Abstracts

# Keynote

## Miriam Neigert, University of New England, Australia

### Humanizing Assessment

Miriam has been a lecturer at University of New England, Australia, since 2018 and is the Discipline Convenor of German Studies. In 2023, she received a Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning, Australian Awards for University Teaching (AAUT) 2023, in recognition of the portfolio work she designed and introduced into all the German units at UNE.

Miriam works a very long way away from teachers of German in the UK. However, that does not mean she is distant from us when it comes to issues of student recruitment and retention. That is why her ideas on, examples for and approach to portfolio assessment as ‘humane’ assessment can be particularly stimulating in the context of this Meeting.

# Workshops and Lightning Talks

## Helen Jones, Lancaster University

### Creative collaborative writing approaches to support assessment with B1-B2 learners.

I am often struck by the reticence of first-year students (post A-Level equivalent) in writing freely and under timed constraints. Conversations indicate a fear of making grammatical mistakes and a concern about vocabulary range. Writing under time constraints can add pressure to those who have a learning and support plan, for example, due to anxiety, a sensory impairment or dyslexia.

For the past three years, therefore, I have run a summer term (pre-summer exams) creative writing project over an average of 3 weeks, based on a combination of ideas from creative writing software, sources such as Doris Dörrie, game play such as Call of Cthulu, my past research on narration and point of view, and 5 years community experience outside HE as an Asset-Based Community Development practitioner (a neighbourhood approach bringing together people on the basis of individual gifts rather than needs).

Each group of around 8-15 students produces a short story. The process involves seminar activity with role allocations, levels of competition and collaboration. The roles are distributed and negotiated according to students' strengths: whether that be creativity, organisation or an eye for detail, to name but a few.

My session covers the process, refined over three years, the positives and the pitfalls, and a very short taster on getting started to demonstrate.

## Britta Schrader, Oxford University – Language Centre

### The Promise of Authenticity

*Blogs*, *Portfolios*, *Learner diaries* and *self-assessment* – there is now a whole gamut of assignments designed to be “authentic”. However, a closer look at some specific tasks, marking criteria and submissions leads to question the assumption that everything designed to reflect student’s interests, to mirror real life tasks and thus make learning meaningful is being perceived by students as such. Instead, submissions which tap deliberately into student’s personal experiences / lives are frequently completed purely performatively, without any significant difference to any other “unauthentic” assessment. Does the students’ strife for perfection (respectively a good mark) stand in the way of revealing anything about themselves?

## Sandra Reisenleutner (Nottingham University)

### Small adaptations to add more authenticity to harmonised assessment

In the Language Centre of the University of Nottingham, language assessment is harmonised across languages for each level. While this format aims at comparability, it also raises the question, how classroom practice can be reflected in the assessment and how assessment can include a degree of authenticity. This short talk will look at the reading and listening comprehension tasks in the language tests of stage 2, i.e. a module at A2 level, and examine how those tasks can be more authentic by adding a task-based approach to a set piece of assessment.

## Ulrike Bavendiek, Liverpool University

### A culture-based portfolio for ab initio language learners

I will present a range of assessed portfolio tasks for first year ab initio students at A2 level which invite students to develop authentic responses to works of art. The portfolio was based on the following premises:

* Language degree students are interested in the culture of a community as well as in their language.
* The ability to communicate about culture in the target language is an important skill for language graduates.
* The critical use of AI for language learning should be taught and assessed.
* A playful, nonpunitive approach to language learning leads to deeper engagement, feeling of control and motivation.

## Jonas Langner, KCL

### Mediation in language learning

Mediation, one of the key skills for language learners according to the CEFR, offers plenty of opportunities for authentic assessment of language learning. Mediation skills enable learners to combine their language skills and intercultural competence and use them in situations that reflect real-life scenarios, both in professional and everyday contexts. This approach provides learners with useful transferable skills whilst allowing them to bring their personality and background to the task. This approach is not only about the target language and culture but also the language(s) and culture(s) of the students and how to use these to construct (new) meaning. It is therefore a creative way in also addressing Universities’ employability agendas.

I will present ideas of how to utilise the potential of mediation for authentic assessment. Different examples will address various descriptors for mediation from the Companion Volume of the CEFR.

Sources:

* Council of Europe, “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion volume”, 2020.
* Judith T. M. Gulikers, Theo J. Bastiaens and Paul A. Kirschner, “A Five-Dimensional Framework for Authentic Assessment”, in Educational Technology Research and Development, 52 (3), 2004.

Darren Lester, Wycliffe College  
Using CEFR Levels for meaningful assessment  
The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a six-point  
scale designed to be an international standard for describing linguistic ability  
(Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024) but is predominantly used to define  
entry requirements for international students in higher education (Piccardo, 2021) rather  
than to assess linguistic ability at a terminal level (see, for example, the lack of  
correlation between CEFR levels and GCSE or A Level grading).  
In this talk, I will advocate for the increased explicit use of CEFR levels at all stages of  
language assessment in the UK (from EYFS to tertiary education) so that it becomes  
part of the vocabulary of German assessment and of our students and so that we can  
more explicitly discuss the levels of language proficiency amongst our students. I will  
explore the correlation between the CEFR and end-point assessments at KS2, 3, 4 and  
5 as well as my own tool for facilitating comparisons (which will be made freely available  
to attendees).

# Outreach and partnerships

* Thorsten Egner, Head of Language Courses, Goethe Institut London and Dr Regina Seiwald: Exam partnerships with the Goethe-Institut: Goethe-*Zertifikat* exams
* Dr Edward Boothroyd (University of Birmingham, Dept of Modern Languages) - Working with hub schools of the NCLE (Dr Edward Boothroyd)
* Doris Zimmermann, University of Nottingham & John Goodyear, University of Birmingham (Co-Directors of the Midland German Network): Report on the audit of the German learning landscape at primary, secondary and tertiary level in the Midlands – and reasons given by schools for choosing German (in contrast to or together with other languages)
* Dr Sandra Reisenleutner, Univ of Nottingham: The German Language Teaching Network – possible ways forward
* Prof Sara Jones (UoB): Europe’s East, the Second World War, and the Holocaust: A transnational Education Project – Introduction to Educational Resources for Secondary Schools as well as a pupil and teacher competition