

Programme

EALTA Special Interest Groups for
the *Assessment of Writing* and *Assessment for Academic Purposes*

Middle East Technical University, Department of Modern Languages, Ankara, Turkey

Wednesday, 30th May (13.30-17.00)

This event will take place the day before the **METU ELT Convention, organized by the School of Foreign Languages**, <http://metuelconvention.blogspot.com/>

Welcome and Introduction (13.30-13.40)

Presentations (20 min plus 10 discussion; 13.40-15.40)

13.40-14.10:

Mohammad Naghi Keramati, Ershad Damavand University, Teheran, Iran: *Investigating the relationship between writing components and the quality of writing among Persian MA students majoring in TEFL: a case of construct validation using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).*

Written texts or extended production responses are usually assessed through various methods of scoring such as analytic and holistic scoring criteria each with their own advantages and disadvantages. In these methods of scorings which are used by institutions and scholars, there are a number of components (i.e. content, organization, grammar, mechanics, spelling, length etc.) based on which the quality of writing will be assessed and score will be assigned to the text. For a rating scales to be valid, it has been argued that they should be based on empirical investigation of actual writing sample (Fulcher, 1987, 1996; North & Schneider, 1998; Turner & Upshur 2002; Upshur & Turner 1995, 1999). Given the importance of a reliable and valid score which is the cornerstone of writing performance, scoring procedures need to be based on empirical evidence to support the number of components used in rating scales.

This study intends to investigate the relationship between writing components and the quality of writing using Structural Equation Modeling. It intends to include as many components of writing as possible in the proposed model to investigate whether or not there is an empirically supported pattern in these components to determine the quality of writing.

14.10-14.40:

Burcu Ozgur, Yeditepe University, Educational Science Department, Istanbul, Turkey and
Murat Kantar, Doğuş University, Department of Foreign Languages English Preparatory Programme, Istanbul, Turkey: *Dynamic Assessment and Listening Development.*

This paper investigates both the theoretical and methodological issues within the framework of second language acquisition, language pedagogy and sociocultural theory (SCT) that is proposed by Vygotsky. This paper extends the meaning of traditional understanding of listening assessment in foreign language contexts and applies dynamic assessment (DA) to the learners' listening proficiency. DA is based on Vygotskian perspective of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and prescribes mediated teacher-learner dialog during the assessment procedure. Theoretically developed and experimentally tested worldwide since the 1950s, DA has proven to be an efficient diagnostic tool.

This research analyzes the effects of dynamic assessment on improving listening comprehension of intermediate university students learning English as a foreign language and compares the results to a traditional test of listening comprehension. DA is an instructional process regarding specific areas where learners need improvement and in so doing allows for appropriate intervention to help learners overcome these problems. The results of the study indicate that, through interactions in the ZPD, DA permits to establish not only the actual level of learners' listening ability but also to diagnose the potential level of their listening development, while at the same time promoting this development.

14.40-15.10:

Nükte Durhan, Middle East Technical University, Northern Cyprus Campus, School of Foreign Languages, Kalkanlı, Güzelyurt, Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti, Mersin 10 Turkey: *Improvements in the cognitive and context validity dimensions of academic speaking tests.*

This paper aims to evaluate the validity of the assessment carried out in the Academic Speaking Course taught at Middle East Technical University, School of Foreign Languages, by using a socio-cognitive framework. In the first part there is an analysis of test tasks from the earlier form of the course in terms of cognitive, context, scoring and consequential aspects of validity. Then the paper continues with the examination of the new assessment tasks and procedures developed according to the results of a needs analysis carried out last year. In the needs analysis results, a variety in the types of presentations, more emphasis on interactive activities, spontaneous speech and fluency stand out as the desired features of the new syllabus. The paper proposes that the new assessment tasks, which include different types of oral presentations, role-plays, discussions and debates, cater for both informational and interactional routines as well as improvisational skills. There are substantial gains in cognitive and context validity through the improvement of construct representation and construct relevance. Better construct representation also contributes to consequential validity in the form of positive washback in classroom. The paper ends by pointing out the areas that need more work, especially in terms of scoring validity. It draws attention to the need to reduce subjectivity through better rater training, standardization and the use of multiple raters.

15.10-15.40:

Hale Kizilcik, METU, Ankara, Turkey: *The Place of Direct and Indirect Tests in the Assessment of Speaking Skills: A Case Study.*

This presentation briefly describes the development of the midterm exam for ENG 211 Academic Speaking Skills given at the Middle East Technical University and then shares some of the insights gained through reflecting on students' performance in the indirect speaking test items in the exam and in the direct speaking tests in the course.

In ENG 211, speaking is mostly tested directly. There are assessed presentations and discussion tasks. In addition, as officially required, there is a written test. The midterm exam has four different parts. In this presentation, the focus is on the final part, discussion skills. In this part, students are given a tapescript from a discussion and expected to participate in the discussion as prompted. When the students' performance in this part is compared to their performance in the direct tests given in class, it was seen that there was a low correlation. First, this may be interpreted as an indication of the unreliability of indirect tests when testing speaking. However, a close look may pose some further questions, one of which is the dependability of direct testing of English through whole class discussion activities. A careful study of the merits and limitations of direct and indirect tests given in ENG 211 seems to support the view that these tests complement each other and when used together give a more reliable picture of students' speaking skills.

Break (15.40-16.00)

Discussion (16.00-17.00)

Question Box: Discussion is open to all sorts of questions, stimulated either by the presentations or by your own context.
We will collect your questions during the break in the question box, and randomly draw questions from the box to be discussed in the audience.