



The 3rd CBLA SIG Symposium Programme
'Test Washback in the Language Classroom'

Friday 2nd and Saturday 3rd November, 2012

Hosted by the Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus

Venue: The CLASSIC Hotel, Nicosia, Cyprus

Friday 2nd November, 2012 - Vincent Van Gogh Room

15.00 – 15.30	Registration
15.30 – 16.00	Towards an alternative approach to oral performance assessment in English as a Lingua. Franca Niki Kouvdou
16.00 – 16.30	Examining the quality and quantity of the washback effect of the FCE test in Greece. Lana Loumbourdi
16.30 – 17.00	Beyond and within the classroom: ideology, values, and tests' power in Greece. Vanda Papafilippou
17.00 – 17.30	Coffee break
17.30 – 18.15	Plenary 1: Do all tests have washback? Prof. J Charles Alderson
18.15 – 18.30	Coffee break
18.30 – 20.00	Workshop 1: What is the relationship between diagnosis and washback? Prof. J Charles Alderson

Saturday 3rd November, 2012 - Michael Angelo Room

9.00 – 9.30	A Washback study of the teaching practices used in EFL multi-exam preparation classes. Irini Papakammenou
9.30-10.00	The washback effect of peer assessment to adolescent EFL learners. Eleni Meletiadou
10.00-10.30	Assessment as a technology of power: the shaping of literacy and literate identities in elementary classrooms. Stavroula Kontovourki
10.30-11.00	Coffee break
11.00-11.45	Plenary 2: Examining different approaches of 'building on washback' for meaningful teaching and learning. Prof. Elana Shohamy
11.45 – 12.00	Coffee break
12.00 – 13.30	Workshop 2: Designing bi-multilingual assessment procedures Prof. Elana Shohamy
13.30 – 14.00	CBLA SIG Meeting - Farewell

Sponsors:



Niki Kouvdou

Hellenic Open University, Greece

Towards an alternative approach to oral performance assessment in English as a Lingua Franca

In an era of globalization, the use of English as a Lingua Franca (i.e. a contact language between speakers from different lingua-cultural backgrounds) is a reality that affects all aspects of human life and activity, the teaching of English being one of these. It is true that nowadays a great number of Greek state school classes are multicultural, comprising students from different countries with different mother tongues. These students may well use English to communicate with each other both inside and outside the classroom. Besides, even Greek students, who are most probably the majority, use English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) when interacting with other non-native speakers on various occasions outside the classroom. Therefore, English should be treated as a Lingua Franca and taught accordingly. Yet, if the teaching of English is guided by the principles of ELF, can traditional testing techniques, calling for strict compliance with Standard English norms and structures, be the most suitable assessment method to be adopted? And if not, what kind of assessment can have a positive washback effect and as such promote the teaching and learning of English as a Lingua Franca?

In this talk, I aim to discuss whether alternative assessment, in the form of systematic observation-based record keeping, is appropriate for the assessment of oral performance skills in a teaching context where the principles of ELF are highly valued. The relevant research should therefore reveal what kind of washback effect this form of assessment has on teaching and learning. This is an under-researched area, whose exploration is expected to narrow the existing gap between assessment and ELF by providing substantial evidence for the potential effectiveness of systematic and focused observation as an assessment tool.

Bio

Niki Kouvdou has been teaching English as a foreign language in Greece since 1985, first in the private sector for eight years and then in a state primary school, where she has been working until now. She got her first degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Athens in 1985 and her Master's Degree in English Language Teaching Methodology from the Hellenic Open University of Patras in 2004. She is currently working on her PhD research on English as a Lingua Franca and alternative assessment. Besides alternative assessment in ELT and the use of English as a Lingua Franca, Androniki is also interested in teacher training and development as well as in teaching English to young learners.

Lana Loumbourdi

Goethe University, Germany

Examining the quality and quantity of the washback effect of the FCE test in Greece.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the washback effect – the influence that testing has on teaching and learning (Alderson and Wall, 1993) - of a very popular test in the Greek context- the FCE (First Certificate in English) administered by Cambridge ESOL.

Emphasis was put on finding out the nature of the washback effect produced before the administration of the test - that is during the preparation phase, and after the administration of the test. First, in an initial study, teachers were interviewed on their beliefs, methodologies and attitudes towards the exams. Then, questionnaires were handed out to teachers and students, in an effort to investigate washback more directly and identify its dimensions. Finally, two classroom observations were conducted. The first, using COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching Observation Scheme), recorded the same teachers teaching FCE and non-FCE classes. The second round of observations was done with an instrument developed for the purposes of the study (WOT) aiming at recording the quantity and nature of the washback present.

After the data was collected, transcribed and analysed, several conclusions were drawn. For example, the washback effect present was of a negative nature, esp. in the Use of English paper of the test, which tests Grammar and Vocabulary. Overall, the test itself seemed to have a positive effect on students and the way they perceived their skills and knowledge of English. However, the preparation course they attended before the exam seemed to have a negative effect on both teachers and students, especially in the way it pushes towards repetition of the same material, exclusively teaching of test-taking strategies, producing high levels of anxiety, and the students' perception of their skills.

Bio

Lana Loumbourdi has a BA in English Language and Literature from Aristotle University, Greece an MA in TEFL/TESL from Birmingham University, UK and will soon submit her PhD in Language testing and assessment at Goethe University, Germany. She has been an English teacher for many years in Greece, both in the private and public domain and is currently working as a lecturer and research assistant at Goethe University in Frankfurt. Her fields of interest include Language testing and assessment, the washback effect of language tests, task-based and communicative language teaching.

Vanda Papafilippou

Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol

Beyond and within the classroom: ideology, values, and tests' power in Greece

Classrooms are not independent entities, as what is happening and said in them reflects the discourses and hegemonic ideology operating outside, in the wider society. However, test washback research usually focuses exclusively on the classroom environment, neglecting the 'broader picture'. Through narrative interviews and critical discourse analysis, this study explored how stakeholders (ten test-takers, five teachers and six parents) viewed and experienced English language exams in Greece, one of the biggest markets of English language teaching and testing market, why they consider them so important, and what the values behind their views are. What emerged from the data was that English language tests undoubtedly have a washback effect on teaching as everybody admitted that lessons orbited around these exams. All test-takers argued that throughout their student lives, viewed themselves primarily as candidates rather than learners and that it was their teachers and parents that put this pressure on them. Teachers, in their turn, argued that they receive immense pressure to teach to the test from parents. However, parents seemed not to know anything about the tests per se, and their main arguments were drawn from the human capital discourse 'pool'. Therefore, tests appear to draw their power not from their format or content but from the values that the society holds.

Bio

Vanda Papafilippou studied English Language and Literature in the Aristotle University, Greece. In 2008 she completed her MA Educational Studies in the University of Warwick, UK with Distinction. Currently, she is about to finish her ESRC-funded PhD in the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK. She has also worked as a TESOL teacher in Greece and as a teaching assistant in the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol.

J Charles Alderson

Lancaster University, UK

Plenary 1

Do all tests have washback?

“Washback” is the term used to describe the powerful effect that important examinations can have on teaching and learning. In earlier times it was believed that there was a direct relationship between the characteristics of an examination and the impact it had on classroom practices. However, recent research has shown that the situation is actually much more complicated and challenging.

In this lecture, I will begin by describing and discussing the concept of washback, and I will present research that has tried to examine the nature of washback and the role of teachers and students in bringing about washback. I will then question whether all tests have washback and explore the relationship between test stakes and the impact of the test. I believe that low-stakes tests need not have washback and specifically that diagnostic tests are designed to have a positive effect on learners. I will refer to the experience of DIALANG (Alderson, 2005) and the ongoing research project DIALUKI to substantiate this assertion.

Alderson, J.C. (2005) *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency: The Interface between Learning and Assessment*. London: Continuum.

DIALUKI - Diagnosing reading and writing in a second or foreign language
<https://www.jyu.fi/dialuki>

Workshop 1

What is the relationship between diagnosis and washback?

The workshop will explore in small groups the issues raised in the lecture. This will then lead to a plenary discussion of how washback works, what influences it, what classroom-based diagnosis looks like and what impact it can have.

Bio

Charles Alderson is Professor of Linguistics and English Language Education at Lancaster University. His main interests are language testing, reading in a foreign language and the interface between language testing and second language acquisition. His most recent books are *The politics of language education: individuals and institutions*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2009 and *A Lifetime of Testing*, Applied Linguistics Series, Series Editor R. Ellis. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press and Amsterdam: De Gruyter, 2011.

He is currently Principal Investigator of an ESRC/ Academy of Finland research project looking at the diagnosis of reading in a second or foreign language, and the author of a 2000 monograph entitled *Assessing Reading* (C.U.P). A former co-editor of the international refereed journal *Language Testing*, he is also co-editor of the *Cambridge Language Assessment Series*, with Lyle Bachman of UCLA. He is the author of over 100 articles in refereed journals and chapters in books, and has given papers and plenary presentations on language testing and reading in a foreign language in 54 countries.

Irini Papakammenou

University of Cyprus

A Washback study of the teaching practices used in EFL multi-exam preparation classes

Washback studies on how teachers teach have revealed interesting but rather vague results with regard to the concept of 'methodology' used by teachers in exam preparation classes (Mickan & Motteram, 2008). However, there is only related evidence and not direct research on the influence of tests on both how teachers teach and their attitudes towards the methods they use (Cheng & Curtis, 2012). In addition, only limited research has been undertaken in the Greek context (Tsagari, 2009).

The purpose of this research project, which is work-in-progress, is to outline an investigation into the washback effect (Alderson & Wall, 1993) of multi-exam classes on teaching practices in Greece. In Greece students have a great number of language examinations to choose from so they often participate in more than one exam in the same exam period. The term 'multi-exam' class best describes the variety of exams which are taught in the same exam preparation classes in Greece presenting an interesting pedagogical ecology.

This study aims to investigate the nature and type of the methodology teachers use in multi-exam classes and the extent to which their approaches are influenced by the nature and requirements of this kind of preparation classes. The presentation will focus on the theoretical underpinnings and research design of the study by drawing a distinction made between 'methods', 'activities' and 'tasks' when studying teachers' methodology in washback studies. Also, the overall research methods that will be used will be presented along with the methods of analysis.

The presentation will offer teachers, administrators, teacher trainers, test constructors and material writers and publishers, insights directly relevant to their needs.

Bio

Irini Papakammenou studied English Literature with English Language at the University of North Wales, Bangor. She then completed an MSc in TESOL at the University of Stirling. She has been teaching English as a foreign language to Greek students since 2001. In 2008 she enrolled for a PhD degree at the University of Cyprus. Her research topic is about the influence of EFL exams on the teaching practices in Greece.

Elena Meletiadou
University of Cyprus

The washback effect of peer assessment to adolescent EFL learners

The research literature abounds with studies concerning the influence that testing has on teaching and learning, or what has commonly been referred to as washback (Alderson and Wall, 1993). However, there has been little investigation into the effect of classroom-based assessment on learners (Munoz and Alvarez, 2010). The use of peer assessment (PA) as a form of classroom-based assessment is reported to induce positive washback and is increasingly being adopted in secondary education settings (Wen and Tsai, 2006).

The current study employed a 16-item Likert-scale instrument to explore the impact of PA on participants' attitudes towards PA and EFL writing. A sample of 60 Cypriot adolescent EFL students participated in the study. These students formed three intact groups which received different kinds of feedback. The findings indicated that: a) all three groups had a positive attitude towards PA, and b) learners who were actively involved in PA as student/assessors (third group) felt that they had learnt more than the learners who were passively involved as student/assesseees (second group). Results showed positive washback on learners' attitudes towards PA of writing confirming previous research (Cheng and Warren, 1997; Orsmond et al., 1996). To sum up, the use of peer assessment mechanisms fosters positive washback on the learners because they can take control of the assessment. Through peer assessment students become responsible for their own progress because they may be able to diagnose strong or weak areas, identify current proficiency level, and become more goal-oriented and consequently more self-directed learners (Munoz and Alvarez, 2010).

Bio

Elena Meletiadou holds a DS (Université de Franche-Comté), a BA (Aristotle University), a PGC (Aristotle University), an MEd (Hellenic Open University) and an MA (University of Cyprus). She is currently a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at the Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus. Her research interests include classroom-based language assessment, collaborative language learning and teacher training.

Stavroula Kontovourki
University of Cyprus

Assessment as a technology of power: the shaping of literacy and literate identities in elementary classrooms

In this presentation, literacy assessment is approached as a technology of power, whereby particular meanings of literacy and of literate identities are being reflected, regulated, and produced. Toward this end, data from two studies are combined: first, from an ethnographic study of children's performances of literacy in a third grade public school classroom in a metropolitan U.S. city, where regular literacy instruction was interspersed with multiple forms of assessment; and, second, from the discourse analysis of the newly introduced curriculum for the teaching of Greek language in Cyprus. Sociocultural perspectives on literacy and poststructural performance theories are employed to examine the meanings of assessment in each case and of the processes whereby particular meanings of literacy and of literate identities were produced in those particular contexts. Thus, the hybridity of schooled literacy is discussed, while questions are raised about the less visible ways in which assessment shapes the literacy performances of readers and writers in public school classrooms.

Bio

Stavroula Kontovourki is a Lecturer in Literacy and Language Arts Education. She employs sociocultural and post-structural theoretical approaches and qualitative research methods to examine literacy and language arts instruction; literacy development and literacy practices; the performance of literate identities in and out of school; multimodality (textual and embodied); and the realization of literacy curricula in elementary classrooms. As part of the latter, she examined the processes whereby students' performances as literacy learners were shaped at the intersection of literacy curricula and mandated testing. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at different international conferences.

Elana Shohamy

Tel Aviv University, Israel

Plenary 2

Examining different approaches of 'building on washback' for meaningful teaching and learning

A common approach of the past few years has been to build on the concept of washback to connect testing and learning, i.e., to utilize washback, which refers to the effect of tests on teaching and learning – to the creation of various pedagogical approaches for effective language learning. Such approaches range from those where testing companies engage in the development of learning and teaching materials that will assist students and teachers in obtaining higher scores on tests, to others which attempt to erase the divide between testing and learning using mediations and other socio-cultural methods as in Dynamic Assessment. This talk will describe, examine, evaluate and critique a number of these common approaches which are widely used nowadays mostly in large scale testing in educational systems and universities and arrive at conclusions as to the desired type of connections between testing and learning.

Workshop 2

Designing bi-multilingual assessment procedures

This workshop emerges from the argument and convincing evidence that language users do not use languages in separate ways, rather, users who are competent in different degrees in a number of languages employ the multiple languages they know in comprehension of written and oral texts and in the production of speech and written texts in multiple genres. In addition users of a number of languages employ various multi-modal features such as visuals and symbols. This phenomenon refers mostly to immigrants, children and adults and indigenous groups who use and rely on their first languages, or other languages they know in the engagement with academic content. The phenomenon is especially noticed among those who use a number of languages at home. While a view of languages as closed entities has been common in the past, current approaches view languages in terms of multilingual uses, code-switching, trans-linguaging and hybridities, that is taking place in classroom which are held in a number of languages encouraging the use and movement among languages in very creative ways (see *The Modern Language Journal*, special issue, 95, iii, 2011). The argument put forward to language testers is to construct bi-multilingual tests which reflect this growing trend of mixing languages.

This workshop will begin with a short introduction of notion of multilingual tests, will demonstrate examples and will then provide guidelines for constructing such tests so that participants will develop and create. Method for examining the reliability and validity of these tests and will be discussed along with a number of studies that demonstrate the advantage of these tests to multiple language users.

Bio

Elana Shohamy is a Professor of Language Education at the School of Education, Tel Aviv University. Her research and writings focus on a variety of topics related to language testing and language policy in the context of conflicts, co-existence and rights in multilingual societies. Her work in language testing, in particular, addresses the political, social, educational and

ethical dimensions of tests within a critical framework pointing to the power and misuses of tests in education and society, immigrants in schools and adults in the context of migration and citizenship. Her *current* work in language testing attempts to develop multilingual tests that match expanded practice of language in multilingual contexts, based on a broader construct of languages reflecting the diverse societies and multimodal literacies in the digital world. Elana has published extensively on all these topics. Her authored and edited books include *The power of tests*, Longman 2001; *Encyclopedia of Language and Education: Language Testing and Assessment, Volume 7* (ed. w/ Nancy Hornberger, Springer, 2008) and many others. In 2010 Elana was granted the ILTA lifetime achievement award in Cambridge, UK.