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MwALT 2021 Plenary Speaker

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Technology and Testing: The Future is Here (Whether We Like It or Not)

Technology is changing the way we assess second language ability. That can and should be a good thing, because technology is also changing the way we use language and the way we learn languages. The advent of different types of electronically-mediated communication used in everyday life necessitates that language testers acknowledge and expand the construct definition of L2 language ability, and their operationalization of it. However, in examining the published research on technology in language assessment over the last fifteen years, it is striking to note that most of the research is focused on the use of technology to make language testing more

practical, accessible, and efficient. While these are obviously areas worthy of research, there is much less research focusing on how technology can improve the validity of tests, and this research imbalance is a real concern.

In this talk, I will briefly review the literature on technology in language assessment for the last fifteen years, examining trends in the research and synthesizing the results. I will then review four different areas of technology currently being used in language assessment: technology allowing for the administration of at-home tests; automated scoring of speaking and writing; technology used to standardize the administration of test tasks meant to assess interactive speaking and listening ability; and technology used to provide context to language test tasks to make them more similar to and representative of real-world language tasks (e.g., scenario-based assessments).

I conclude the talk with an examination of technology's role in validation arguments for language assessments. A prominent theme in current conceptualizations of test validation is that language tests should be designed to have a positive impact. It is not enough for a test developer to simply claim that their test promotes positive washback; rather, tests should have a positive impact by design (Chalhoub-Deville & O'Sullivan, 2020). Unfortunately, much of the use of technology in language testing seems to be based on increased efficiency, rather than by principled design to promote a positive impact on test-takers, teachers and learners, curriculum and materials developers, educational systems, and society.

Register Here

Registration is free of charge for all!

Guidelines for Participants

Conference Schedule

Call for Papers

The 22nd MwALT Conference will be held at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa in joint with the 18th Annual TSLL Conference. To access the Call for Papers for this conference, click here.

Access to Proposal Submission Portal

Conference: October 8th and 9th, 2021

Email: mwalt@lingutest.com

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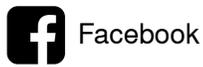Iowa State University

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