

Promoting research and best practices to improve the use of English in the emerging global knowledge economy of the 21st century

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Research Organizations: Spotlight on LTRC



Editor's note: In this piece, Dr. Ute Knoch shares information about The Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne, including its history and resources.

Since its establishment in 1990, the [Language Testing Research Centre \(LTRC\)](#) at the University of Melbourne has earned a national and international reputation for its contributions to language testing and assessment, as well as program evaluation. The mission of the Centre is (1) to carry out and promote research and development in language testing; (2) to develop tests and other appropriate proficiency measurement instruments for English and other languages; (3) to evaluate programmes of language learning and teaching; (4) to provide consultancy services in evaluation and testing; and (5) to provide education and training in the area of language assessment. The LTRC engages in a broad range of projects. Some are commissioned and others are grant-funded.

Recent test development, consultancy, and research projects at the LTRC have involved a wide array of contexts, including tests for young learners, language tests for specific purposes (including for pilots and air traffic controllers), contract research for larger testing agencies such as TOEFL and IELTS, as well as a large-scale project investigating the impact of language background and program exposure on student achievement in Asian languages in Australian schools. In an ongoing relationship with the Occupational English Test (OET) Centre, owned by Cambridge Box Hill Language Assessments, the LTRC develops the listening and reading tests for the [OET](#), a test designed to evaluate the English-language competency of qualified medical and health professionals who wish to practise in an English-language context. The test is currently taken by candidates from twelve professions, including dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and physiotherapy. The LTRC is also contributing to validation work on the OET through a [series of research studies](#).

A further major test development and validation

focus is on post-entry language assessments. These assessments are administered at tertiary institutions across Australia and New Zealand to identify students' language needs following admission to university with the aim of identifying needed on-campus academic language support. The LTRC has been developing and validating tests with such foci since the 1990s and has been a leader in policy-making in this area for many years.

The Centre has also been involved in research and test development projects for languages other than English over the years. Most recently, it developed online placement tests for nine languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish).

The LTRC is also active in mentoring postgraduate students in language testing through supervision, as well as through a regular seminar series on language testing and assessment for PhD students and staff. In the past two years, the LTRC has also started offering studentships for promising students to be involved in research work at the Centre.

In addition to building assessment tools and undertaking research, the Centre has been at the forefront of language assessment capacity-building in Australia through its role in the establishment of the [Association for Language Testing and Assessment of Australia and New Zealand \(ALTAANZ\)](#). This regional organisation promotes best practice in language testing and assessment in educational and professional settings. Two staff members at the LTRC (Sally O'Hagan and Ute Knoch) co-edit [Papers in Language Testing and Assessment](#), an international journal of ALTAANZ. This journal, formerly known as [Melbourne Papers in Language Testing](#), has been a major outlet for research in language testing since 1992.



Sally O'Hagan (left) and Ute Knoch

WIDA 2013 National Conference: Registration Now Open



The [World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment's \(WIDA\) annual conference](#) will be held

October 17-19, 2013 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The theme for the 2013 conference, "Language Learner Success: Building on Strengths," directly ties into WIDA's "CAN DO" philosophy, which emphasizes the assets, contributions, and potential of linguistically diverse students. Topics are expected to encompass

four broad areas: academic language and literacy, effective instructional practices, program management, and national initiatives.

The conference will provide Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12 language teachers with opportunities for professional development, idea sharing, relationship building, and strategic collaboration. Registration for this event is now open, and you can learn more by [clicking here](#). For questions about the conference and general information, please write to info@widaconference.us.

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Kathleen Bailey,
Chair of TIRF

Canadian Modern Language Review: CFP for 2014 Special Issue



The Canadian Modern Language Review (CMLR) invites manuscripts to be considered for a special issue to appear in November 2014. The issue, entitled "Speech Perception and Production: Implications for Second Language Teaching," focuses on pedagogical implications and applications of research in second or foreign language (L2) speech perception and production.

Recent years have witnessed a steady increase in research on L2 speech perception and production, targeting varied populations of speakers using different languages in diverse linguistic, educational, social, and political contexts. However, most of this research, whether it is carried out in areas of speech pathology, speech science, linguistics, psychology, or cognitive science, has been largely theoretical. It has not been targeted towards researchers and teachers interested in pedagogical aspects of L2 pronunciation. Therefore, this special issue is envisaged as a collection of empirical research studies where L2 speech perception and production are investigated, with the goal of enhancing L2 pronunciation learning and teaching.

Conference Opportunities in Lebanon and the UK

Call for Papers: Identity and Conflict in the Middle East and its Diasporic Cultures

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Balamand invites you to participate in its international conference, "Identity and Conflict in the Middle East and its Diasporic Cultures." The conference will be held on the campus of the University of Balamand in the Al-Kurah district of North Lebanon March 20-22, 2014.

This conference will consider the ways that representations of conflict through word, sound, and image have reconceptualized histories, geographies, religions, cultures, and political and economic systems, and have affected peoples' identities and lived experiences, across the Middle East and Middle Eastern diasporas. The conference organizers invite scholars of literature, film, media, and music, as well as historians, anthropologists, sociologists, psychoanalysts, linguists, translators, and political scientists to contribute their work examining conflict and identity across any region in the Middle East and/or Middle Eastern diasporas. More information about the "Call for Papers" can be found by [clicking here](#).

The conference will be conducted in English. Consequently, all abstracts, papers, and presentations should be in English. The deadline for abstract submission is October 1, 2013. Please upload abstracts to [the conference website](#). For questions and inquiries, please contact [Dr. Mazen Naous](#), Chair of the Scientific Committee.

Chair's Report — Humbly Asking for Help

Humility is not my strong suit. Creativity, initiative, enthusiasm, yes – but not humility.

Having to ask for help again and again and again is a very humbling experience. These past two months, I've had to ask for others' assistance many, many times. I am normally quite independent, but in June, I had knee surgery that left me unable to walk unassisted. Now I am getting around with a walker. (This is not a person, like someone who walks dogs, but rather a four-legged, three-sided, wheeled alumi-

num cage that you step into for support when you need to walk). This means your hands are engaged through hanging on to the walker, so you cannot really carry much. Thus I've had to ask for help in cooking, cleaning, buying groceries, and moving things. During the first two weeks, I even needed help in getting dressed – certainly a lesson in humility!

Maybe becoming a bit more humble will help me turn into a better fundraiser for TIRF. I realize that not everyone is able to donate to

The journal editors are seeking empirical research on L2 speech perception and production, broadly defined. Contributions from a variety of theoretical perspectives (including but not limited to linguistic, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, and neurolinguistic approaches) are welcome. Each contribution must include a clear discussion of implications and applications of the research findings to L2 pronunciation teaching and learning. Also welcomed are research reports that document and evaluate pedagogical innovations based on L2 speech perception and production research for the "Focus on the Classroom" section of the special issue. The editors will consider articles written in either English or French.

Submitted articles will be subject to the normal peer review process of the CMLR. Please [click here](#) to learn more about the submission guidelines for information on manuscript length, the mandate of the journal, and other aspects of submission.

Final deadline for submissions is October 31, 2013. All materials should be sent via [this link](#). Questions about the special issue may be addressed to the co-editors, [Dr. Walcir Cardoso](#) and [Dr. Pavel Trofimovich](#).

EALTA 2014 Conference in the UK

The 11th EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment) conference will take place at the University of Warwick, Coventry, UK from May 29 – June 1, 2014. The conference, entitled "The CEFR and Language Testing and Assessment – Where are we Now?" will bring together researchers and practitioners in the field of language testing and assessment.

Information about the conference theme as well as the call for abstracts can be found by [clicking here](#). Types of proposals include papers, work-in-progress presentations, and posters. The deadline for abstract submission is November 1, 2013. A separate call for proposals for the pre-conference workshops, to be held May 27-29, 2014, can be found at [this link](#). The deadline for submitting pre-conference workshop abstracts is September 15, 2013. For more information, please write to EALTA2014@warwick.ac.uk.

The EALTA conference offers an opportunity to attend renowned experts' presentations, discuss current research and practical projects, and share new developments with researchers and practitioners. The program will offer not only keynote talks, papers, parallel sessions on works in progress and poster presentations, but there will also be an extensive social program, including a welcome cocktail party on Thursday night, a reception on Friday evening, and the conference dinner on Saturday night.

the Foundation, and I deeply appreciate the contributions from those who can. No matter how small the gift may seem to the donor, it is important to TIRF, and to the doctoral students whose research we wish to fund. So I am asking, very humbly, for your support. You can send a check drawn on a US bank to the address on this page, or you can [donate on line](#). Please will you donate to TIRF? Thank you so much.

Kathi Bailey