

ILTA Workshop Award 2017 for

Developing language teachers' assessment literacy in classroom-based achievement assessment for young learners in Turkey

facilitated by Aylin Ünalđı and Szilvia Papp, 19-23 June 2017, Istanbul

Report

Szilvia Papp and Aylin Ünalđı

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Background:

In Turkey, language assessment is taught as a semester-long course in ELT departments of some universities. In these courses, students are introduced to the basic concepts of foreign language testing, yet with scarce opportunities to practice test development for various purposes, such as Young Learners. There are no specific in-service training opportunities available to teachers to improve their assessment skills or assessment literacy. The aim of this workshop was to support language teachers' assessment literacy especially concerning classroom-based, achievement assessment and help them to gain expertise in developing suitable assessment materials for young learners, and finally help them to evaluate, select and use more appropriately assessment instruments such as standardised tests. This workshop was the first to offer specialised and comprehensive training in its context. It combined under the roof of Bogazici University Faculty of Education Department of Foreign Language Education the expertise of international and local professionals in a 5-day program to address the specific needs of the YL teachers. It was hoped that the workshop will lead to future activities and associations.

Facilitators:

The workshop was organised by Dr. Aylin Ünalđı in collaboration with Bođaziçi University's Life Long Learning Centre. The facilitators were Dr. Aylin Ünalđı and Dr Szilvia Papp. The participation of Szilvia Papp was funded by the ILTA Workshop Award, and Aylin Ünalđı was supported by Bođaziçi University.



Aylin holds PhDs in Language Testing from Boğaziçi University (Turkey) and University of Bedfordshire (UK). Previously, she was involved in the development and supervising the development of tests and rating scales, test validation and marking standardization. Currently, she is teaching at the Department of Foreign Language Education of Boğaziçi University.

Szilvia holds a BA in English and Russian Studies from the Teacher Training College at the University of Szeged (Hungary), an MSc in Applied Linguistics and a PhD in Second Language Acquisition from Edinburgh University (UK). Currently, she works as a consultant in educational assessment. She has helped develop the Masters-level course in Educational Assessment and Examinations offered by the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Previously she worked as Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at Portsmouth University (1999-2007) and Senior Research and Validation Manager at Cambridge English Language Assessment working on the *Cambridge English Young Learners* tests and *for Schools* examinations (2007-2015).

Dates, venue, participants:

Course title: ASSESSMENT of YOUNG LEARNERS A practical course in test development and evaluation

Dates: June 19-23, 2017

Venue: Boğaziçi University's Life Long Learning Centre, Istanbul TURKEY



There were 21 participants on the course. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds, institutions (private schools, state schools, university departments), and countries.



At the end of the course, participants were given a certificate of achievement by Boğaziçi University.



We asked participants to fill in a pre-course questionnaire to find out their level of assessment literacy and expectations of the course. After the workshop, we asked them again to fill in another questionnaire to find out how valuable they found the course. The data from the two questionnaires will be presented at the IATEFL TEASIG/CRELLA seminar in Luton in October 2017.

Content of the workshop:

see Appendix for the programme

Evaluation:

The workshop was very well attended and each session was well received. The responses to the final evaluation questionnaire were very positive, as indicated by the following comments:

- *It allowed us to be able to discuss different age groups and what can be expected from them.*
- *It was very fun and effective to design a test with other teachers.*
- *It gave us a great chance to share ideas and comments on producing and improving items and tests.*

- *We had a chance to work on real examples.*
- *I learned a lot from these activities. Working with different rating scales which have detailed ratings was very useful for me.*
- *I realized that it isn't that easy to develop a rating scale. We learned how to do it in an effective way.*
- *It was interesting to see how different teachers find different parts more important to appear on an achievement test and discuss why they think so or why they don't.*
- *Working on and preparing the tests with people who come from a variety of fields such as teachers, examiners helped me think from different perspectives.*
- *It was pleasure to join this workshop. Thanks to the professors who have organized this workshop for their great efforts.*
- *It was a very dense and fruitful workshop with the amalgamation of theory and practice. I know it's unrealistic, but extending the duration of workshop (to two weeks, maybe) could give the opportunity to internalize what we learn through repeated practice and feedback.*
- *Thank you all for this valuable workshop. I felt lucky to have been there.*
- *The quiz, the statistical information along with the item lecture and the way questions were answered were all beneficial. The websites shared were very functional & helpful. A reading list on basics of testing would help a lot for the new starters. Nevertheless, the workshop was quite efficient despite limited time for such a big coverage! THANK YOU!*
- *Working in groups and sharing our experiences throughout the workshop.*
- *Thanks for Your effort. Hope to see you again in another workshop.*
- *I need to work more on item writing and statistical analyses.*
- *Sending a schedule one or two days beforehand would be nice. Thank you for everything. It was challenging, informative and fun. But, most of all It was very motivating.*
- *It was very beneficial in terms of uniting people who are interested in assessment in ELT for young learners.*
- *It was a group of people gathering who were enthusiastic about one thing: improving themselves to be able to give more to their students. It was inspiring.*

By organizing the workshop, we hoped to form a network of teachers specialising in the assessment of young learners' foreign language development within the testing community in Turkey, and maintain our professional relationship in the future, too.

Prior to the workshop, an email discussion list (Language Assessment Issues in Turkey – LAIT, lait@list.boun.edu.tr) was created to set up a nationwide communication network, to foster further collaboration, to share details of and create opportunities for training and meetings about Foreign Language Assessment in Turkey. At the moment, there are 130 subscribers following the discussions in the list. The participants of this workshop are keen on forming an Assessment of Young Learners Special Interest Group among themselves. The ultimate aim is the possibility of forming in the future a Turkish Language Assessment Association.

Our aim was to start up a professional centre to offer specialised assessment training to schools. This centre will be formed under the roof of Boğaziçi University, Life Long

Learning Centre and the centre is hoping to expand the training in language assessment to larger groups of teachers in the near future. For this, the collaboration of several institutions will be sought for. We plan to formally follow up the activities of the participants of this workshop in their institutions to assess the impact of the workshop on their assessment practices. This will be in the form of a short report based on action research and may lead to academic publications.



ASSESSMENT of YOUNG LEARNERS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE
A practical course in test development and evaluation

Course Objectives

This five-day course on young learners' foreign language assessment aims at developing English language teachers' assessment literacy by improving their understanding of the general principles of language assessment and skills in developing and evaluating test tasks. Participants of this course will develop their understanding of young learner characteristics, and relate these to test demands in order to evaluate the appropriacy of tests for specific purposes. The course will give the teachers basic theoretical background and abundant opportunities to analyse test tasks designed to assess language skills as well as enabling them to develop tasks for classroom assessment. On completion of this course, participants will become more conscious users of tests and be better able to evaluate student performance with more efficient methods.

Participants will be better able to:

- Understand key concepts in language assessment and apply them in evaluating tests
- Understand learner and test taker characteristics of children
- Compare tests written for different purposes
- Evaluate the operationalisation of language skills and functions in test tasks
- Evaluate the appropriacy of test tasks for a given group of learners
- Develop test tasks for assessing language skills
- Perform basic classical test and item analysis

Program:

1 st DAY Monday	
9.30-11.00	<p><i>Young learners' cognitive characteristics and their development</i> Activity: Cognitive development handout <i>Basic principles of language assessment: reliability, validity, impact</i> Ensuring reliability: appropriate test length, item quality (discrimination, facility), match between candidate ability range and test coverage, item difficulty range, marker/examiner training, test administration conditions, Ensuring validity: fitness for purpose, definition of construct, appropriate test tasks and test administration conditions (time limits, instructions), avoiding construct under-representation or construct irrelevance, Ensuring beneficial impact on teaching learning and motivation</p>

Coffee break	
11.15-12.30	<i>Basic principles of language assessment: reliability, validity, impact (cont.)</i> Activity: Test users' needs and Uses of assessment Activity: TOEFL Primary and Junior test task comparison Frameworks for construct definition: GSE, AYLLIT, CEFR Activity: Can-do sorting
Lunch break	
13.30-15.00	<i>Analysis of test purpose and general test characteristics</i> PTE TELL, Oxford Young Learners' Placement Test, Trinity ISE foundation, TOEFL Primary Activity: Getting to know the tests
Coffee break	
15.15-16.30	<i>Analysis of test purpose and general test characteristics (cont.)</i> Activity: Fitness for purpose: Test evaluation checklist

2 nd DAY Tuesday	
9.30-11.00	<i>Designing and evaluating YL listening test tasks</i> Task: consider YLs' cognitive processing in listening and implications for test design Task: identify and adapt a text for a listening task
Coffee break	
11.15-12.30	<i>Designing and evaluating YL listening test tasks (cont.)</i> Task: design a listening task for a specific target candidature and proficiency level Task: evaluate a listening task
Lunch break	
13.30-15.00	<i>Designing and evaluating YL speaking test tasks</i> Task: consider YLs' cognitive processing in speaking and implications for test design Task: build in support in a YL speaking task
Coffee break	
15.15-16.30	<i>Designing and evaluating YL speaking test tasks (cont.)</i> Task: design a speaking task for a specific target candidature and proficiency level

3rd DAY Wednesday	
9.30-11.00	<i>Designing and evaluating YL reading test tasks</i> Activity: Assessment literacy for teachers Task: consider YLs' cognitive processing in reading and implications for test design
Coffee break	
11.15-12.30	<i>Designing and evaluating YL reading test tasks (cont.)</i> Task: design a reading task for a specific target candidature and proficiency level Task: evaluate a reading task
Lunch break	
13.30-15.00	<i>Designing and evaluating YL writing test tasks</i> Task: consider YLs' cognitive processing in writing and implications for test design Task: build in support in a YL writing task
Coffee break	
15.15-16.30	<i>Designing and evaluating YL writing test tasks (cont.)</i> Task: design a writing task for a specific target candidature and proficiency level

4th DAY Thursday	
9.30-11.00	<i>Scoring YL speaking performance</i> Task: evaluate a speaking task Task: develop speaking assessment scales for a target proficiency level
Coffee break	
11.15-12.30	<i>Scoring YL speaking performance (cont.)</i> Task: rate sample candidate speaking performances Task: rater agreement (reliability)
Lunch break	
13.30-15.00	<i>Scoring YL writing performance</i> Task: evaluate a writing task

	Task: develop writing assessment scales for a target proficiency level
Coffee break	
15.15-16.30	<i>Scoring YL writing performance (cont.)</i> Task: rate and mark sample candidate written productions

5 th DAY Friday	
9.30-11.00	<i>Qualitative and quantitative item analysis</i> Task: Analysis of test data
Coffee break	
11.15-12.30	<i>Material analysis for achievement testing</i> Task: Analysis of Oxford Discover 3 Chp.9-10 and writing test specification for the chapters
Lunch break	
13.30-15.00	<i>Writing an achievement test</i> Task: developing an integrated reading-writing, listening and English in use task on Oxford Discover 3 Chp.9-10
Coffee break	
15.15-16.30	<i>Task evaluation</i> <i>Feedback on the workshop and action plan for the future</i>