced item writer trainer with broad experience leading teams of item writers on a range of different tests. Participants will submit items for discussion prior to the session, and the following will be addressed:

Why was a particular text chosen? What makes it suitable for use in a test?

Why were some texts rejected? What makes them unsuitable for use in a test? What edits needed to be made to these texts before using them in this session?

Why do some of the participant's items work well? Why are some of the participant's items not working? How can we re-write these items to make them work?

What level of processing of text is required to successfully respond to this item?

What generalisations about writing specific item types can we make?

The importance of writing items as a team and the item writing edit process

Check ueca.edu.au for more information as it becomes available!

ALTAANZ Sponsorship for Educational Activities

A call for submissions was circulated earlier this year for sponsorship for Educational Activities (see <http://www.altaanz.org/sponsorship-for-educational-activities.html> for the full call). At our recent committee meeting we decided to support the following submissions:

Yuendumu school workshops

Yuendumu school currently runs a bilingual with bi-literacy program that incorporates Warlpiri language, values and knowledges into classroom learning. A prevailing challenge for bilingual programs is capturing and assessing the cognitive and linguistic competencies of multilingual students and Warlpiri educators have collaborated in recent years to explore best practice in first language assessment, particularly of oral language. A project is currently underway to differentiate learner pathways linked to the Warlpiri Curriculum Cycle and Emma Browne has been engaged in research as part of a doctorate at ANU exploring teaching, learning and assessment in Warlpiri language since 2017.

The workshops will cater for teaching staff and interested community members and will offer an opportunity for teaching teams and Warlpiri community members to engage with research conducted in terms 3-4, 2018 and term 1, 2019 on assessment of teaching and learning in Warlpiri, as part of Emma's PhD project. They will involve discussion of topics and issues in language testing practice, explorations of assessment strategies and tools and discussion of students' Warlpiri language (oral and written) and contribute to efforts to build a substantial evidence base for the school's bilingual programming.

TESOLANZ symposium

TESOLANZ is a professional association representing approximately 600 language teaching professionals across a range of sectors (tertiary, secondary, primary, refugee services). The membership consists of teachers, researchers, programme leaders and policy makers. At the end of 2017, TESOLANZ ran a state of the sector survey to identify critical needs within the sector. One of the key concerns indicated by members who participated in the survey related to Assessment practices. In addition, half of the survey respondents identified assessment as a pressing professional development need.

TESOLANZ proposes, therefore, to host a one-day symposium on 13th July (at Wintec - Hamilton) to bridge the gap between research and development in language testing to classroom praxis, thereby aligning with ALTAANZ's stated purpose of promoting 'best practice'. The theme of the symposium is: *Building the Knowledge Base: Connecting Research to Practice in Assessment and EAP*.

The ALTAANZ Committee congratulates the organisers of these events and we look forward to sharing stories from the workshop and symposium in the next edition of the newsletter.

MAD MARCH 2019

Johanna Motteram reports on her Mad March 2019... a big month for conferences about testing, and a lot of flying for Johanna (ALTAANZ's Communication Officer and British Council Language Assessment Specialist) from her home base in Singapore.

LTRC 2019

March opened with the Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) in Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta, Georgia. The conference locale was leafy, with a village square and court house at the top of the street straight out of *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

LTRC always offers a great range of social events in addition to the excellent plenaries and parallel session papers. This year was no exception with the conference dinner held in a beautiful wooden Tram Shed, with great food and a swing dancing demonstration from Rachel Brooks, FBI and Gerrriet Janssen, Universidad de los Andes. A new initiative this year were the networking dinners which were held on the Wednesday evening. Conference attendees were invited to nominate to attend dinner at a local restaurant with an LTRC "old-timer". I really enjoyed the meal and the company in the networking dinner I joined which was convened by Elvis Wagner of Temple University College of Education. Other informants have told me that Ute Knoch's dinner was also a lot of fun.



Tim McNamara and Noriko Iwashita at the LTRC Banquet

Jason Fan, University of Melbourne also attended ALTAANZ. He arrived earlier than me (I had a frustrating plane delay in Doha) and was able to attend the Alan Davies Lecture. He comments as follows:

During the LTRC in Atlanta, Dr Cathie Elder gave a fascinating Alan Davies lecture entitled Bringing tests to justice: Can we make a difference? In the talk, she reviewed Alan Davies' work on test consequences, fairness and justice, and ethics and professional responsibility. Then, she presented a provocative discussion on where we are now on these issues and what could be done in the future. Next, she shared her personal reflections through three research projects that she undertook in her professional career to demonstrate the actions that language testers could take against test misuse and injustice. In the last section of her talk, she provided suggestions on how to enhance social justice in language assessment.

Noriko Iwashita, ALTAANZ Co-President (pictured above with Professor Tim McNamara, attended the ILTA AGM lunch meeting. She notes:

The president of ILTA, Professor Micheline Chalhoub-Deville stressed the importance of membership engagement and strategic planning at the president report. She asked how ILTA can serve to promote the research and assessment practice, which echoes the ALTAANZ mission. ALTAANZ welcome members' input and more dialogue to achieve our goals.

The first meeting of the Language Assessment Literacy special interest group of ILTA (LALSIG) was also held during LTRC. Over 30 people attended the meeting, which started at 7:30am, and discussed creating closer collaboration in this area.

Highlight papers for me included Ute Knoch and Sally O'Hagan on the validity of language tests used in the registration process of internationally qualified nurses' registration, and a presentation by Ikkyu Choi of ETS on "Understanding Writing Process of Adult EFL Learners in a Writing Assessment Context". The data collection tool, keystroke logging, seems to me to be potentially even more interesting from a qualitative perspective than the quantitative approach Choi is following. Lorena Llosa and Scott Grapin, both of New York University, also drew a lot of attention for their research into assessing English language learners' language proficiency in the content classroom.

Olena Rossi and Tineke Brunfaut presented on item writer training. Their proposal to include language assessment literacy in item writer training sparked a lot of discussion around the essentials involved in the development of a quality item writer.

There was a large Australian contingent at LTRC this year, though the New Zealanders appear to have had their appetite for LTRC sated since hosting the extremely successful LTRC 2018 in Auckland (or perhaps, the timing was bad, or it is just a really, really long way to go from NZ to Atlanta!).

LTRC 2020 will be held in Hammamet, Tunisia from the 9th to the 13th of June. The call for papers will open in July next year. Further information can be found at <https://www.iltaonline.com/page/LTRC2020CFP>



Noriko Iwashita, Luke Harding, Jamie Dunlea and Johanna Motteram at LTRC in Atlanta

SEAMEO RELC Singapore / Post RELC-CULI Bangkok

Rounds two and three in my Mad March were closer to home. First, I attended the SEAMEO RELC conference, and then I finished the week at the Post RELC/CULI conference day in Bangkok.

The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Regional English Language Centre (REL) conference is an important annual event for language teaching and testing professionals in Asia. Hundreds of participants converge on the RELC Regional Language Centre to join the conference. This year there were 142 parallel papers, 11 invited speaker talks, 4 panels and 23 workshops.

Of those there were three invited speakers explicitly talking about assessment, Dr Rose Clesham of Pearson, Graeme Harrison of Cambridge Assessment English, and Dr Johanna Motteram from the British Council. In addition, Professor Dr Bernd Rüschoff from Duisburg-Essen University spoke about the recently released revisions to the CEFR. An extremely popular, assessment focussed invited speaker panel session was held at the end of the day on Tuesday. This session, “Language Learning and Assessment in the Digital Era” featured Associate Professor Ana Pellicer-Sánchez (UCL Institute of Education), Rose Clesham and Bernd Rüschoff, answering some tough questions from an engaged and informed audience.

This year there seemed to be a particularly high number of Japanese delegates. I enjoyed many interesting conversations about the (fairly) recent MEXT decision that all university entrance examinations should include 4 skills English language testing.

Another special feature of the RELC conference is the presence of visiting speakers from New Zealand. RELC offers a MA in TESOL in partnership with Victoria University of Wellington and each year lecturers from Wellington join the conference.

For round three, as a special treat, I was invited to attend the post-RELC conference day hosted by the Chulalongkorn University Language Institute (CULI) in Bangkok. This involved flying to Bangkok on Thursday after the RELC Monday to Wednesday conference, and presenting my invited talk “A Test Development Model for Developing Localised, and Local, Tests” a second time on Friday morning. There were three speakers at the Post-RELC/CULI conference day, Professor Cynthia White from Massey University, New Zealand, and Dr Ton Nu Linh Thoai, a Language Specialist from SEAMEO RELC, Singapore also gave presentations, Cynthia White facilitated a workshop and we joined for a final panel discussion at the end of the day.

The audience in Bangkok was very keen to talk about different issues related to language assessment, particularly about the varieties of English which are tested in different contexts. As well as great conversations, the Post RELC-CULI conference day featured an abundance of great food.

Inaugural New Directions Latin America in Mexico City

Great food was certainly also a feature of round four, the New Directions in Language Assessment Latin America which was held in Mexico City 21-23 March. The British Council’s New Directions in Language Assessment conference in East Asia has been an annual event since 2013, but this was the first New Directions conference held in Latin America. The conference attracted participants from all over Latin America and the two panel sessions and the parallel papers highlighted the range of language assessment projects being undertaken in Latin America.

The conference was organised as one day of plenaries and panels, one day of parallel papers, and one day of workshops. There were ample opportunities to network during coffee breaks, lunches and at the cocktail event held on the first evening of the conference.

Lunchtime on day one saw a special introduction to Latin American Association for Language Testing and Assessment (LAALTA) meeting which was very well attended. Both LAALTA and New Directions LATAM were envisioned at LTRC 2017 in Colombia and it was good to witness the healthy state of both just two years later.

The 2nd British Council New Directions in Language Assessment LATAM conference will be held in Colombia in 2020. However, before then the 7th British Council New Directions in Language Assessment East Asia will be held in Yokohama, 8-9 December 2019. Yokohama will be my fourth New Directions conference and I am confident that it will include many interesting and challenging conversations. The call for papers is open now <https://www.britishcouncil.jp/en/new-directions/call-for-papers>.



Souvenirs from a seriously Mad March.

Festschrift for Professor Tim McNamara: ‘An exceptional scholar’



Tim McNamara's Festschrift Celebration: Carsten Roever, Tim McNamara and Gillian Wigglesworth

On 4 April, a crowd gathered to honour the work of Tim McNamara, recently retired from the University of Melbourne where he has taught since 1987, and where he founded the *Language Testing Research Centre* with Alan Davies.

It is virtually impossible to be involved in the field of language testing and not be aware of Tim's work, or at least, be affected by it. He has made substantial contributions across the field in staggering array of topics: validity theory, measurement methods, social theory, fairness and justice, identity, citizenship testing, lingua franca testing, LSP and EAP assessment, classroom assessment, proficiency testing, theories of language ability, refugee and asylum seeker language assessment, social policy, gender, poststructuralism and the boundaries of Applied Linguistics itself. His most recent book is *Language and Subjectivity*, which draws on his capacity for making deep connections across theories and disciplines and applying them innovatively to language practices, from casual conversation to language tests. To celebrate his work, Carsten Roever and Gillian Wigglesworth presented him with their edited volume titled *Social perspectives on language testing: Papers in honour of Tim McNamara*. In their Foreword they acknowledge that 'it would take several collections like this one to provide a complete picture of the influence Tim's thinking has had on language testing and Applied Linguistics more broadly' (p. 7). In their chapter, John Pill and Luke Harding summarise his personal and intellectual influence as follows:

There are few academic scholars working in the field of language assessment as engaging as Tim McNamara. We use the word "engaging" here to signify both being interesting (drawing others into a topic) and being interested (taking an interest in others' affairs). Those who know Tim – as we have had the good fortune to as students and, later, as colleagues – know that Tim's engaging nature is first and foremost a personal characteristic. Tim is interested in the world, and in the lives of others. This is why, if you speak to the many students Tim has taught, supervised and mentored at the University of Melbourne over the years, they will often talk not only of the experience in intellectual terms, but of the warmth and personal connection that Tim fostered. Beyond the personal domain, however, Tim's intellectual journey can also be well described as engaging – drawing others into the field of language testing (by introducing them to the intellectual richness and breadth of the issues assessment touches upon), and

engaging with scholarly work outside the field. This outside engagement involves both broadening the range of connections made between language testing and other fields of academic enquiry – for example, Tim was an avid, long-term member of an interdisciplinary Derrida reading group at the University of Melbourne – and engaging more practically with the real-world impact and consequences of language tests – for example, Tim’s work on language analysis for the determination of origin of asylum seekers. (p. 217)

As the editors conclude, an exceptional scholar.

Pill, J. & Harding, L. (2019). A most engaging scholar: Tim McNamara and the role of language testing expertise. In C. Roever & G. Wigglesworth (Eds.), *Social perspectives on language testing: Papers in honour of Tim McNamara*. Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 217-228.

PAPERS IN LANGUAGE TESTING AND ASSESSMENT (PLTA)

Editors Sally O’Hagan and Lynette May

New issue (Vol. 8.1) available soon at

<http://www.altanz.org/papers-in-language-testing-and-assessment-plta.html> and
<https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/language-testing-research-centre/research/publications>

Contents:

- Using DIALANG to diagnose the performance of English language learners over time, N. Kektsidou & D. Tsagari
- Grammatical complexity at phrasal level: an investigation into integrated writing produced by advanced Chinese EFL learners, L. Xu
- Standardized language assessment in Cuba: benchmarking videos for teacher training on CEFR implementation, G.D. Pérez, F. van Splunder, L. Baten, J. Van Maele, Y.D. Moreno
- An Investigation of The Factors Involved in Japanese Students’ English Learning Behavior During Test Preparation, T. Sato
- Book review: Usage-inspired L2 instruction, Tyler, Ortega, Uno & Park (Eds.). Reviewed by I. Chen.

Special issue *Applying Rasch measurement in language assessment* (Vol. 8.2) in preparation