The Applied Linguistics & TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University, together with the Educational Testing Service, cordially invites you to

The First TC/ETS Forum on Teaching, Learning and Assessment of English Language Learners on the topic of

Scenario-Based Language Assessment in Large-Scale and Local Contexts

Friday, April 24, 2015, from 4:30 to 7:00 in Room 457
Grace Dodge Hall, Teachers College, Columbia University,
525 W 120th St, New York, NY 10027

The goal of the TC/ETS Forum is to bring together teachers, students, researchers, testing specialists, administrators, and others interested in language assessment topics to listen, explore, discuss, and debate issues and concerns related to the assessment of English Language Learners. This forum features three presentations followed by time for discussion. Wine and cheese will be served.

Talk 1: How Scenario-Based Assessment Affords New Opportunities for Measuring Reading Ability (45 minutes)

John Sabatini & Tenaha O’Reilly
Educational Testing Service

In this presentation, we will provide an overview of scenario-based assessments (SBA) developed through the Reading for Understanding research project, which was funded by the Institute of Education Sciences of the U.S. Department of Education. Advances in technology, cognitive theory, and measurement have paved the way for a new generation of reading assessments. Electronic delivery affords the use of new item types and assessment design sequences that can potentially provide a clearer window into student ability. Technological reading environments also enable an expansion of the reading construct to include digital sources as well as the process of integrating and evaluating
potentially conflicting and biased information. Advances in cognitive theory have helped shed light on the how students learn including the process and strategies that contribute to skilled performance. SBAs integrate all of these advances to help measure, model, support, and foster strategic thinking in students.

Implications for how these learning-oriented assessments apply to education and instruction will be discussed. Although this work has primarily been conducted with populations whose first language is English, in this session we will share our thinking and foster a discussion of how the framework, designs and assessments could be applied and implemented with English language learners.

**Talk 2: Broadening the Construct of Second and Foreign Language Proficiency through Scenario-Based Language Assessment (15 minutes)**

James E. Purpura
Teachers College, Columbia University

Probably the most compelling and enduring challenge in L2 assessment is the quest to understand and define the construct of L2 proficiency, so that meaningful interpretations of an individual’s performance consistencies can be attributed, to the extent possible, to L2 resources, along with other internal and external factors, responsible for communicative success across a range of tasks and contexts. This has led to several approaches to defining constructs intended to serve as the basis for assessment design, operationalization, interpretation, and use. One question surrounding differences in how L2 proficiency has been defined relates to a consideration of the components of L2 knowledge and their interrelationships. Another concerns the role that context plays in characterizing an examinee’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) based on performance consistencies. A third involves socio-cognitive factors underpinnings of L2 test performance, and how these factors mediate between an examinee’s KSAs and their ability to respond to tasks. A final question — and one receiving too little attention in my opinion — is the role that topical or content knowledge and the conveyance of meaning play in the L2 proficiency construct. Dialectics surrounding these questions have led to a broadening of the L2 construct in light of growing interpretation needs and to refinements in test construction, delivery, and use.

In this presentation, I will contextualize scenario-based L2 assessment in the debates related to construct definition of L2 proficiency, and I will show how none of the contemporary approaches to L2 construct definition can fully capture the assessment opportunities afforded by scenario-based assessment.
Researchers in the field of educational assessment have begun to re-conceptualize and broaden the construct of language ability to better align with the contemporary focus on integrated literacy skills and learner cognition (O’Reilly & Sheehan, 2009; Sabatini, O’Reilly, Halderman, & Bruce, 2014). Scenario-based assessment is one of the most current and innovative assessment approaches to examine learners’ integrated skills in a purposeful, interactive, and strategic manner. Bennett and colleagues (2011) used scenarios-based tasks in their Cognitively-Based Assessment of, for, and as Learning (CBAL) project in middle school reading, writing, and mathematics; Sabatini et al. (2014) used scenario-based assessment to measure middle school students’ reading comprehension. While scenario-based assessment has received much attention in assessing students’ literacy in K-12 mainstream classrooms, there has been very little published work in the use of scenario-based assessment in the field of applied linguistics and second language testing.

The purpose of this talk is to present an attempt to implement a scenario-based assessment designed to make placement decisions in an adult, ESL language program. We will focus our discussion on the intermediate-level scenario, as part of a broader set of assessments. First, we will share our design narrative of the scenarios-based English placement exam. We will then present the preliminary scenarios-based test tasks assessing reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills within a single scenario. Then, we will discuss the challenges and issues we face as we explore the area of scenario-based assessment.

**Bios**

**Brian Carroll** is an Ed.M. student in the Applied Linguistics & TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Beginning in 2005, Brian taught EFL in Russian public schools, and taught ESL in New York City. He was Head of Teaching and Technology at two private ESL schools in New York City where he developed Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) integrated curriculum and has held the positions Director of Studies at Pace University ESL program, and Center Director at Long Island University ESL program. His research interest focuses on second language assessment.

**Heidi Han-Ting Liu** is a doctoral student in the Applied Linguistics & TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her research focus is on L2 assessment, with specific interests in learning-oriented assessment, assessing integrated skills, learner cognition, automated scoring, and psychometric measurement. She has had over 10 years of EFL/ESL teaching experiences, and has consulted for or worked with Pearson, Oxford
University Press, and Second Language Testing Inc. on test development projects. She currently serves as the assistant to the Editor-in-Chief of Language Assessment Quarterly. She is also on the editorial board of Teachers College, Columbia University Working Papers in TESOL & Applied Linguistics.

Saerhim Oh is a doctoral student in the Applied Linguistics & TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University specializing in second language assessment. Her doctoral research is focused on second language writing assessment, specifically on test-takers’ use of resources in writing assessment. She has taught ESL and EFL learners for more than 10 years and has worked as the assessment coordinator at English language programs at universities. She has also worked on test development projects for TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University) and OOPT (Oxford Online Placement Test), and has co-authored grammar and reading textbooks for middle school students in Korea. She currently teaches a graduate course on Second Language Assessment at Hunter College, and works on projects at ETS as an ETS graduate fellow.

Tenaha O’Reilly is a Senior Research Scientist in the Center for Global Assessment at ETS. His research interests are broadly concerned with improving the validity of reading and writing assessments. In particular, he is interested in developing ways to measure and control for variables that may impact the interpretation of reading and writing scores. These variables include background knowledge, student interest, motivation, and print skill efficiency. Tenaha also is interested in developing ways to use assessment as a tool for modeling students’ learning, memory and transfer of ideas to novel situations. To this aim, he has been a principal investigator and co-investigator on a number of ETS and federally funded projects geared towards developing cognitively-based assessments of reading comprehension.

James E. Purpura is Associate Professor of linguistics and education in the Applied Linguistics and TESOL Program at Teachers College, Columbia University, where he teaches L2 assessment and L2 research methods. Jim’ scholarly books include: Strategy use and language test performance: A structural equation modeling approach (CUP); Assessing grammar (CUP), and he is currently working on two books: Learning-oriented assessment in language classrooms: Using assessments to gauge and promote language learning (with C. E. Turner) (Routledge) and The writings of L. F. Bachman: “Assuring that what we count counts” in language assessment (with A. J. Kunnan) (Routledge). Jim is currently the Editor-in-Chief of Language Assessment Quarterly, and is series co-editor of New Perspectives on Language Assessment (with A. J. Kunnan) (Routledge) and Language Assessment at ETS: Innovation and Validation (with J. Norris, S. Ross, & X. Xi) (Routledge). He was the President of the International Language Testing Association (2007-2008), and is an expert consultant for the European Association of Language Testing and Assessment. He currently serves on the Committee of Examiners at ETS and on the Defense Language Testing Advisory Panel in Washington, D.C. Jim’s research
interests include: the assessment of grammar, meaning and pragmatics, learning-oriented assessment, and scenario-based assessment.

**John Sabatini** is a Managing Principal Research Scientist in the Center for Global Assessment at ETS. His research interests and expertise are in reading literacy development and disabilities, assessment, cognitive psychology, English language literacy, and educational technology, with a primary focus on adults and adolescents. Currently, he is the principal investigator of an IES-funded grant to develop pre-K-12 comprehension assessments as part of the Reading for Understanding initiative. He is also co-principal investigator (with J. Burstein) on an IES-funded project, the Language Muse Palette. The project uses software that identifies linguistic aspects of texts that might pose challenges to English language learners. It also generates activities that classroom teachers can use to help them learn from and with content area texts. He provides technical and research advice to national and international surveys including the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PISA).