



IATEFL TEASIG

September 2021 Online Event
25th September 2021 via Zoom

Lessons learnt from online assessment practices under Covid-19

Provisional programme (all times UK time)

For the registration link and joining conditions check <https://www.iatefl.org/events/227>

14:00 – 14:10	Introduction	Welcome from the TEASIG Committee
14:10 – 14:40	Keynote	Lynda Taylor <i>'Metaphors we test by' – talking about language testing and assessment in the public domain</i>
14:40 – 15:10	Session 1	Toni Mäkipää <i>Foreign language teachers' assessment practices in emergency remote teaching in Finland</i>
15:10 – 15:40	Session 2	Neil Bullock <i>Adapting to an ever-changing world – the challenges for workplace language proficiency learning and assessment during and after COVID.</i>
15:40 – 16:00	Comfort break	
16:00 – 16:30	Session 3	Dina Tsagari, Asma Maaoui and Hanen Dammak <i>Teachers' Assessment Literacy and COVID-19: Challenges and Prospects</i>
16:30 – 17:00	Session 4	Emma Bruce and Heléna Stakounis <i>Emergency Remote Assessment in the UK EAP Sector: Challenges, Innovations and Opportunities</i>
17:00 – 17:30		Panel discussion
17:30 – 18:00		TEASIG Open Forum & Entertainment Part

For details please visit <https://tea.iatefl.org> and follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Teasig> , Twitter: https://twitter.com/iatefl_teasig or Insta: https://www.instagram.com/iatefl_teasig/ to stay up to date!

We are looking forward to meeting you online in September!
TEASIG Committee

Speakers and abstracts

Keynote:

'Metaphors we test by' - talking about language testing and assessment in the public domain (Lynda Taylor)

The 2020 Covid19 global pandemic led to major disruption in every part of society, including education. Among other things, the crisis severely affected the annual programmes of standardised testing and public examinations, both nationally and internationally. Some countries were forced to abandon their usual national public examinations schedule in favour of teacher-based assessments for school pupils (i.e. estimated grades). Major international English language proficiency test providers had to pivot swiftly to offer alternative assessment options, often involving digital innovations such as online remote proctoring.

The rapid, and sometimes chaotic, changes required during 2020 provoked considerable public debate about the relative merits and failings of differing assessment approaches, not just among language testing professionals but in wider society, in the news media and among the general public. In the UK, for example, newspapers and social media reported debates contrasting the 'rigour' and 'fairness' of standardised school examinations with the potential 'unreliability' and 'unfairness' of pupil assessment by teachers. Those working in international higher education struggled to discern how far newly-created online tests of English provided the necessary evidence required for university admissions purposes. The debate raised important issues of public confidence and trust. Public debate around matters of testing and assessment (not just in education but also in public health matters, e.g. concerning antigen/antibody testing) has often been characterised by a lack of understanding of certain basic testing and assessment concepts, such as reliability, validity, fairness, etc.

The role of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003) has become central to contemporary understanding of how we think, understand and express our thoughts in language. The 2020 global pandemic, for example, highlighted the presence and power of metaphor in political and public discourse, drawing strongly on vivid and emotive images of warfare and natural disaster. Like other disciplines, the field of educational assessment has espoused various metaphors that promote thinking and understanding about testing and assessment (Mislevy, 2012).

The subdomain of language testing and assessment, and English language testing in particular, has become not only commercial 'big business', but also a locus for investigating the social power of testing, including test washback and impact (both metaphors in their own right!). Theoretical and empirical exploration of washback and impact led to growing interest in 'assessment literacy' (Taylor, 2009), defined broadly as the skills, knowledge and abilities that different test stakeholders (e.g. teachers, university admissions officers, curriculum designers) need to carry out assessment-related activities (Kremmel & Harding, 2020). But, as Taylor and Harding (2020) assert, there may be real benefit in raising the general level of assessment literacy in society more broadly given that all our lives are affected by tests of one sort or another: school exams, medical tests, job interviews, professional certification, citizenship tests (for some).

Developing assessment literacy depends partly upon finding a common language and shared discourse, including appropriate metaphors, for communicating key principles and practice in the public domain (Taylor, 2013). This paper examines some of the metaphors our field currently uses to evaluate their communicative effectiveness. Are some of our existing metaphors too technical or philosophical for public understanding, e.g. 'assessment as feedback loop', 'assessment as evidentiary argument' (Mislevy, 2012)? Are some too emotive, e.g. framing language tests as 'gatekeepers' (Davies, 1997) or 'weapons' (McNamara, 2005)? Do we need more familiar and accessible metaphors to help engage more effectively with politicians, media and the general public? And if so, what might they be?

Lynda Taylor is Visiting Professor at the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) at the University of Bedfordshire, UK. She holds a PhD and MPhil in Language Testing from the University of Cambridge and she has worked for over 35 years in the field of language testing and assessment, particularly with IELTS and the full range of Cambridge Assessment English qualifications. Her research interests include speaking and writing assessment, testing accommodations for language learners with special needs and the development of language assessment literacy. For several years she was Assistant Research Director with Cambridge Assessment English and she has advised on test development and validation projects around the world, including mainland China, Taiwan and Japan. She has presented invited plenaries, research papers and workshops internationally, published extensively in academic journals and authored or edited many of the volumes in CUP's *Studies in Language Testing* (SiLT) series, for which she is also a series co-editor. She is currently President of the UK Association for Language Testing and Assessment (UKALTA) (2020-2022).



Session1: Foreign language teachers' assessment practices in emergency remote teaching in Finland (Toni Mäkipää)

The rapid change to emergency remote teaching as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020 was unprecedented worldwide. Within days, teachers were forced to move their teaching onto online platforms. This also meant that teachers had to plan assessment practices suitable to online teaching. I will present results of a study exploring foreign language teachers' perceptions of emergency remote teaching. The respondents were 176 teachers, and the data were collected with an online questionnaire. In terms of assessment, the results show that teachers were mostly satisfied with their assessment practices and that they felt they were able to assess students fairly. Nevertheless, they expressed mixed views on several issues, such as whether student assessment had realistically reflected students' learning, and whether teachers had given sufficient feedback. However, teachers felt that the final assessment of 9th graders was fair. The results also show that teachers in basic education gave more feedback than teachers in general upper secondary education. The results indicate that feedback practices in emergency remote teaching should be developed. I will discuss the practical implications of these results and present tangible suggestions on how assessment practices in online teaching can be enhanced and diversified.

Toni Mäkipää is a teacher of English, Swedish, and French. He is also a doctoral student at the University of Helsinki. His doctoral research focuses on assessment and feedback practices in general upper secondary education. He has extensive experience in teaching in basic education and at the university level. His research interests include (but are not restricted to) summative assessment, formative assessment, assessment literacy, feedback, foreign language teaching, self-regulated learning, and mixed methods research.



Session 2: Adapting to an ever-changing world - the challenges for workplace language proficiency learning and assessment during and after COVID. (Neil Bullock)

Few can doubt that since the outbreak of the global pandemic in early 2020 teaching and testing has been challenging for both teachers and learners. Radical changes have obliged everyone to adapt to the ever-changing situation caused by the global pandemic. Those involved in testing have also had to adapt in rethinking dramatically how they operate. This could be the simple logistical challenges of the testing room or protecting candidates and examiners alike. It could also be the more problematic issues of moving to online testing with the obvious fears over test security, rater performance, the changing testing environment or the reliability of technology to run the exams.

Language learning and assessment in professional environments has not been spared either. Industries like aviation have been hit hard but maintaining safety in such a domain has never been more critical, and that includes assessment of language proficiency in operational communication by pilots and Air Traffic controllers.

How much these changes will affect a post-COVID world is still a long way from being known. It has been suggested that learning and testing as we know it may not fully return to the more traditional methods with which we have worked for some time. Others have gone further and advocated that maybe this is the time for a radical rethink in testing language which could address issues that have been around for a while.

This presentation will analyse results of a survey carried out amongst language trainers and testers in the aviation world to see how the enforced changes of the COVID period have provided positive incentives to adapt and improve a system of learning and testing in aviation. It will go on to address whether such changes can, in fact, resolve longer term issues in language testing in this domain, for a positive post-COVID outcome.

Based in Switzerland, **Neil Bullock** is a teacher, teacher trainer and test developer working in the domain of professional English in business and ESP settings.

He has overseen test and assessment related projects around the world, including: rater training; item writing; assessment literacy workshops for teachers, and evaluations of national education policy. He is also a former Coordinator and webinar moderator for IATEFL TEASIG and is a member of ALTE and EALTA.

Neil has an MA in Applied Linguistics, including a dissertation on test development for language proficiency in aviation and is currently in the second year of doctoral studies at Lancaster University researching constructs in communicative competence for aeronautical communication.



Session 3: Teachers' Assessment Literacy and COVID-19: Challenges and Prospects (Dina Tsagari, Asma Maaoui and Hanen Dammak)

With the global outbreak of COVID-19, educational institutions and teachers worldwide have encountered challenges in implementing planned on-site end-of-year tests in different educational levels. The disruption of the pedagogical process has made it necessary for the majority of countries to take measures for pedagogical continuity online. Despite the sudden shift occurring in many settings to online teaching, little is known about assessment practices during the crisis.

In line with the newly emerging body of research on the move to remote teaching and assessment, this study aims at exploring the range of assessment measures and practices taken in different countries in primary, secondary and higher language education. It also investigates language teachers' assessment literacy and online assessment practices prior to and after the outbreak of this pandemic. An online survey was administered to teachers to scrutinize these questions in addition to possible correlations between their assessment literacy and online assessment practices. The findings of the study have theoretical and practical implications on language assessment in times of crises when the adoption of online assessment may become a necessity rather than an option.

Dina Tsagari, PhD, is Professor, Department of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. She has also worked for the University of Cyprus, Greek Open University and Polytechnic University of Hong Kong. Her research interests include language testing and assessment, materials design and evaluation, differentiated instruction, multilingualism, distance education and learning difficulties. She is the editor and author of numerous books, journal papers, book chapters, project reports etc. She coordinates research groups, e.g. CBLA SIG – EALTA, EnA OsloMet and is involved in EU-funded and other research projects (e.g. KriT, DINGLE, TRIBES, ENRICH, TALE, DysTEFL, PALM, etc)



Asma Maaoui is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Tunis (Higher Institute of Applied Studies in Humanities and the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of Tunis). She holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics (Language assessment). She is past president of Tunisia TESOL and currently a Board member. Her main research interests include language assessment, reading comprehension teaching and assessment, English for Business Purposes, technology-based instruction and assessment, self-regulated learning, and test-taker strategies. She has presented in many national and international conferences and has held many positions at university including the head of department of languages at the Higher of Applied Languages and Computer Science in Beja, Tunisia, and the coordinator of professional MA programs of Business English and TESOL. She is currently involved in research projects on assessment under COVID-19 and two quality enhancement projects at her university and institution.



Hanen Dammak is a lecturer of English at the Higher Institute of Applied Studies of Humanities of Tunis, University of Tunis. She has an MA in linguistics from the Faculty of Letters of Manouba, Tunisia. She is currently working on a PhD entitled The Washback Effect of the High-Stakes English Baccalaureate Exam: Teachers' Perceptions and Practices at the Management and Science University, Malaysia.



Session 4: *Emergency Remote Assessment in the UK EAP Sector: Challenges, Innovations and Opportunities* (Emma Bruce and Heléna Stakounis)

Language assessment is an area which has demanded timely action and innovative contingency planning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. To enable students and test takers to continue to access tests while complying with government safety restrictions, test providers, assessment developers, teachers and administrators were urgently tasked with adapting methods and processes. In this talk we will provide insights into the challenges, innovative strategies and in many cases, opportunities which arose as assessment teams in a variety of higher education contexts tackled the shifting landscape of the pandemic.

The Covid crisis served as a catalyst which has inevitably changed the future landscape of language testing. In grappling with seemingly unsurmountable challenges and acute time pressure, ideas about what is possible have expanded and aspects previously on the development agenda have been expedited. Research suggests that the opportunity to rethink teaching, to question learning outcomes and to re-evaluate testing processes and instruments has resulted in more authentic and meaningful assessment (Bruce & Stakounis, 2021). Ockey (2021) optimistically notes that construct-representative assessments have been successfully delivered despite technological limitations and this will help 'to shuttle in a new era of technology-driven language assessments' (p.5).

However, there is a need to reflect on our collective responses to the crisis and to determine which contingency measures have longevity. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data from a large-scale mixed methods research study we will share insights into the approaches adopted by English for Academic Purposes (EAP) colleagues in an attempt to administer entrance tests and provide effective measurement of desired EAP constructs. As well as providing a retrospective narrative and establishing key trends during this time of upheaval, the insights presented can usefully inform future decision-making and planning.

Dr **Emma Bruce** is an ELT consultant and researcher specialising in language testing and assessment. She is currently advising NCUK on EAP testing and assessment in the capacity of Principal Assessor for EAP. Emma spent 20 years working in the HE sector in Hong Kong and has recently completed a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) from CRELLA, University of Bedfordshire, investigating the impact of time allowances in the EAP reading-into-writing assessment context.



Heléna Stakounis is a Teaching Fellow in Applied Linguistics and TESOL at the University of Durham. Previously EAP Co-ordinator at University of Lancaster and Associate Lecturer at University of Salford, Heléna has worked in the UK HE sector for over ten years. She founded and managed her own British Council accredited private language school and has experience working in assessment for Cambridge International Examinations, British Council, Pearson, and NCUK. She is currently a final year PhD student investigating student integration on the multicultural, internationalised campus.

