IN CONVERSATION

Asian Association for Language Assessment Student Committee

Issue 6 (2021)

CONTENTS

(Website of the 7th annual conference of the AALA)

Editors' Note

We, graduate students as well as the academic community, have weathered through the troubled waters for another year of online events. Thank you all so much for the continued support, dedication, and professionalism so that we have made our AALA Student Events a great success.

On behalf of the AALA Student Committee (SC), we are delighted to present the 6th issue of *In Conversation* series that aims to share and learn new ideas and experiences of language assessment in Asia and beyond. We believe that being engaged in AALA conferences and events is a great way for us to learn from established scholars and colleagues in the field.

We then report the 7th International Conference of the AALA held in South Korea. The conference was co-organized and co-hosted by Korea English Language Testing Association (KELTA) and Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE). The theme of the conference is "Learning-Oriented Language Assessment: Insight, Practice & Research." Our reports include AALA 2021 Conference Coverage, a report of the pre-conference workshop, and our graduate student networking session initiated by the AALA SC. We also invite student winners of the Outstanding Dissertation Award, Best Student Paper Award, and AALA Best Student Poster Award, to share their ideas and experiences on their journey of assessment endeavour.

This issue also includes a reflection from Phuong and Tatsuro on behalf of AALA SC. The authors remind us of the significance of being involved in the community of AALA SC. We hope that we can work together with energetic and thoughtful readers to fulfil the future mission of AALA SC.

Best,

Phuong Cao & Tatsuro Tahara (Co-editors)

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AALA 2021 Conference Coverage

Report by Yan (Niles) Zhao

The 7th International Conference of the Asian Association for Language Assessment was held online from November 3 to 5, 2021, co-hosted by the Korea English Language Testing Association (KELTA) and the Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE). The theme for the conference was "Learning-Oriented Language Assessment: Insight, Practice & Research."

The conference attracted 328 participants, 70 of whom were students, from across the world. Due to the COVID, the conference was held online, which provided both opportunities, evidenced by a record number of presentations, and challenges, as many participants and speakers had to navigate the digital platform and give their presentations in the middle of the night. The conference comprised of one pre-conference workshop, two keynote speeches, two invited symposia, one plenary panel discussion, four plenary speeches, as well as 70 paper presentations and seven poster presentations.

The pre-conference day started with two concurrent symposia: one on language learning and assessment innovations in the TOEFL family; and the other on the policy and consequences of the TEPS-family tests. Then, seven posters were presented, followed by a pre-conference workshop on the use of Lexile reading frameworks (see the next report for a summary). The last day of the conference ended with the AALA student networking session (see p. 3).

The first day of the conference kicked off with opening speeches from Professor Yan Jin, AALA President, Emeritus Professor Oryang Kwon, AALA 2021 Advisory Committee Chair, and Professor Inn-Chull Choi, AALA 2021 Local Chair. Then, Professor Antony Green from CRELLA gave the first keynote speech on learning-oriented language assessment. Later, three awards, including the Best Student Poster Award (Agustinus Prasetyo), Best Student Paper Award (Ji-young Shin), and Outstanding Dissertation Award (Hang Sun), were presented (see pages 3 to 5 for a few words from these winners). For the rest of the day, a plenary panel discussion, two plenary speeches, and 25 papers were presented.

The second day of the conferenced began with the second keynote speech delivered by Professor Yasuyo Sawaki on the formative assessment of summary writing. The rest of the day saw 55 paper presentations and two plenary speeches.

Despite the online format, the conference proved to be a huge success with high-quality presentations that addressed key issues in the field of language assessment.

Pre-conference Workshop

Workshop 2: Incorporating the Lexile Frameworks into EFL Teaching and Assessment
Report by Haeun Kim

On November 3rd, a pre-conference workshop on the topic of Lexile® Frameworks in teaching and assessment was led by Dr Alistair Van Moere and Dr Jing Wei, who are senior researchers at MetaMetrics, Inc. The main purpose of the workshop was to demonstrate how the Lexile Framework for Reading can be used to measure students' reading ability, determine the complexity of reading materials, and select books/materials that are at the right level of challenge for students. MetaMetrics tests learners' language ability through the assessments they have developed, but they also embed Lexile framework into other assessments (e.g., TOEFL Junior, the British Council Aptis test) so that students can receive a Lexile measure after taking those tests. If we know how difficult a text or a book is and students' reading ability, we can match the two together, which allows the students to read in their zone of proximal development. To have full access to the Lexile Analyzer educators normally have to pay a certain amount to get premium access; however, the workshop attendees had the opportunity to try Lexile for free during the workshop. Dr Alistair Van Moere and Dr. Jing Wei guided the audience through each of the Lexile Analyzer and helped attendees explore the tools while they participated in small-group inquiry-based learning activities. Towards the end of the workshop, the Lexile Frameworks for Listening and Oral Reading were briefly introduced and demonstrated as well. Through this workshop, attendees learned how to use the Lexile tools for classroom instruction and to analyze the text complexity of reading and listening materials.

AALA Graduate Student Networking Session
Report by Hideaki Oka

The AALA Graduate Student Networking Session conducted on November 3, 2021, was the first session to be held online on the Zoom platform. We faced several technical issues while conducting the session on the online platform; however, thanks to the cooperation of the members of the AALA Student Committee and other participants, we were able to make the session a success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the participants once again.


(AALA Student Committee Meeting)

This session aimed to promote the following 3Cs: (a) Facilitating the building of Competencies related to language assessment for graduate students; (b) Enhancing Communication between student members and other stakeholders; and (c) Fostering Collaboration both within and beyond the AALA student community.

We were fortunate enough to listen to five exemplary researchers in this session. We appreciate the efforts of the two award winners, Dr Hang Sun and Ms Ji-young Shin, to share their insights in selecting research topics and writing research papers. Moreover, we were fortunate that Professor Tony Green and Dr Mikyung Kim Wolf, who are at the forefront of language testing and language education research, attended the session. They provided insightful experiences and tips for the participants on writing papers. I was particularly intrigued by the fact that writing a paper requires patience and stamina on the part of researchers. Finally, we were grateful to Dr Ivy Chen from the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC), the University of Melbourne for sharing some good advice on seeking jobs as researchers. Further, we learned that it was necessary not only to publish as many papers as possible but also to remain alert to every employment opportunity as a researcher.
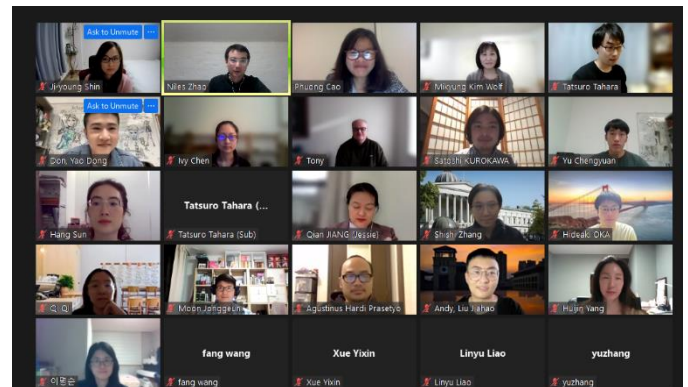
(AALA Student Networking Gathering)

Since there was a time limit, the entire session lasted only 45 minutes. However, there is no doubt that the session helped our students develop a clear sense of what they should do in the field of language assessment and their life plans as researchers.

Words from Award Winners

AALA Outstanding Dissertation Award

Hang Sun

Hello AALA student members, my name is Hang Sun. I graduated from Shanghai Jiao Tong University in 2020 and my supervisor is Professor Yan Jin. My research interests lie in diagnostic assessment and classroom-based assessment. My dissertation is entitled: An argument-based approach to validating a diagnostic test – the case of UDig reading test. I feel truly honoured to have won the 2020 Outstanding Dissertation Award.

Let me tell you an anecdote of how the idea of my dissertation came into being five years ago. My undergraduate major was Chinese language and literature and I got my master's degree from the TESOL program. After that, I worked in Shanghai for three years, but my job was not related to foreign language education before I decided to apply for a PhD program in language assessment. After my first meeting with Professor Jin, I began to prepare for my research proposal. The first thing I did was to check the different types of language assessments. I found the term "diagnostic test", which sounded intriguing to me. If we could diagnose students' language ability, we would be able to give them appropriate treatment. As a foreign language learner, I would also like to know the strengths and weaknesses of my English competency. Since validity was probably the only jargon I knew in the field of language assessment, I decided quickly that I was going to validate a diagnostic assessment for my PhD study. I read articles on validation frameworks to see what I could use, and then I got quite excited and made a call to Professor Jin. I told her that I found a researcher, Michael Kane, whose work is quite legitimate and interesting as I see it, and I wanted to try out his validation approach. I asked her, "Have you ever heard of this Michael Kane?" You can guess what Professor Jin said – "Of course, he is a leading figure in our field." I was so embarrassed because I just showed my future supervisor how little knowledge I had of the field. I know most of you must have more knowledge of the field than I did and have chosen your research topic after serious considerations. Still, we all have to go through difficult times during our PhD studies. My confidence in the potential of diagnostic assessment has also been on and off during my research. But like my supervisor said, "To conduct research is to problematize". I think the journey of writing a dissertation is not to prove what you believe is correct, but to discover how things are going and why they go like that. I hope that my experience can bring you some confidence during your journey of exploring the wonder world of language assessment.

At last, I would like to share a line of my favourite poem with you: "*Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking*." By walking, you'll make your road in language assessment, too!

AALA Best Student Paper Award

Ji-young Shin

Hello, fellow graduate students at AALA! I am Ji-young Shin, a PhD student at Purdue University. I am graduating this semester and starting my assistant professor career at the University of Toronto, Mississauga. I feel very honoured to receive the 2021 AALA Best Student Paper Award. I am also grateful to the AALA student committee for inviting me to introduce my paper and share my experience.

My main research area is language testing and assessment, but I also have some background in other areas of applied linguistics, such as corpus linguistics, computational linguistics, and educational measurement. I am interested in the interfaces among these areas, which my paper for this conference reflects. In my paper, *Investigating the relationships among complexity, accuracy, and fluency in elicited imitation: Insights from factor analysis and random forest modelling*, I examined elicited imitation, also known as sentence repetition. I particularly focused on the relationships among complexity, accuracy, and fluency, which are the three main components of language proficiency. I particularly benefited from a measurement approach (i.e., factor analysis) and machine-learning modelling (i.e., random forest regression).

The AALA Student Committee suggested that I share some tips about conference proposal writing and presentation. I also thought sharing my experience would be more useful than reiterating what my study is about, which can be found in the conference proceedings. Here are what I believe important points are, and how I applied the keys to writing the current paper.

Among several commonalities between conference proposal writing and presentation, and their distinction from other types of scholarly communication, you might want to note that both forms are a purposeful summary of a long research project. In other words, you have to choose essentials wisely. In the process of selecting what to include for your proposal and presentation, the two criteria that I use might be helpful: the centrality of the study and the clarity of the research process. Regarding the importance of a study, rather than simply pointing out the scarcity of previous studies on the given topic, I make sure to foreground why my topic is important and which specific area of language testing my study contributes to. To increase the clarity of a study, I would like to recommend that you match each of your research questions with its methods and results. It might be helpful to ask your colleagues who do not know much about your project to read your proposal and give comments on the clarity. You can also revisit and revise your first draft a few days later when you might have fresh insight. For example, the methodological approaches that I employed in the current project are not the most common methods in our field. To ensure my proposal is comprehensible and clear to the general audience in our field, I asked my colleague to read my proposal and identify anything unclear. I also found my own experience as a proposal reviewer at regional conferences very useful for revising my proposal, so I would like to encourage you to participate if you have a chance.

It is a pleasure to share my experience and I hope it will be helpful in some way as you prepare for your next conferences.

AALA 2021 Best Poster Award

Agustinus Hardi Prasetyo

Hello, AALA student members! My name is Agustinus Hardi Prasetyo. I am surprised and deeply honoured to receive this award in my first participation at the AALA conference. Let me tell you more about myself, the study that won me the award, and some tips for you.

I have taught EFL student teachers since 1999 after I earned my bachelor's degree in English Language Education at Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia. I became interested in language testing and assessment after taking Dr Robert Kleinsasser's Second Language Assessment course at the University of Queensland for my master's degree in 2004. His course opened my mind, and I was inspired to be a language testing researcher and educator to help Indonesian pre- and in-service teachers better. I am currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Applied Linguistics and Technology at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, US. My principal supervisor is Dr Gary Ockey. My current research interest is the use of scenario-based assessment design to support EFL teachers' language assessment literacy (LAL).

The study that won me the award was my dissertation project. During the poster presentation, firstly, I reported the results of my pilot study, which investigated the LAL components deemed important by Indonesian EFL teachers to help them be more assessment literate, the challenges they faced in implementing classroom-based assessment practices, and their assessment

training needs. I used exploratory factor analysis to identify the LAL components and thematic analysis on the interview transcripts to determine the teachers' challenges and training needs. Second, I also presented the prototype of the scenario-based LAL test, which I am currently working on based on the pilot study results.

It was challenging to research in the Covid-19 pandemic! I needed to modify my research method since no face-to-face interviews nor visits to research sites were allowed. Therefore, this award acknowledges my effort and Indonesian teachers' perseverance who keep doing their best to help their students in this challenging time.

I always remembered Dr Carol Chapelle's advice in one of the courses I attended: always find a home or audience for your work (e.g., book review assignments, final paper, or dissertation project). Find conferences or journals that fit your research ideas. Be a member of the organizations that run the conferences where you would like to present your work, be familiar with the articles in the journal you want to publish. To some extent, I guess I have applied her advice successfully.

Reflections by AALA Committee Members

Phuong's Reflection as a New AALA SC Member (2021)

Since being engaged in an academic community plays an indispensable role for Ph.D. students, who are novice researchers in the field, to connect, share ideas and learn from colleagues and established researchers, we believe that AALA Student Committee has brought us wonderful opportunities to learn from colleagues from Asia and beyond.

As an SC member, Phuong reflects that being part of the AALA community and being able to share ideas with other researchers who have the same research interests has greatly benefited her as a practitioner and researcher. The workshops and presentations at the 7th AALA conference help enable Phuong to understand more about assessment theories, assessment practices, methods and strategies, and most importantly, how assessment can improve learning and teaching.

Phuong started her research path in language assessment after nearly 20 years of teaching in Vietnam, with her burning desire to deepen her knowledge and skills related to assessment literacy and assessment for learning. Therefore, being engaged in such an organisation plays a part in her assessment endeavour. She trusts that contributing to AALA SC not only enhances knowledge of language assessment but also helps open many doors in the future. Phuong also firmly believes that in the next coming years, AALA SC, in either form, online or face-to-face, will continue to work enthusiastically, collaboratively for the mission of AALA.

Phuong Cao

Tatsuro's reflection of the years of AALA SC (2018-2021)

The reason why I joined AALA SC was that I participated in the networking lunch of AALA SC. In 2017, in my second year of the Ph.D. program, I was invited by my supervisor, Dr. Sawaki Yasuyo, to attend the conference and give a poster presentation. It was the first time I participated in such a large-scale international conference, and I was surprised to see that both the presenters and the audience were leading researchers in this field. In the 2017 annual conference, I also participated in the SC Networking lunch. Because there are not many graduate students in Japan who specialize in language testing, I was surprised to see so many graduate students from the Asian area gathered there. It was also great that I was able to talk to many students overseas, including Rongchan Lin, the AALA SC Co-chair at that time. After the

conference, I was invited to join the AALA SC, and I applied for a committee member and join.

In the first two years, from 2018 to 2019, I worked as a Committee Member. Since the members of AALA SC live in different places in the world, we had online meetings via Skype (and later Zoom) a few times a year. As a Committee Member who had just joined the SC, I voluntarily took the minutes of the meetings to understand the protocol of the academic association. We also prepared for the networking lunch just before the annual conference, such as writing invitation letters for professors who would give talks, preparing for the raffle draw with gifts. After the conference, each member assumed the responsibility of writing, proofreading, and editing In Conversation 4. I was supposed to write a workshop report on "Rating scale development and validation" by Dr. Ute Knoch at the AALA conference in 2018. As I was conscious of writing the workshop report later, I listened to the workshop with great concentration. In the first two years, I had little experience in international conferences and often felt lost. However, I managed to do my job with great help from many people, including Dr. Jirada Wudtayagorn, the advisor for SC, and Sha Liu and Ivy Chen, the Co-chairs of SC at that time.

From 2019 to 2020, I worked as a Co-chair. Because many members had to leave at the end of 2018, I became the Co-Chair as the only continuing member. I was worried because I was suddenly assigned a vital position. However, I overcame this with the help and encouragement of other members, particularly Don Yao, who became a Co-chair with me. In 2020, the annual conference was cancelled, but I reported as a representative of the SC at the Executive Board (EB) meeting in December 2020. I was very nervous but based on the SC online meeting with other members, I could carefully consider the agenda with Don and explain it in front of the board members. Don and I again reported at the EB meeting in 2021. Throughout the four years of AALA SC, it was a valuable experience for me to be involved in several jobs as a graduate student in the management of an international organization.

I am delighted to have several new members join us in 2021. Because Don and I were going to end our term of Co-Chairs at the end of 2021, we needed several new members to continue the SC. We were so happy to see that new members work hard for the preparation for SC online meeting at the annual conference. I hope that Phuong Cao and Niles Zhao, the new Co-chairs, will lead the new SC from 2022, and all members will continue to work enthusiastically in the new organization.

Tatsuro Tahara

AALA Student Membership Statistics

The number of student members in 2020 and 2021 by region/country

Country/region	2020	2021
Mainland China	17	23
Vietnam	9	10
Indonesia	4	4
Japan	6	8
Hong Kong	8	8
Taiwan	1	1
UK	18	18
Philippines	1	1
Thailand	5	6
USA	18	19
Australia	18	19
India	12	22
South Korea	5	9
Malaysia	2	3
Singapore	3	4
Macau	6	9
Iran	1	1
Saudi Arabia	0	0
New Zealand	4	4
Canada	3	4
UAE	0	0
Pakistan	1	1
Turkey	1	1
Bangladesh	0	1
Belgium	0	0
Cambodia	0	0
Israel	0	0
Kuwait	0	0
Nepal	1	1
Oman	0	0
Portugal	1	1
Russia	0	0
Sri Lanka	0	1
The Netherlands	0	0
Uzbekistan	1	1
Myanmar	0	0
Algeria	0	0
Hungary	0	1

Note. The top three countries/regions with the largest number of increases between 2020 and 2021 are India (10), Mainland China (6), and South Korea (4).

The number of student members in the respective year

Year	No. of Student Members
2014	18
2015	26
2016	24
2017	14
2018	26
2019	15
2020	23
2021	35
Total	**181**

*All the data were as of 30 October 2021.

AALA Founding Members (in alphabetical order)

He, Lianzhen,Zhejiang University

Imao, Yasuhiro,Osaka University

Jin, Yan,Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Kunnan, Antony John,University of Macau

Lee, Yong-Won, Seoul National University

Lee, Young-Shik,Hannam University

Qian, David,Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Sawaki, Yasuyo,Waseda University

Wu, Jessica Row-Whei,Language Training and Testing Center

AALA Executive Board (2020-2021)

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Jin Yan, Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Co-President
Jirada Wudthayagorn,Chulalongkorn University

1st Vice President
Thi Ngoc Quynh Nguyen, VNU University of Languages and International Studies

2nd Vice President
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David Qian,Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Communications Officer
Yasuhiro Imao,Osaka University

Members at Large
Qin Xie,The Education University of Hong Kong

Mingwei Pan, Shanghai International Studies University

AALA Executive Board, 2022–2024

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Jirada Wudthayagorn, Chulalongkorn University

Co-President:
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Rama Mathew, Delhi University

Bernard Spolsky, Bar-Ilan University

Randy Thrasher, International Christian University

Fellows
Lyle F. Bachman, University of California, Los Angeles

Alister Cumming, University of Toronto

Barry O'Sullivan, British Council

Bernard Spolsky, Bar-Ilan University

David Carless, University of Hong Kong

Nomination Committee, 2022–2024
Ivy Chen, University of Melbourne

Xiangdong Gu, Chongqing University

Shangchao Min, Zhejiang University

Yo In'nami, Chuo University

Student Committee, 2022–2024

Co-chairs:

Phuong Cao (Cao Thị Hồng Phương), Victoria University of Wellington
Yan (Niles) Zhao,The University of Melbourne

Immediate Past Co-chairs:
Don Yao, University of Macau
Tatsuro Tahara, Waseda University

Secretary:
Haeun Kim, Iowa State University

Treasurer:
Hideaki Oka, University of Tsukuba

Public Relations Officer:
Satoshi Kurokawa, University of Tokyo

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LinkedIn:
https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6941774/profile

AALA Student Committee *In Conversation* Series

Issue 6 (2021)

Co-editors: Phuong Cao & Tatsuro Tahara