Research Organizations: Spotlight on LTRC

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

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**Canadian Modern Language Review: CFP for 2014 Special Issue**

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 and production. We also welcome 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](http://www.tirfonline.org) 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.

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**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](http://www.tirfonline.org).

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.

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**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 aluminum 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 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 online](http://www.tirfonline.org). Please will you donate to TIRF? Thank you so much.