



5th CBLA SIG Symposium Programme
'Issues in Classroom-based Language Assessment'

Saturday 1st November, 2014

Hosted by the Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus

Venue: Room A019, 75 Kallipoleos Street, Nicosia, University of Cyprus

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9.00-9.45	Plenary 1: Testing Systems in Reform Agendas: Validity Considerations	Micheline Chalhoub- Deville University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) U.S.A.
9.45 – 10.30	Plenary 2: The CEFR and standards-based assessment: research and policy	Neus Figueras, Ministry of Education, Spain
10.30 – 11.30	Workshop 1: Using EALTA Guidelines for Good Practice to streamline CEFR- related assessments	
11.30 - 12.00	Coffee break	
12.00 – 12.45	Plenary 3: Assessment as a key competence of foreign language teachers	Oscar Soler-Canela Instituto Cervantes, Egypt
12.45 – 13.45	Workshop 2: Planning professional development in classroom assessment	
13.45 – 14.00	CBLA SIG Meeting – Farewell	

Sponsors:



Prof. Micheline Chalhoub-Deville

University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG)
U.S.A.

Plenary 1: Testing Systems in Reform Agendas: Validity Considerations

Government policies continue to affirm a central role for testing systems in reform efforts. These educational reform initiatives increasingly employ high-stakes accountability tests to improve the so-called quality of education. Classroom-based formative assessments play a secondary role in such testing systems. Formative assessment tends to “... often means no more than that assessment is carried out frequently and is planned at the same time as teaching” (Assessment Reform Group, n.d., p. 7).

In the U.S., Race to the Top (RTTT) is a concerted government initiative, which seeks to implement testing systems to drive reform--these systems include formative and summative types of assessments. RTTT is grounded in consortia testing whose functions move beyond traditional roles of placement, selection, end-of-grade, certification, etc. at the individual level. The RTTT testing systems are intended to drive teacher effectiveness and school performance. RTTT seeks systemic reform to help ensure that students graduate ready for college and career according to the attainment of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The presentation explores the relationship between summative and formative assessments in the context of RTTT. The presentation also discusses the nature of validity theory and practice that underpins such testing systems. It makes the argument that reform-driven RTTT moves beyond traditional interest in individual student scores. RTTT mandates attention to aggregate and system performance. The presentation touches on emerging research under the heading of theory of action (TOA), which calls for a reform-informed validity framework. A TOA promotes validity efforts that target individual, aggregate, and social system considerations. The presentation prompts scholarly engagements that acknowledge the social dimension to validity.

Bio

Micheline Chalhoub-Deville (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Professor of Educational Research Methodology and Co-Director of the Coalition for Diverse Language Communities at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She has been awarded the 2000 Outstanding Young Scholar Award by the Educational Testing Service—TOEFL Program and the UNCG 2013 School of Education Outstanding Senior Scholar Award, both of which recognize her contributions to the field of language testing and assessment. She has also received the 1998 Best Article Award from the International Language Testing Association. She is a member of the editorial boards of *Language Testing* and *Language Assessment Quarterly*. She is the founder of the Mid-West Association of Language Testers (MwALT). She is a former member of both the TOEFL Policy Board, as well as the TOEFL Committee of Examiners, where she also served as chair for three years. She currently serves on the British Council Assessment Advisory Board.

Dr Neus Figueras
Ministry of Education
Spain

Plenary 2: The CEFR and standards-based assessment: research and policy

The publication of the CEFR with its level labels and level descriptors has given an unprecedented impetus to research in language assessment and has greatly influenced language policies in Europe and all over the world.

There is today a growing body of research available on how the CEFR verbally defined levels of proficiency are translated (to varying degrees of success) into numerical scores on student performances, and on the validity, defensibility and generalisability of the decisions taken, which shows that research practice(s) have acknowledged the literature put at their disposal on standard setting in the past ten years (the Council of Europe Manual, with its Reference supplement, Cizek and Bunch 2007, Figueras and Noijons 2009, Martinyuk 2010, Tannenbaum and Wylie 2008). To a much lesser extent, and in this case with considerable differences across countries and continents, there is also a growing literature on the difficulties of implementing CEFR-related language policy requirements as issued by governments (agency, in Reckase 2007's terms) both for testing, for assessment and for teaching. Likewise, not enough is known about how such policy requirements are put into practice in classrooms, nor on their consequences and implications.

Now that standard setting seems to have entered the field of language assessment as a full member, it is time to attract researchers into a detailed exploration of whether what has been learnt about standards-based assessments can influence language teaching, and whether such an influence can have an impact on learning results, bridging the still existing gap between knowledge of and about the CEFR and its use in real fact in the drafting of curricula, in teacher training and in classroom assessment.

Workshop 1: Using EALTA Guidelines for Good Practice to streamline CEFR- related assessments

In this session, the participants will be able to discuss issues arising when trying to link assessments to the CEFR levels through the analysis of the new section D in EALTA Guidelines and their correspondence of the procedures suggested in the Council of Europe Manual (2009). Examples of the different steps and procedures will be presented and used for discussion.

Bio

Dr Neus Figueras works in the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya, where she coordinates the certificate exams for foreign language adult learners since 1996. She also lectures part-time at the University of Barcelona and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She has been involved in a number of international research and development projects and collaborates regularly with the Council of Europe in the dissemination of the CEFR in relation with testing and assessment. She has published articles in the field of language teaching and assessment and is one of the authors of the Manual for Relating examinations to the CEFR (2009). She has given courses and presented at universities in Spain and in different European countries, in Asia and the USA. She was the first President (2004-7) of EALTA (www.ealta.eu.org).

Oscar Soler-Canela

Instituto Cervantes

Egypt

Plenary 3: Assessment as a key competence of foreign language teachers

Foreign language teachers are increasingly expected to implement more diverse and innovative assessment practices in the classroom in order to improve the quality of student learning. Nevertheless, pre-service or in-service teacher training programs are often focused on more traditional aspects of language testing. This may leave teachers to struggle alone with having a better understanding of classroom assessment issues and approaches. In this talk, I will argue for a need of a reflective approach to professional development that allows teachers (Brookfield, 1995) to consciously develop their own repertoire of strategies and techniques to draw upon in their teaching, to take informed actions, or to adjust their teaching to respond to issues and problems.

In the European context, several studies have been carried out on the foreign language teacher training needs in assessment (e.g., Vogt et al., 2008; Hasselgreen et al., 2004; Huhta et al., 2005). EALTA has also developed guidelines for good practice with a section on teacher pre-service and in-service training in testing and assessment (EALTA, 2006). More recently, profiles have also been elaborated to describe language teacher competencies in order to identify training needs and the development of teachers' professional skills, including competence in assessment, such as the European Profiling Grid project (2011-2013) or the Instituto Cervantes Key competencies of teachers of second and foreign languages (2012). Some of these documents will be presented and discussed in order to show how they can be used as tools for a reflective approach to professional development in classroom based assessment.

Workshop 2: Planning professional development in classroom assessment

Building on the approach to professional development outlined in the plenary, this workshop will explore a reflective approach to teacher training. It will use a series of activities to exemplify how documents like those presented in the plenary can be used by teachers in order to better plan their own development. Participants will reflect on the procedures involved when planning, implement and evaluate professional development actions that are more relevant to their own context.

Bio:

Oscar Soler-Canela holds an MA in Language Teaching from Lancaster University, where he focused in language testing and relating examinations to the CEFR. He has been a teacher of Spanish as a Foreign Language (SFL) for more than 15 years, and has taught SFL in Tunisia, UK and Egypt at further and higher education levels. He has also worked as an officer at the Test Validation Unit of the Instituto Cervantes in the design, development, validation and revision of the official DELE examinations, and has been involved in the development of the SICELE (International System of Certification of Spanish as a Foreign Language) to create parameters to standardize and mutually recognize the different exams or certificates of SFL that make part of the System. He has delivered many teacher training workshops focusing particularly in language testing and language classroom assessment.