

**4th SIG Meeting: Classroom-Based Language Assessment**

**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2013**

**Programme**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Paper Presentations</b>
13.30-13.35	<i>Welcome and Introduction</i>
13.35-14.00	<b>Washback of an Oral Exam on Teaching and Learning in Germany: The EuroCom in Realschulen in Baden-Wuerttemberg</b> Veronika Fröhlich
14.00-14.25	<b>Formative Assessment in EFL Primary Schools in Cyprus</b> George Michaeloudes
14.25-14.50	<b>Turkish students' perceptions of peer and teacher feedback</b> Hidayet Sarandi
14.50-15.15	<b>Diagnosing Young Learners' English – the development of a national tool for Swedish schools</b> Ann Bjerklund Larsson and Gudrun Erickson
<b>15.15-15.45</b>	<i>Break</i>
15.45-16.10	<b>Assessing Spanish in a communicative school context: the case of teacher made tests in Austria</b> Barbara Hinger
16.10-16.35	<b>What Is Fluency: Reaching A Common Understanding</b> Hatice Çelebi and Gaele Macfarlane
16.35-17.00	<b>Speaking Assessment fit for the future</b> Ayşegül Liman Kaban
<b>Poster presentations</b>	
	<b>Teachers' Perceptions Of Classroom-Based Language Assessment In Tertiary Level In Turkey</b> Kemal Gönen
	<b>Assessing Undergraduate Sociology Students' Academic Presentation Skills through Reflective Learning within a Virtual Learning Environment</b> Irina Nuzha
	<b>An assessment of EFL learners' and teachers' preferences for oral corrective feedback</b> Sayyed Mohammad Alavi and Farank Zahmatkesh

## Abstracts

13.30-13.35 Welcome and Introduction

### Presentations

13.35-14.00

**Veronika Fröhlich** (University of Education, Heidelberg, Germany)

*Washback of an Oral Exam on Teaching and Learning in Germany: The EuroCom in Realschulen in Baden-Wuerttemberg*

The aim of this study is to explore the nature of the impact of an oral exam - the EuroCom - on teaching and learning. This exam was introduced in Realschulen in Baden-Wuerttemberg following educational reforms in 2004. The Ministry of Education had hoped the EuroCom would have a washback effect, specifically on teaching. It was expected that lessons would become more communicative. Prior to this study, no investigation of the EuroCom and its impact was undertaken.

Mixed methods research was conducted, using both teacher and learner surveys and interviews and classroom observations. This study has shown that, although the high-stakes EuroCom exam does prove to have positive washback on the teaching and learning of some teachers and students, this is not exclusively the case. Overall, it has become clear that the washback effects of the EuroCom exam on teaching and learning are complex, as described in the literature (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Alderson & Wall, 1993; Cheng & Curtis, 2004; Watanabe, 1996). Teacher education and motivation seem to play substantial roles, along with both teacher and learner understanding of exam requirements, teachers' ability and willingness to adapt their teaching content and styles to support positive washback, publishers' production of appropriate material that supports washback, availability of teacher training seminars, and student motivation.

As language assessment is a relatively new field in Germany, the results of this study will help the Ministry of Education of Baden-Wuerttemberg, staff at teacher training colleges, textbook publishers, and English teachers better understand how best to prepare students for this high-stakes exam.

14.00-14.25

**George Michaeloudes** (University of Cyprus, Cyprus)

*Formative Assessment in EFL Primary Schools in Cyprus*

This presentation, based on work-in-progress, proposes an examination of classroom-based language assessment (CBLA), more specifically formative assessment (FA), in the EFL primary school context in Cyprus. FA is an effective process of assessing learning, modifying teaching according to information gathered and promoting learning in classrooms with the aim of improving learners' competence (Black & Wiliam, 1998). FA has a positive impact on teachers' confidence (Hayward & Spencer, 2010) and on learners' motivation, self-esteem, feelings of control and awareness of their own learning (Brookhart, et al., 2010; Weurlander, Söderberg,

Scheja, Hult, & Wernerson, 2012). Despite FA effectiveness, research in the field of educational assessment has shown that there are problems in its conceptualization e.g. lack of a unified definition (Turner, 2012), lack of knowledge and teachers' negative attitudes towards FA (Boyle & Charles, 2010). In the area of second or foreign language learning, FA-related research is still limited (Rea-Dickins, 2004). Especially in the Cypriot context, the amount of research on FA and assessment of English in primary classrooms in general is even more limited (Tsgari & Pavlou, 2008).

The study to be presented, aims at examining FA in English primary classrooms in Cyprus through qualitative and quantitative approaches. The presentation will demonstrate the theoretical background, the research design and the methods of data analysis of the study. The presentation will discuss FA on teaching and learning in English language classrooms and will lay the foundations of a framework conceptualizing processes of FA, which will hopefully be useful for EFL teachers and other researchers.

14.25-14.50

**Sarandi Hidayet** (University of Zirve, Turkey)

*Turkish students' perceptions of peer and teacher feedback*

This study focuses on the perceptions of 35 first year English Language Teaching students in Turkey towards the feedback they received on their papers in composition courses. The participants took composition courses for two semesters with a different instructor each term. These instructors used different methods for giving the students feedback on their writings; one giving feedback on multiple draft, focusing on higher order skills on early drafts and lower order skills on later drafts, and the other giving feedback on both higher and lower order skills on one draft. The participants responded to a survey, which included multiple choice and open-ended questions. The survey was designed to probe participants' opinions about: their preferences regarding teacher feedback, the usefulness of peer editing, the usefulness of teacher feedback, and their understanding of teacher and peer feedback.

Results showed that the majority of the students 1) preferred multiple draft feedback to single draft feedback, 2) had a positive attitude towards peer feedback though they preferred a combination of teacher and peer feedback 3) perceived both receiving and giving peer feedback useful, though they claimed that they found giving feedback more useful than receiving it 4) preferred comments about lower order writing skills (such as grammar and vocabulary) to comments about higher order skills (such as organization and content) 5) showed a preference for explicit feedback where teachers not only locate but also correct their errors. Pedagogical implications are discussed.

14.50-15.15

**Ann Bjerklund Larsson and Gudrun Erickson** (University of Gothenburg, Sweden)

*Diagnosing Young Learners' English – the development of a national tool for Swedish schools*

The start of English instruction in Sweden varies between school year one and three. Grades are not awarded until the end of school year six, but teachers are obliged to monitor their pupils' learning from the beginning and to discuss it continuously with each child. Furthermore, the

progress of individual pupils is summarized and discussed at least once a term in developmental dialogues with the pupil and his/her guardians. The outcome of these dialogues is an individual development plan, including a written report. Thus, assessment is explicitly intended to have a formative as well as a summative function. In order to enhance this, and also to concretize the action oriented national syllabus for languages, a diagnostic tool of English for learners aged 7 to 12 is provided and offered to all schools. In our presentation we will discuss the development of this material, its structure and content, and its intended use. Examples of components to be focused on are models for self and peer assessment, oral tasks and benchmarks, profiled descriptions of results, and links to the European Language Portfolio. The collaborative nature of the development process is discussed, with particular attention paid to contributions by pupils and teachers.

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### 15.15-15.45 - Break

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15.45-16.10

**Barbara Hinger** (Innsbruck University, Austria)

*Assessing Spanish in a communicative school context: the case of teacher made tests in Austria*

The study to be presented aims at analysing written classroom-based exams for Spanish in the Austrian upper secondary school context by following a descriptive-exploratory research approach (Dörnyei 2007). The research interest is two-fold and focuses on the following questions: To what extent do classroom-based exams reflect modern language test principles? To what extent do they test language skills and language competences according to the CEFR?

The study covers the period of a summer term and analyses two 50-minute exams and five 20-minute tests. The exams were designed for second year learners of Spanish by an expert teacher who has acquired some professional expertise in communicative language testing (Tsagari 2011). The analysis includes qualitative and quantitative approaches:

- The qualitative data analysis was carried out according to frameworks for modern communicative language task characteristics (Alderson/Cseresznyés 2003, Bachman/Palmer 2010, Purpura 2004, Read 2004) as well as to modern test principles (Grotjahn 2008, Rea-Dickens 2008). It follows a hermeneutic research paradigm.
- The quantitative analysis points to the time- and item-distribution by contrasting tasks of reading, listening and writing as well as grammar and vocabulary. It uses SPSS to provide descriptive statistical results and shows whether there is a balance between language skills and linguistic competences in the classroom-based exams or whether some skills or competences predominate.

Altogether, the study offers insights into the application of communicative language test principles in the school context by pointing out qualitative and quantitative aspects.

16.10-16.35

**Hatice Çelebi & Gaelle Macfarlane** (Koç University, Turkey)

*What Is Fluency: Reaching A Common Understanding*

For the students, teachers are perhaps the most relied on parties in terms of accountability of exams, which adds to the importance of classroom based assessments. Considering the variety of confounding factors such as complexity of the design of the task (monologic vs. interactive), format of the exam (face-to-face vs. direct vs. semi-direct), pattern of interaction (examiner-paired test taker vs. peer-paired test taker) in speaking exams, it is quite important that teachers take measures to reach a valid, comprehensive understanding of the level their students with the formative and summative exams they are offering in classroom.

In this study, we examined how we can increase classroom-based speaking exam reliability, which in turn is supposed to increase inter-rater reliability in summative classroom-based and institutional proficiency speaking exams. To start with, among other components of our institutional proficiency speaking exam rubric, we focused on “fluency” with the aim of creating a conceptual framework to work with while assessing our students for fluency. The components of the fluency coding consisted of repetitions, prolongations, blocks, pauses, revisions, filler/starters. We examined seven foundation level and seven pre-intermediate level learners’ two-minute speeches and compared the findings. In this presentation, we present our findings and the implications of the process we went through for creating classroom-based rubrics. We focus on how the process brings out a valid and reliable classroom-based assessment across classrooms and levels within the institution.

16.35-17.00

**Ayşegül Liman** (University of Marmara, Turkey)

*Speaking Assessment fit for the future*

Designing a speaking assessment rubric that meets the needs of the present and prepares students to meet their own future needs is a challenge. This presentation is based on a study which primarily aims to explore the effect of speaking training, secondly to determine whether there is a relation between training and performance and finally to find out the impact of speaking strategy training on the effective use of time in speaking assignments. The participants of the study were 80 Prep School students who study at Gedik University. Two groups were formed: an experimental group in which 40 students received a structured, five-phase speaking strategy training, 30 hours speaking course, and a control group in which 40 students received general assessment without speaking strategy training (They didn’t have any speaking class, they just took skills based course.). In this experimental study, quantitative research methods were employed. The quantitative data, which consisted of interviews conducted with students from each group, aimed to clarify the relationship between speaking strategy training and effective time use.

## Poster Presentations

**Kemal Gönen** (Zirve University, Gaziantep, Turkey)

*Teachers' Perceptions Of Classroom-Based Language Assessment In Tertiary Level In Turkey*

This study aims to explore EFL teachers' beliefs and their practice with respect to classroom-based language assessment (CBLA). It also examines teachers' current working principles of assessment and their practices in Higher Education in Turkey.

The first part of the presentation discusses theories of language assessment; then it considers how closely CBLA in Higher Education matches up to these theoretical principles.

The second part will present findings based on a questionnaire. Four stages in teachers' CBLA were investigated: planning, implementation, monitoring, recording and dissemination. The findings of the questionnaire were analyzed statistically and qualitatively. Further qualitative data was also collected and analyzed through interviews with volunteer participants.

The results of the study showed that generally teachers hold and exercise their own firm beliefs regarding CBLA. Beside this, there were a number of issues, which arose from their assessment beliefs and their practice. The results of the questionnaire showed that they did not put some of their principles into practice. During the interviews, teachers mentioned that in some cases they don't have a chance to put their beliefs into practice due to the central assessment system of the institution or the intensive curriculum which they have to cover in a limited time and students' educational background which they brought from primary and secondary schools' education system.

**Irina Nuzha** (Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg)

*Assessing Undergraduate Sociology Students' Academic Presentation Skills through Reflective Learning within a Virtual Learning Environment*

A shift from traditional knowledge transmission pedagogy to active learning concept and a remarkable growth of e-learning have increased the importance of feedback and evaluation and promoted a search for new modes of assessment. Web-based curricula require new assessment practices which emphasize greater and more complex feedback and are focused on students' ability to gain understanding of theoretical concepts engaged into experience through reflection, apply them in a new situation, develop an independent critical outlook and evaluate their own and others' performance.

The paper reports the results of a small-scale research into the potential of the reflective learning-based assessment mode which combines self-, peer and tutor assessment practices within an electronic Learning Management System (e-LMS) university course for undergraduate students of sociology on developing academic presentation skills. The outcomes of this case study indicate that the traditional assessment procedure built on the standards designed by tutors has little impact on learners' progress. However, the research revealed that reflective learning-based assessment of academic speaking skills delivered in a blended learning mode foster students' academic oral proficiency despite some challenges that need further investigation.

**Sayyed Mohammad Alavi and Faranak Zahmatkesh** (University of Tehran, Iran)

*An assessment of EFL learners' and teachers' preferences for oral corrective feedback*

This study aimed to assess the preferences of English language teachers and learners concerning oral corrective feedback in a formal education and a private context of English language instruction in Iran. Two questionnaires, one for teachers and one for learners, were administered to 40 English language teachers and 200 EFL learners. The questionnaires, uniquely developed for the purposes of this study, aimed to investigate the teachers and learners' preferences for necessity of correcting errors, importance of grammar, priority of communication, time of error correction, types of errors to be corrected, and sources and preferences for types of correcting feedback. The results showed a significant difference between teachers' and learners' perceptions concerning frequency, time, sources, and types of correcting errors. While the teaching materials and the language instruction in the formal education and in the private contexts of English language teaching are different, there was no significant difference in the perceptions of the teachers concerning the issues of error corrections in these two instructional contexts. To improve the achievement of EFL learners, the findings of this study suggest a compromise in the perceptions of language teachers and learners to match their preferences regarding the issues related to error corrections