ESOL
in Higher Ed

Preparing the Way
Teaching ELs in the Pre-K-12 Classroom

fourth edition

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ELs and Content Area Assessment:
Large-Scale and Classroom-Based Considerations

All teachers must be able to **analyze** and **interpret** student data from varied types of measurement.

Scores obtained on large-scale tests are often used as the primary measure of academic progress and language development for ELs.

These scores represent only a single measurement of ELs' abilities in content areas.

Teachers need to be able to distinguish between whether ELs have **mastered the content** or if their **lack of knowledge of English** is interfering with their learning.

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Four critical principles of assessment:

1. **validity**
2. **reliability**
3. **practicality**
4. **washback**

Validity is defined as the extent to which a measure, for example, a test, actually reflects the concept(s) or knowledge that it is intended to measure.

Reliability is consistency, and it may be defined as the capacity of a test or other form of measurement to be consistent in getting the same results over and over again.

A test that is reliable is not necessarily valid.

To be **practical**, a test needs to be financially reasonable in terms of administration; it should not take a long time to administer and grade; and, it should have clear, specific, and time-efficient scoring methods.
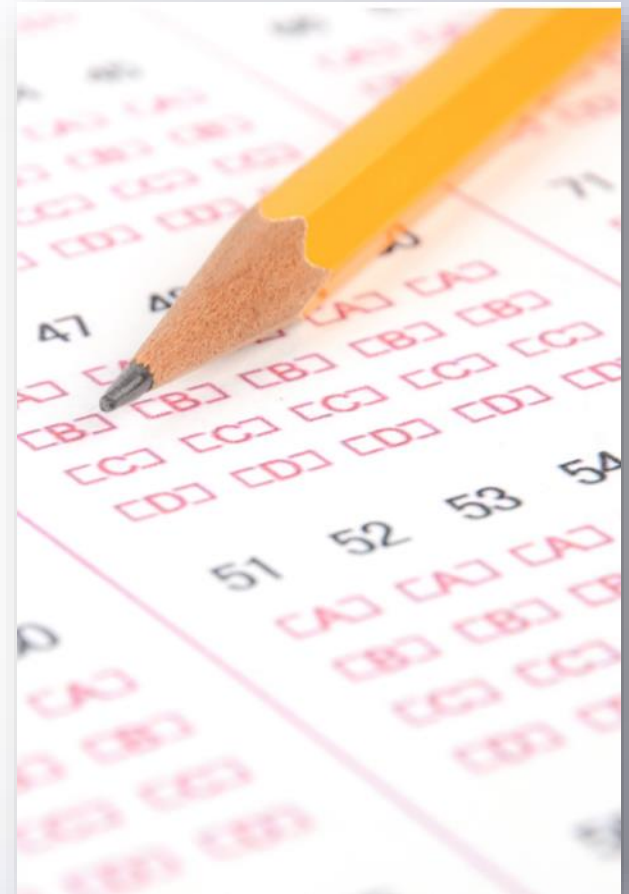
Testing must be an integral part of every learning environment.

Washback is the effect an assessment has on instruction and student learning.
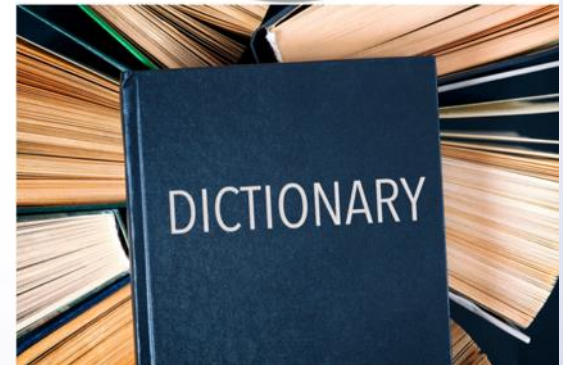
Washback can be either positive or negative. Assessment can generate positive washback, especially when classroom-based instruments are created with the purpose of positively influencing instruction and student learning.

Types of Assessment

Category	Types
Intention	Informal/Formal
Purpose	Formative/Summative
Format	Traditional/Alternative
Interpretation	Norm-/Criterion-Referenced
Administration	Large-Scale/Classroom

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Accommodation: any support provided to ELs to ensure they can access English content of the assessment

Recommended types:
1. Time modifications (e.g., additional time)
2. Aids (e.g., dictionary)
3. Environment (e.g., private setting)
4. Directions (e.g., given in L1)
5. Response type (e.g., in L1, point to responses)
6. Presentation (e.g., bilingual, recorded)

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Effectiveness of EL Accommodations

State	Accommodations
California	breaks; additional time; English dictionary; bilingual dictionary; English glossary; thesaurus; translated test directions that can be read to the student; translated glossary for construct-irrelevant items; translated test items; text-to-speech; read aloud of test directions and items; read aloud in Spanish of a translated test; separate setting
Texas	extra time; bilingual, standard English, ESL (simplified English) dictionaries; clarification in English of word meaning; reading aloud of text by computer
Florida	flexible setting; flexible scheduling; additional time; assistance in the heritage language for all directions and for specified portions of tests (except reading passages); word-to-word bilingual dictionaries
New York	time extension; separate location; proctors may read the listening passage three times; word-to-words bilingual dictionaries and/or glossaries; written tests in native language; oral direct translations of the English tests; writing responses in the native language (not allowed for English language arts exams)
Illinois	extended time; general administration directions clarified in student's native language by test administrator; general administration directions read aloud and repeated as needed in student's native language; responses dictated in English using scribe or speech-to-text for math assessments; word-to-word bilingual dictionary; separate setting

Accommodations Used in States with Large EL Enrollment

Assessment of English learners in content areas is often a daunting task for teachers who try to find a balance between English language proficiency and content area knowledge.

DESIGN
Reduce the language barrier.

ADMINISTRATION
Use effective state-approved EL accommodations.

GRADING
Familiarize ELs with grading methods.

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Imagine that one of your ELs was looking over another student's test. Brainstorm reasons why this EL might have looked at another student's answers. Then, share how you would handle this situation. Keep in mind that "cheating" has cultural connotations.

10B
Activity!
ASSESSMENT

Name: _____

Math word problems can be especially challenging for ELs who are more likely stumbling over the words than the math concepts. However, all math problems solved in the 'real world' are simply shorthand word problems. *Can she afford it? How many will it serve? How long will it take?* All are real situations using math to tell stories. See if you can find an 'ah-ha!' moment here by reverse-engineering a word problem by first turning a regular math problem into a word problem.

Find the mean, median, and mode for these numbers:

154
288
201
154
243
98
197

What if you took these numbers and turned them into a story? For instance, these numbers could represent the number of people waiting in various lines at Disney World, or bowling scores. Now, write any math problem, and then provide the 'story' details to bring it to life.

Write your math problem: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Now, write the story behind these numbers:

Teachers often forget to read over word problems looking for problem areas. Circle the problem areas below. Discuss why these could present problems for ELs.

Troop 204 was holding a fundraiser ...
Karin wanted to play a game of 8-ball ...
Dave estimated it would take 2 hours to walk ...
Highway 44 is a busy road for tourists ...

Discuss why and how reverse-engineering can help them feel more comfortable with word problems. Discuss how teachers can and should screen word problems for language issues.

Review these resources:

Assessment Accommodations

WIDA Accessibility and Accommodations

www.esolinhighered.org