

“Assessment should be one of the main places of dialogue.”

Richard Lescure (1993, p. 39 [my translation])

In April 2011 the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) and its research centre, the Canadian Centre for Studies and Research on Bilingualism and Language Planning (CCERBAL), organized a symposium on evaluation. In a context of increased transnational migration, and in order to contribute to the enhancement of the quality of Language teaching and learning, it seems indeed important to examine policy issues and assessment practices, and determine the social and economic impact of language policies on a society. Three main lines of thought were thus proposed: the evaluation of language policies and linguistic developments in the context of bilingualism and official languages along with their social and economic impacts; the assessment of language skills and cultural and intercultural competencies in bilingual and professional settings; and the analysis of assessment practices in education and training programs.

The fourth issue of the OLBI Working Papers is an extension of this reflection and offers four articles dealing respectively with one or more of these lines of thought.

The first article, by Benaïssa Ichou, describes the situation of the Amazigh language in Morocco. In 2003–2004 this language, which has the status of national and heritage language for all Moroccans, became compulsory in all schools. In this study the author evaluates elementary school children for their degree of mastery of the Tifinagh script in their learning to read and write Amazigh.

In the following article, starting from the principle enunciated by Rinaldi (2004) that any act of documentation is the genesis of evaluation, Martine Pellerin examines the use of digital technologies such as iPods and iPads by students and language teachers and shows how they foster the emergence of a new mode of formative evaluation for students who become more involved in their learning.

Enrica Piccardo, in the continuation of research funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) on the culture of evaluation among professionals, focuses on the practices and challenges faced by teachers in the field of evaluation. Through a careful analysis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), she shows how this tool, in its multiple uses, can help teachers become aware of the complexity of evaluation.

To conclude this fourth issue of the *OLBI Working Papers*, Alysse Weinberg, Sandra Burger and Dalila Boukacem present an evaluative study in which data on the perceptions of students enrolled in a university-level immersion program are collected twice, in 2006 and in 2009, analyzed, and then compared in order to detect changes in the levels of satisfaction with the language activities offered in the program. From the results of this research the authors suggest ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

Enjoy — and let's continue this important dialogue on the many facets of evaluation.

Aline Germain-Rutherford
Guest Editor

References

- Lescure, Richard. 1993. Dimensions sociales et culturelles de l'évaluation. *Le Français dans le monde* (août/sep.), pp. 28–35. Numéro spécial: *Évaluation et certification en langue étrangère*, Annie Monnerie-Goarin et Richard Lescure (dir.).
- Rinaldi, C. 2004. The relationship between documentation and assessment. *Innovations in early childhood: The International Reggio Exchange*, 11, pp. 1–4.