

Exploring the Possibilities of Scenario-based Assessment: An Introduction

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The field of language assessment has steadily been evolving over the years, with new approaches to construct definition and test design emerging as developments in research and technology arise. Different fields have helped inform theory and practice, and one approach, which began as part of K-12 assessment, seems particularly promising—the approach of Scenario-based Assessment (SBA). SBA was initially developed as part of the *Cognitively Based Assessment of, for and as Learning* (CBAL), an initiative that aimed to use findings from cognitive and behavioral sciences to inform the development of innovative assessments, such as those to be designed in alignment to the Common Core State Standards (Sabatini, Bennet, & Deane, 2011). In this way, SBA has been used to explore the assessment of mathematical skills (Bennet, 2011; Harris & Bauer, 2009), reading proficiency (O'Reily & Sheehan, 2009; Sabatini & O'Reily, 2013), and writing skills (Deane, Sabatini, & Fowles, 2012).

Researchers have placed an increasing emphasis on SBA in the field of second language (L2) assessment over the years. Here at Teachers College (TC), Professor James Purpura has led students in spearheading research on SBA. In 2015, the Applied Linguistics & TESOL Program at TC, together with the Educational Testing Service, organized the first TC/ETS Forum on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment of English Language Learners on the topic of scenario-based language assessment in large-scale and local contexts. Students enrolled in Applied Linguistics internship classes at TC also developed a scenario-based placement exam for the Community Language Program.

As an extension of our efforts to explore the possibilities of SBA, for this issue's forum we invited two doctoral students in the Applied Linguistics Second Language Assessment Track at TC to discuss the opportunities that SBA affords for L2 assessment. Brian Carroll adopted a learning-oriented assessment perspective in examining SBA while Yuna Seong highlighted SBA's potential in designing academic speaking assessments that are aligned to contemporary views of L2 proficiency. We hope that you will enjoy reading the forum.

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