



## Keynote Abstracts

Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup> 9.00am

### The Challenge of Classroom-Based Assessment

**Professor Liz-Hamp Lyons, University of Bedfordshire, UK**

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Stiggins (2001) tells “a story of disregard by policy makers, school leaders, and the measurement community” for classroom assessment that has “kept classroom assessment from even approximating its potential” (p.5) But in the decade-plus since he wrote those words, a good deal of attention in the field of educational assessment has been turned to various forms of assessment that are **not** ‘testing’: formative assessment; assessment for learning; learning-oriented assessment; school-based assessment; classroom-based assessment (and more). The first challenge then, in talking about classroom-based assessment (CBA), is to untangle the terminology in order to get to the heart of the question: what **is** classroom-based assessment?

The second and more probably more relevant challenge will be to formulate at least some principles that are essential for ‘classroom-based assessment’ to be qualitatively and effectively different from traditional testing. For example: Is classroom-based assessment necessarily/always formative? Is overt, explicit feedback a necessary element of classroom-based assessment? Can assessment be “for learning” (as in Black & Wiliam 1998; Black et al 2003) if it is taking place in the classroom but being reported upwards to accountability systems?

The third challenge in the context of a group such as EALTA is to consider whether (and perhaps which of) the principles hold true when working with second, third or fourth language learners, and also whether there may be some additional principles that apply specifically to the teaching and learning of languages. The fourth challenge is perhaps the greatest: since classroom-based assessment is at once new and different, yet at the heart of what good teachers already do, have in fact always done, how can teachers learn and practice the skills of assessment in their classrooms? I will argue that greater attention must be paid to teacher, student and administrator assessment literacy if relatively sophisticated alternative assessment tools and strategies are to be implemented successfully, and if the changes implicit and explicit in classroom-based assessment approaches are to have impact in students’ command of English and their attitude to language learning.

Black, P. & D. Wiliam. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Educational Assessment: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 5, 1: 7-74.

Black, P., C. Harrison, C. Lee, B. Marshall & D. Wiliam. (2003). *Assessment for Learning: Putting it into practice*. Open University Press.

Stiggins, R. J. (2001). The unfulfilled promise of classroom assessment. *Educational Measurement Issues and Practice* 20, 3: 5-15.

**Saturday, May 25<sup>th</sup> 9.00am**

## The Impact of Automated Measurement of Text Characteristics

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This presentation reports research on automated text analysis systems that analyze edited texts, student writing, speeches, and conversations. The primary focus will be on a system called Coh-Metrix (<http://cohmetrix.com> and [andtea.cohmetrix.com](http://andtea.cohmetrix.com)), which analyzes texts on multiple measures of language and discourse that are aligned with multilevel theoretical frameworks of discourse comprehension and production. Several dozen measures funnel into five major factors that systematically vary as a function of types of texts, e.g., narrative versus informational) and grade level: narrativity, syntactic simplicity, word concreteness, referential cohesion, and deep (causal) cohesion. We have recently examined a composite measure called *formality*, which increases with low narrativity, syntactic complexity, word abstractness, and high cohesion. The assignment of texts to students is one of the central concerns of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other experts in educational policy. Students sometimes need to be challenged by assigning texts on difficulty levels that aggressively push the envelope on what they can handle. At other times students need a self-confidence boost by receiving easy texts they can readily comprehend. An alternative text assignment policy would assign texts that are not too difficult or too easy, but at an intermediate zone of difficulty. Yet another policy is to have a balanced diet of texts on the difficulty dimension, with adequate scaffolding for the difficult texts. Coh-Metrix has also been used to analyze student writing and conversation. However, other automated systems have been developed that are more appropriate for these registers of discourse that have minimal or no editing and that tend to have many misspelled words, ungrammatical sentences, and low cohesion. These alternative systems include AutoTutor, Operation ARA, and Writing-Pal in addition to the essay graders that are being used at Pearson Education and Educational Testing Service. The presentation will discuss the grading of writing and conversations in addition to the grading of edited texts.

**Sunday, May 26<sup>h</sup> 11.30am**

## Nobody Speaks English Here Today: The Notion of Impact in the Context of Aviation English

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After discussing the concept of impact in second language assessment and noting the general absence of the notion in many professional codes of ethics and practice, I will elaborate on impact in the context of aviation English. I will focus particularly on current International Civil Aviation Organization language proficiency requirements which state clearly that they refer to native and non-native speakers of English alike; yet ICAO tests only the latter group of pilots and air traffic control

officers, and in doing so, ignores a number of factors deemed necessary for international air safety. These factors include issues of aviation experience and expertise, lack of professional knowledge by either pilots or air traffic controllers, lack of adherence to standard conventions of phraseology, and a shared responsibility for misunderstandings and for communicative repairs. I will argue that the impact of such policies means not only that non-native English speaking pilots or air traffic controllers who do not show the minimum required level of English proficiency are barred from practicing their profession but also that native English speaking professionals remain largely unaccountable for communication problems that bear heavily on air travel safety. As a way forward in achieving accountability and fairness in aviation English assessment, I will suggest that a test might include a focus on intercultural communicative abilities for both native and non-native English speakers and will speculate on what such a test might look like.