

9th Annual EALTA Conference

Validity in Language Testing and Assessment

3rd SIG Meeting: Classroom-Based Language Assessment

Thursday 31st May 2012

Programme

Time	Presentation
13.30-14.15	<i>Assessment Literacy in Russian schools through PROSET</i> Anthony Green
14.15-15.00	<i>Linguistic and communicative competence traits and classroom-based assessment: The case of Italy</i> Sabrina Machetti
15.00-15.45	<i>Investigating listening competences in mixed-ability classes</i> Frances Mc Donald
15.45-16.00	Break
16.00-16.45	<i>Role of culture and experience on teachers' conceptions of assessment</i> Sehnaz Sahinkarakas & Qatip Arifi
16.45-17.30	<i>Examining the effects of using task-based classroom assessment in Germany: teachers' beliefs and students' attitudes</i> Lana Loumbourdi

Assessment Literacy in Russian schools through PROSET

Anthony Green
University of Bedfordshire, UK

This paper reports on a project (PROSET: Promoting Sustainable Excellence in Testing and Assessment of English) to develop introductory teacher training course modules on language assessment for language teachers in Russian secondary education. These course modules will become a federal component in the Russian university curriculum for school teacher trainees. The modules will include lecture sessions and workshop sessions and will be supported by the publication of materials for students and for instructors. Additional online distance variations will also be developed in order to facilitate access to training for in-service teachers.

Through capacity building and developing expertise in language testing and assessment, the project will contribute both to the comparability of university curricula and to the quality of qualifications for school teachers. The project will impact both the programmes offered by universities and the wider practice of teaching and assessment in schools across the Russian Federation. The project will set up and equip regional Professional Development centres on Testing and Assessment intended to sustain assessment literacy among teachers in the Russian regions.

**Linguistic and communicative competence traits and
classroom-based assessment: The case of Italy**

**Sabrina Machetti
Università per Stranieri di Siena, Italy**

The process of assessing the linguistic and communicative competence of pupils for several years has been affected by considerable difficulties in Italy. These have undoubtedly been compounded by the increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural composition of classes, and by the fact that plurilingualism is viewed more as a problem than as a resource. In this context, the classroom-based assessment seems to be in danger, since it is carried out using assessment tools of limited validity and reliability.

This research was begun in 2009 and is still ongoing. It involves the use of questionnaires, interviews and class observations, with the objective of investigating on the following aspects:

- how and with which tools is Italian linguistic and communicative competence assessed in Italian and foreign pupils?
- what are the linguistic and communicative competence traits for which teachers believe linguistic assessment should account?

Analysis performed so far points to persistent continuity problems between the different levels of schooling, due mainly to the lack of classroom-based assessment culture in Italy.

Investigating listening competences in mixed-ability classes

Frances Mc Donald

Istituto Tecnico Commerciale Statale “Leonardo da Vinci”, Italy

This paper reports on a survey of listening competences of 15 year-old Italian students learning English in intact classes in mainstream secondary education ($N=298$). Students listened to input texts consisting in short conversations and a talk and responded to items probing meaningful chunks of discourse (semantic units) in the texts. A sub-group in vocational and technical school ($N=64$) carried out a variation of the tasks involving a first listening at natural speech pace and a further listening at digitally slowed speech rate. The text chunks were coded according to discourse and phonological characteristics and to the comprehension demands they made on listeners.

Patterns in comprehension emerging from a study of responses to open-ended questions and of quantitative data point to the possibility of describing and defining learning profiles at two distinct levels. A further classification of results in terms of CEFR B1 and A2 listening comprehension descriptors, and descriptors at Benchmarks 7 and 5 of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, can serve the purposes of formative classroom assessment which seeks links with external standardized assessment. Implications deriving from a comparison between progress stages in learning and graded assessment levels will be discussed.

Role of culture and experience on teachers' conceptions of assessment

Sehnaz Sahinkarakas, Cag University, Turkey
Qatip Arifi, South East European University, FYROM

For assessment to have an impact on student achievement, teachers need to see assessment as an integral part of the instructional process rather than as an evaluation device to determine students' grades. This study mainly aims at exploring whether cultural background and teaching experience have a role in the way language teachers conceive language assessment. Accordingly, prospective language teachers and language teachers with different years of teaching experience working in two different countries were asked to describe 'language assessment' using a metaphor. Metaphors obtained from the written descriptions of the participants were analyzed and separated by themes. The themes were then compared and contrasted within and between the two countries to identify whether experience and cultural background play a role in the beliefs of language teachers regarding language assessment.

**Examining the effects of using task-based classroom assessment in Germany:
teachers' beliefs and students' attitudes.**

**Lana Loumbourdi
Goethe-Universitaet, Frankfurt, Germany**

For the past few years, the use of task-based teaching in the English language classroom has been established as a modern communicative approach aiming at promoting authenticity of materials and communication. On the same perspective, assessment had to adjust to the changes by introducing tasks as a means to follow the students' development and progress, but also provide a basis for their assessment.

This paper aims at examining the effects that task-based classroom assessment (TBCL) has been having on students and teachers, its positive outcome and deficiencies, by providing examples of assessment tasks and projects. Its strong points and weaknesses will be discussed, along with ways to gradually introduce it in the English classroom. Also, parts of interviews with 10 trainee teachers were analysed, focusing on the use of TBCL, the effect it had on their teaching, their beliefs towards evaluation and their students' perception of their own progress. Success stories and failures will be mentioned, as well as opinions on its suitability for the German classroom. The general consensus apparent in the interviews sends a very positive message for the future of TBCL. However, TBCL application also points to the problem of inadequate information and training on the topic, and the inability to fit into the very tight German curriculum.