A testing time for testing L2 writing: A proposal for a construct redefinition. The 17th Symposium on Second Language Writing. Simon Fraser University and University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, 2-4 August 2018.

Abstract:
The unprecedented geographical and domain spread of English in the contemporary world has cemented its status as the most widely learned and used L2. The changing demographics of English learners/users and the diverse contexts of English use have turned the present era into a testing time for assessing proficiency in English as an L2. Various proposals informed by the World-Englishes paradigm have been made to reconceptualise the construct of L2 English proficiency. Although writing competence is an important part of general language proficiency, these proposals have generally passed over L2 English writing assessment presumably because written English is widely perceived to be conservative with respect to linguistic norms. This does not mean, however, that the assessment of writing competence in L2 English can and should continue business as usual. In this presentation, I argue that the assessment of L2 English writing needs to grapple with the same thorny issues prompting a reconceptualisation of L2 English proficiency more generally. In an effort to stimulate debate and research, I discuss several principles informing recent proposals to redefine L2 English proficiency and explore their relevance to a construct redefinition of L2 English writing competence. I conclude the presentation by outlining a way of moving forward.