

PRELIMINARY VERSION

Handbook of English Language Learning Assessment in the Classroom for Cuban Teachers in General Education

Language Center at the University of Informatics
Sciences on behalf of the Higher Education
Academic Committee

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Contents



I. Introduction

A. Purpose of the Handbook

Welcome to the *Handbook of English Language Learning Assessment in the Classroom for Cuban Teachers in General*, a valuable resource designed for Cuban English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers that seeks to serve as a practical guide. Focusing on the unique context of general education in Cuba, this handbook aims to empower teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to implement successful language assessment practices, promoting a critical reflection on the importance of internal assessment and its alignment with the external assessment which is being carried out by the Higher Education Ministry.

In the field of EFL teaching, assessment has traditionally been a focus of external outcomes, such as certifications and standardized tests. However, it is crucial to recognize that internal assessment, which takes place in the classroom, plays a critical role in preparing students for these external assessments. This handbook aims to provide a comprehensive view on how internal assessment should be aligned with external assessment, ensuring that the two complement each other and offer a single approach from General Education to Higher Education Systems in Cuba.

In the educational context, learners should be given the opportunity to step out of their comfort zone and show their progress in language use. The anonymous metaphor: “A turtle makes progress when it sticks its neck out”, illustrates this idea perfectly well, and that is what we must look for in the classroom, that minimum opportunity for progress. Internal assessment should be designed in a way that allows students to demonstrate their learning and language skills, thus paving the way for successful assessment.

B. Importance of Assessment in Language Learning

Assessment plays a crucial role in language learning. It helps teachers understand students' strengths and areas for improvement, guiding instruction and ensuring that learning objectives are met. According to Westbrook (2023), when we teach students something, we hope that they learn it, but what we teach is not always what they know, so we use assessment to help us and the students find out how well they have learned what we have taught. As teachers, we might decide to revise our teaching based on the results of the test, or the performance may be awarded a grade to measure students' progress.

Through effective assessment, teachers can provide targeted feedback, adapt teaching strategies, and support students' progress in acquiring English language skills. Therefore, a systemic approach to internal assessment is fundamental to creating a cohesive and effective educational environment. This approach considers assessment not as an isolated process but as an integral part of the education system, integrating other components such as curriculum design, pedagogical methods, and teacher professional development. Key aspects of this approach are presented below:

I. STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

Curriculum alignment is fundamental to ensure that internal assessments are aligned with established learning objectives. This implies that both internal and external assessments must be based on clear and well-defined standards. By setting clear objectives based on these standards, teachers can design activities and assessments that not only meet curriculum requirements, but also prepare students for external testing. A clear connection between teaching and assessment will not only facilitate learning, but also student motivation (McTighe & Wiggins, 2015).

II. FORMATIVE VS. SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

A systemic approach also involves recognizing the importance of both types of assessment: formative and summative. Internal assessment should include both. Formative assessments allow teachers to monitor student progress throughout the learning process, providing continuous feedback that can also be used to adjust instruction. Formative assessments inform teachers about their students' progress but also empower students by making them aware of their own learning (Black & Wiliam, 2015). On the other hand, summative assessments, which are often more similar to external assessments, allow for the measurement of cumulative learning at the end of a given period. Both types of assessments should be consistent and reflect the same standards and objectives.

III. TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A systemic approach also requires that teachers be trained and supported in their practice. Ongoing professional development is essential for teachers to implement effective internal evaluation strategies. Professional development should be an ongoing process that allows teachers to reflect on their practice and adapt to the changing needs of their students as stated by many notable figures who have contributed significantly to the field of teacher professional development (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Fuentealba & Russell, 2022; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Penuel & Gallagher, 2017; Richards, 2019; Timperley, 2011).

IV. COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS

Collaboration among teachers is a key component of a systemic approach. By working together, teachers can share strategies, resources, and experiences that enrich educational practice. Various research articles and papers focus on the importance of collaborative learning among teachers to maximize the impact of their teaching on student learning. Researchers like Helen Timperley (2008), Richard DuFour (2006, 2014), David H. Jonassen (2004), Gail E. Tompkins (2009) have provided valuable insights into

how collaborative practices can enhance teaching effectiveness and ultimately benefit student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; DuFour, 2006; 2014; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016; Timperley *et al*, 2007; Timperley, 2011).

V. USE OF THE TARGET LANGUAGE USE DOMAIN

The Target Language Use (TLU) domain, a concept coined and introduced by the linguist and educator Michael Canale in the context of language assessment and proficiency, refers to the specific context in which students are expected to use the target language. This concept is fundamental in language teaching and assessment, as it helps define the linguistic and communicative skills that students must develop to perform effectively in real-life situations.

C. A Unified Approach in Linking Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Effective education is based on the interconnection of several key components: teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback. These components are fundamental to the educational process. Besides, they are interconnected in a way that can enhance students' language proficiency and personal development.

Teaching:

Teaching is the starting point in the educational process. Effective teaching must be intentional and designed to engage students in their own learning process. This involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also the creation of an environment that fosters curiosity and critical thinking.

Learning:

Learning is not a passive event; it is an active process where students construct their own knowledge. Students learn best when they are engaged in those activities that allow them to apply what they have learned in real-world contexts. Teachers should therefore design learning experiences that are relevant and meaningful.

Assessment:

Assessment is a crucial tool for measuring learning progress. It should be both formative and summative, providing administration, families, teachers, and students with valuable information about the students' performance and those areas which need to be improved. A well-designed assessment will also guide future teaching.

Feedback:

Effective feedback is essential to closing that loop between teaching, learning, and assessment. Several researchers assert that effective feedback is a collaborative process between teachers and students and that it should be specific, constructive, and timely for it to be truly useful. When students receive clear and applicable feedback, they can reflect on their performance and make necessary adjustments for improvement (Brown, 2004; Cameron, 2001; Nicole & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Richards, 2015; Wiggins, 2012).

According to Wiggins (2012), interactive and ongoing communication about assessment results can lead to improved teaching strategies, and therefore better student outcomes.

Integration of Components: A Holistic Approach

The key to effective education lies in the integration of these components. This holistic approach allows teachers to tailor their strategies according to individual student needs, thereby promoting deeper and more meaningful learning. This dynamic relationship between teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback is fundamental to creating an effective educational environment and ultimately contributes to improved educational outcomes promoting continuous growth for both learners and teachers alike.

II. Foundations of the Language Assessment Process

A. Theoretical Frameworks

These frameworks provide a basis for understanding the complexities of language use and guide the development of assessment tools that reflect real-world language use.

Effective language assessment is rooted in theoretical frameworks that recognize the dynamic and contextual nature of language use. By integrating principles from communicative language theory, constructivism, task-based assessment and sociocultural perspectives, EFL teachers can develop assessment tools that not only measure proficiency but also promote authentic language use.

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) is a significant theoretical framework in language assessment. It serves as a guideline for developing language curricula, assessments, and teaching materials, making it a vital tool for teachers.

Key Features of the CEFR

Descriptive scales: It outlines six levels of language proficiency ranging from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). Each level is characterized by specific descriptors that detail what learners can do with the language in terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This clear delineation helps teachers set realistic learning goals and expectations for the students.

Can-do statements: One of the most practical aspects of the CEFR is the use of “can-do” statements, which describe what learners are capable of doing at each proficiency level. These statements can guide teachers in designing assessments that are aligned with learners’ abilities and help students self-assess their progress (see **Appendix 1**).

Flexibility and adaptability: The CEFR is designed to be adaptable to various educational contexts and can be used to assess learners in formal and informal settings. This flexibility allows teachers to tailor assessments to meet the specific needs of their students while maintaining a standardized framework.

When students understand the CEFR levels and can see their progress through “can-do” statements, they may feel more motivated to engage with the learning process.

B. Alignment with Curriculum Standards

Effective assessment aligns with curriculum standards and learning objectives. By aligning assessments with these standards, teachers can ensure that students are meeting the expected outcomes of their language education. This alignment also provides a clear roadmap for both instruction and assessment.

Constructive Alignment in the Classroom

Constructive alignment is an educational framework that ensures the coherent relationship or alignment between learning objectives (clearly defined goals that specify what students should know or be able to do by the end of a lesson or course), instructional activities (designed to engage students in the learning process providing opportunities for formative and summative assessment), and assessment tasks (designed to measure whether students have achieved specific learning objectives, providing feedback on their understanding and skills). Constructive alignment emphasizes that all components of a course should work together to support student learning.

The Link Between the Three Elements

Constructive alignment ensures that all three elements —objectives, instructional activities, and assessment tasks— are aligned. When they are well-aligned, students know what is expected of them (objectives), engage in relevant activities that promote learning (instructional activities), and are assessed in ways that accurately reflect their understanding and skills (assessment tasks).

The relationship is cyclical. If assessments reveal that students are not meeting the objectives, teachers can adjust their instructional activities accordingly. Conversely, if certain instructional activities or methods are particularly effective, they might inform future objectives or assessments.

This approach also promotes student-centered learning by encouraging active participation. When students see a clear connection between what they are learning, how they are learning it, and how they will be assessed, they are more likely to engage deeply with the material.

In summary, constructive alignment creates a cohesive educational experience by ensuring that learning objectives inform instructional strategies and that both of these elements connect seamlessly to assessments. By applying constructive alignment, teachers can create a cohesive learning experience where objectives guide teaching methods, and assessments accurately reflect student understanding.

Below you can find some examples that illustrate how these three elements described earlier are interconnected in a classroom context:

Example 1: Vocabulary Acquisition (for a Pre-A1 level)

- Learning objective: Students will be able to identify basic vocabulary related to everyday objects (e.g., pen, book, chair).

- Instructional strategy: Use flashcards with pictures and words. Engage students in a matching game where they match pictures to the correct words. Incorporate songs or chants that include the vocabulary.
- Assessment task: Conduct a simple oral quiz where students must point to the correct object when you say the word or have them draw a picture of their favorite object from the vocabulary list and label it. Depending on the number of students and the conditions of the classroom, each corner of the classroom could be considered a room of the house. Then, students will go to the corner corresponding to the selected flashcard.

Example 2: Simple Sentence Structure (for an A1 level)

- Learning objective: Students will be able to write simple sentences using the structure “There is a/an and There are...” (e.g., There is a coffee table in the living room).
- Instructional strategy: Introduce sentence structure through visual aids and repetition. Use a picture with illustrations of different rooms in a house, emphasizing the sentence structure. Have students repeat after you.
- Assessment task: Ask students to show pictures of the rooms in their houses or desired houses with different objects. Ask them to describe their pictures and create sentences using the structure “There is or there are” to share them with the class or write them on the board.

Example 3: Basic Listening Comprehension (for an A1 level)

- Learning objective: Students will be able to understand and respond to simple questions about familiar topics (e. g., colors, numbers).
- Instructional strategy: Play a listening game where you ask questions like “What color is the ball?” or “How many pencils are there on the desk?”. Use real objects or pictures to make it interactive.
- Assessment task: Conduct a simple question-and-answer session where you ask each student a question related to the lesson, and they must respond verbally. For example, play a memory game where you show them some colored objects for a moment, then somehow cover them or hide them behind something so that they cannot see them, and then ask: “What color is the...?”.

Example 4: Expressing Likes and Dislikes (for an A2 level)

- Learning objective: Students will be able *to express likes and dislikes* using the phrases “I like” and “I don’t like”.
- Instructional strategy: Use pictures of various foods, animals, or activities. Model the phrases by expressing your own likes and dislikes with enthusiasm. Encourage students to do the same with their classmates in pairs.
- Assessment task: Create a “like/dislike” chart where students can place stickers next to items they like or dislike. They can then share their preferences with the class using complete sentences.

All these examples demonstrate how constructive alignment can effectively support learning by ensuring that learning objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment tasks are closely connected. This approach enhances student engagement and facilitates language acquisition in a fun and interactive manner.

C. The Curriculum Design Process

This is an example of constructive alignment with curriculum standards. The Curriculum Design Process (Westbrook, 2019; 2023) is a critical framework that guides teachers in creating effective learning experiences. It serves as a roadmap that links learning outcomes or a needs analysis to teaching, learning, assessment, and feedback, ensuring that all components work harmoniously to facilitate student success.



The Curriculum Design Process

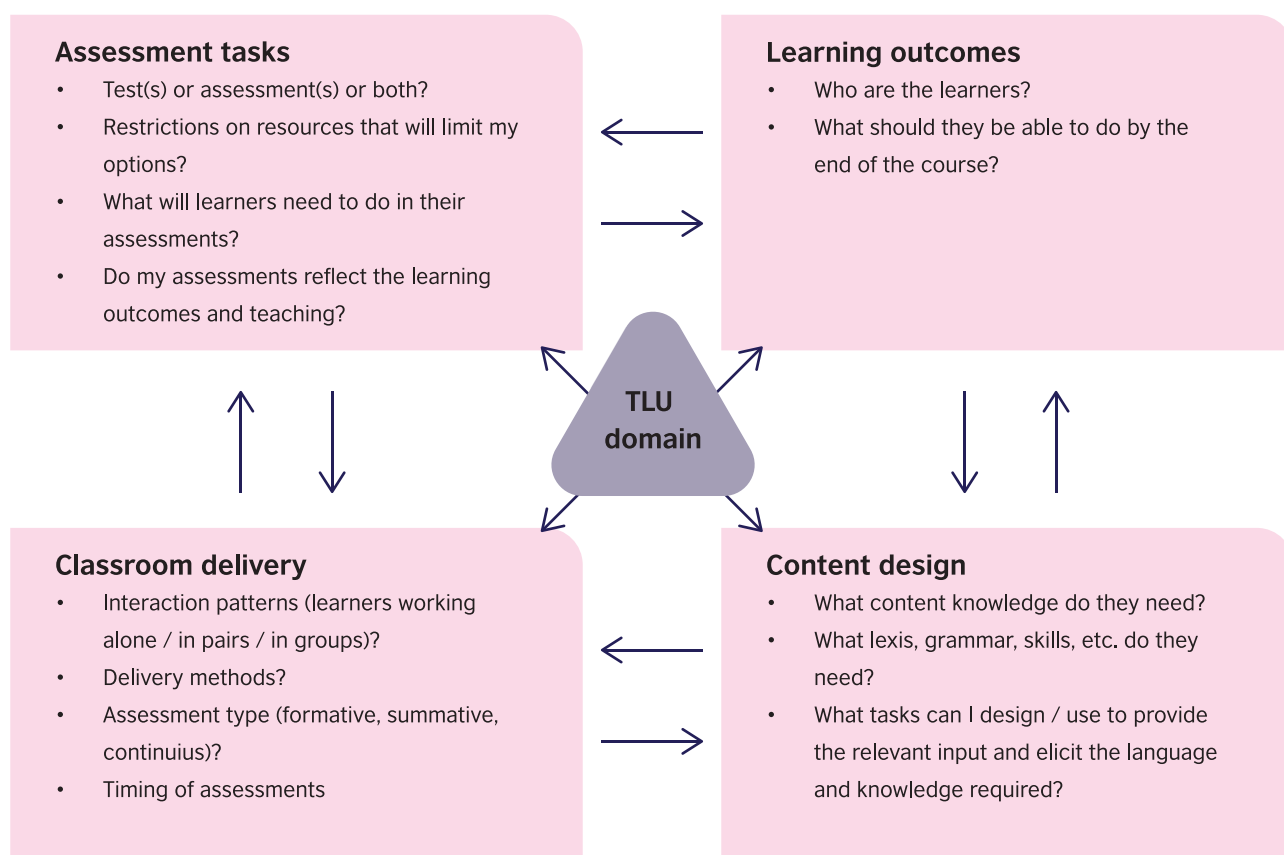


Figure 1. The Curriculum Design Process.

Source: Westbrook, 2023.

Let's explore the essential steps involved in the curriculum design process and highlight how each step contributes to the overall educational experience.

The learning outcomes

As Carolyn Westbrook stated in a workshop given at the international conference UCIENCIA 2023, at the top of the Curriculum Design Process, we have the learning outcome. We think about it right from the beginning when we start planning a course, a curriculum, or some sort of program, we need to think about our learners and what they need, so these questions are key: Who are they? What will they be able to do at the end of the course? The can-do statements from the framework of reference shared among professors and students could guide the way out through this stage.

Then, arrows are pointing in both directions considering the next step could be assessment tasks and following that direction through the classroom delivery, the content design, and then back to the learning outcome stage. However, having internal assessment as the focus of this handbook it is recommended to follow the clockwise direction of arrows.

The content design

After planning the learning outcomes, thinking about the content design provides a clear picture of what is meant to be taught. It is crucial to identify the content knowledge that students need, i. e., skills, grammar, vocabulary, etc. Next, designing the tasks is closely connected to the TLU domain considering relevant input needs to be provided to elicit the knowledge and language required.

The fact that input is relevant to the teacher does not guarantee it would be the same for students. Then, be aware of the cultural references, local influences, and previous learning experiences, among other less evident factors that could make a difference when presenting an input to students.

Teaching students the content knowledge they need according to their context and designing their engagement in real or simulated tasks which are thought, keeping in mind the way delivery and assessments are going to be carried out plays the way to meaningful and successful learning experiences.

Classroom delivery

Next, we can think about how this content is going to be delivered, what interaction patterns to use, whether students are going to work alone, in pairs, or in groups, and how the content is going to be delivered: face-to-face or online, will there be a flipped learning environment, etc., and within that, we need to think about what assessment types we are going to have at this point.

We do not want to put students under pressure, so we need to think about the time, i. e., how it will be split out. Practicality is a key quality of test usefulness and a principle of effective assessment; tasks should be realistic and adaptable to the conditions available in the classroom.

The setting of the classroom delivery must fall within the negotiation of what is possible to accomplish with the concrete existing conditions, considering what was stated in the learning outcomes, the designed tasks, and the assessments we aim at.

Assessment tasks

It is after this that we can think about the assessment task itself. Are there any resources that will limit our options? For example, we may not have time to mark lots of different continuous assessments. So, the question is: what are the limits that will stop us from assessing the students the way we want? And then, crucially, what will learners need to do in their assessment, and most importantly still, will learning reflect the outcomes and the teaching? So we go back to the beginning, the learning outcomes.

As Carolyn Westbrook explained, this cycle could go anti-clock, i. e., reverse engineering the content. This handbook is intended to highlight that starting with the assessment tasks as the main compass to plan the learning process is risky, in the sense of training students to pass the test or assessment task, rather than being proficient in the language they are learning.

The Target Language Use domain

In the center of the diagram, there is the TLU domain with arrows that indicate the connection with all the other elements of the diagram. It indicates how the language is used in the real-life domain, and as argued by Westbrook (UCIENCIA, 2023), we must start thinking about how the domain fits into our content, what content we can replicate in the classroom, and how.

Incorporating the TLU domain into internal assessment is crucial to ensure that students develop relevant and applicable linguistic skills for their future needs. By centering assessment on authentic and meaningful contexts, more effective and motivating learning is fostered, preparing students to successfully face the communicative challenges of the real world.

According to Canale and Swain (1980), students should be assessed not only on their knowledge of the language but on their ability to use it effectively in real-world situations. This implies that assessments should reflect authentic and relevant contexts.

Below is an argument regarding the necessity of considering the TLU domain in internal assessment, supported by various specialists in the field of language teaching.

Contextual relevance

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), assessment should be relevant to the context in which the language will be used. By defining the TLU domain, teachers can design assessments that reflect authentic and practical situations that students will face in their daily or professional lives. This increases students' motivation and engagement, as they see the real utility of what they are learning.

Development of specific competencies

The situated learning theory, advocated by specialists such as Lave and Wenger (1991), theorizes that learning is more effective when linked to specific contexts. By incorporating the TLU domain into the assessment, students can develop specific linguistic competencies necessary for effective interaction in those contexts. For example, students at the secondary school level will need different skills than students at the university level, who are supposed to pass an external examination before their graduation.

Authentic assessment

Huot (2002) argues that assessment should be authentic and reflect real-world tasks. Using the TLU domain allows teachers to create assessment tasks that simulate real communication situations, which is essential for measuring not only language knowledge but also the ability to apply it in practical contexts. This can include activities such as dialogues and simulated conversations.

Adaptation to diverse needs

By considering the TLU domain, teachers can adapt assessments to meet the diverse needs of students. Groups of students are heterogeneous according to their proficiency in language, favorite learning styles, family or community support, willingness to learn, and priorities to study in the classrooms. However, they all come to the same course, and it is the task of the teacher to fit into this diversity with accomplished learning outcomes by the end of the school year. Therefore, having a single assessment option should not be the right solution to such a distinct and unique variety of needs.

Each assessment task should be thought of in a way that is doable for slow, average, and talented learners achieving similar levels of engagement. Designing the assessment task as an opportunity to promote learning based on the contribution of the students' strengths rather than pointing at their weaknesses could make a difference.

Constructive feedback

Focusing on the TLU domain also allows for more constructive and specific feedback for students. According to Brown (2004), effective feedback should align with the expectations of the context in which the language will be used. This means that students can receive guidance on how to improve not only their grammar and vocabulary but also their appropriateness and fluency in specific situations.

D. The Comprehensive Learning System

O'Sullivan's Comprehensive Learning System (CLS) is often represented as a triangular model that emphasizes the interconnectedness of various components essential for effective learning and educational outcomes.

This is an example of constructive alignment with curriculum standards:



The Comprehensive Learning System (O’Sullivan, 2020)

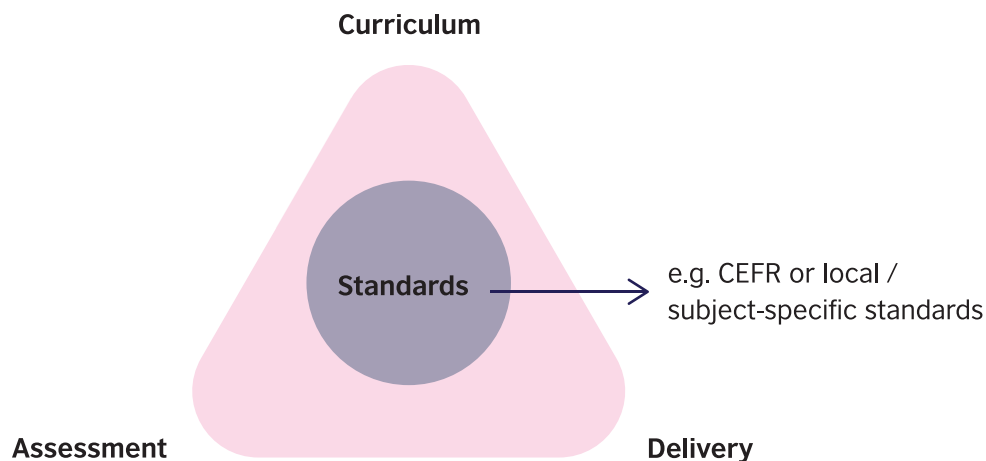


Figure 2. The Comprehensive Learning System.
Source: O’Sullivan, 2020, in Westbrook, 2023.

The triangle that conforms the Comprehensive Learning System has to link the core elements that make up the three parts of any learning system, which could even refer to an individual language lesson.

This visual tool not only facilitates the understanding of how these elements interact but also invites teachers to reflect on their pedagogical practice to seek a more effective integration of these components in the classroom, therefore creating a more cohesive learning environment.

The three components of the triangle —Curriculum, Assessment, and Delivery— are interconnected for the learning system to work and contribute as a whole to effective teaching and learning, as Sullivan argues. A well-designed curriculum informs both assessment practices and instructional delivery, while assessment results provide feedback that can guide adjustments in both curriculum and delivery methods. This interconnectedness ensures a cohesive educational experience that supports student learning and achievement. Here’s how they are linked:

1. Curriculum: This refers to the content and skills students are expected to learn. It encompasses the knowledge, concepts, and competencies outlined in educational standards. The curriculum serves as the foundation for what is taught in the classroom and guides teachers and students in the learning process.

- » Link to Assessment: The curriculum defines the learning objectives and outcomes that assessments are designed to measure. Effective assessment strategies should align with the curriculum to ensure that they accurately evaluate whether students have achieved the intended learning goals. So, whatever skill your program emphasizes, assessments should include tasks that require students to demonstrate those skills.
 - » Link to Delivery: The curriculum also informs the instructional strategies and methods used in delivery. Teachers must understand the curriculum content to effectively plan lessons and choose appropriate teaching techniques. The way the curriculum is delivered can influence student engagement and understanding.
2. Assessment: This involves the methods used to evaluate student learning, including formative assessments (ongoing assessments during the learning process), and summative assessments (evaluations at the end of an instructional period). Assessments provide feedback on student performance and inform instructional decisions.
- » Link to Curriculum: As mentioned, assessments are designed based on the curriculum. They should measure how well students have grasped the content and skills outlined in the curriculum. When assessments are aligned with curricular objectives, they can accurately reflect student learning.
 - » Link to Delivery: Assessment results can inform how instruction is delivered. If assessments reveal that students are struggling with certain concepts, teachers may need to adjust their delivery methods, provide additional support, or revisit specific topics in the curriculum. This creates a feedback loop where assessment informs instructional practices.
3. Delivery: This refers to the methods and strategies used by teachers to teach the curriculum. It includes various instructional approaches, classroom management techniques, and the use of technology and resources.
- » Link to Curriculum: The delivery of instruction must be aligned with the curriculum to ensure that all necessary content is covered effectively. Teachers need to understand the curriculum deeply to select appropriate delivery methods that engage students and promote understanding.
 - » Link to Assessment: The effectiveness of delivery can be evaluated through assessments. If students perform well in assessments, it may indicate that the delivery methods were effective. Conversely, poor assessment results may suggest a need for changes in delivery strategies or additional support for students.

The standards

The standards are positioned at the heart of the triangle; they act as the foundation upon which all other elements of the learning system are built. Expert Carolyn Westbrook emphasizes the importance of these standards in shaping educational experiences and outcomes (UCIENCIA, 2023). Their position in the center of the triangle indicates that they are the guiding principles for all academic activities within the system. Everything within the triangle —curriculum design, assessment methods, instructional strategies— should align with these established standards. This alignment ensures consistency and coherence in teaching and learning processes.

Standards such as those outlined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) can be language-related. These standards provide benchmarks for language proficiency, outlining what learners should be able to do at different levels of language acquisition. They help educators create clear learning objectives and assess student progress effectively. By using a recognized framework like the CEFR, educators can ensure that their language instruction is relevant, rigorous, and comparable across different contexts.

In addition to language-related standards, there are subject-specific standards that apply to various academic disciplines. These standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire in subjects such as mathematics, science, etc. By integrating subject-specific standards into the learning system, educators can create a more holistic educational experience that addresses the diverse needs of learners across different subjects.

All elements within the triangle should reflect these standards, which encourages reflective practice among educators. Teachers are prompted to evaluate their instructional methods and materials to ensure they align with the established standards. This reflection fosters continuous improvement in teaching practices and enhances student learning outcomes.

The standards also play a crucial role in assessment practices. Assessments should be designed to measure student progress toward meeting these standards. This alignment ensures that assessments are valid and reliable indicators of student learning, providing meaningful data that can inform instructional decisions. Standards serve to promote diversity and inclusion within the learning environment.

III. Types of Assessment

Assessment as part of classroom activities is a fundamental process required to promote learning and ultimately achievement.

William (2011) emphasizes the point that assessment should be focused on enhancing learning rather than merely testing knowledge. Through various forms of assessment, teachers can gain insights into student understanding and identify areas where misconceptions may exist.

Language assessment can take many forms, each serving a different purpose in the learning process. This handbook will explore various types of assessments, including formative and summative assessments, diagnostic assessments, and performance-based assessments. Understanding these types will enable teachers to select the most appropriate assessment methods for their classrooms at specific moments of the process.

A. Formative vs. Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment (Assessment for Learning)

- The purpose of Formative Assessment is to provide students with feedback on how they are doing. It is an ongoing process that aims to help students take the necessary actions to improve their performance. Some authors consider there is no teaching without formative assessment saying it is hard to separate them; hence the term “Assessment for Learning” (William, 2015).
- Formative assessment monitors students’ learning; that is why, the feedback students receive is considered to be the key component of this kind of assessment. Feedback is intended to help students identify weaknesses and build on strengths to improve the quality of their next piece of assessment. This is the most important aspect, rather than giving them a grade or mark.
- This kind of assessment can include quizzes, peer reviews, and reflective journals. William (2015) states, “Formative assessment is about using evidence of student learning to inform teaching” as it will help you to further plan opportunities for learners to use the feedback provided during assessment.

The following five features of assessment for learning are taken from *Assessment Reform Group* (1990), in Harsch (2017, p. 2):

1. Effective feedback for learners.
2. Active engagement of learners.
3. Adjust teaching to assessment outcomes.
4. Acknowledge the influence of assessment on learners’ motivation and self-esteem.
5. Acknowledge learners’ need to assess themselves and understand how they can develop further.

Summative Assessment (Assessment of Learning)

- The purpose of summative assessment is to gather evidence to make a judgment about a student’s level of performance; against the specified learning objectives; that is, it is an overall evaluation.
- Students are usually assessed at the end of a period of learning, such as the end of a module, mid-semester, or end of semester. They are awarded with results typically as marks or grades to represent a particular level of achievement.

B. Diagnostic Assessment

- Diagnostic assessment identifies students' existing knowledge and skills before instruction begins. It helps teachers tailor their lessons to meet students' needs and address any gaps in understanding.
- Diagnostic tools can include pre-tests, surveys, and informal assessments.

C. Performance-Based Assessment

- Performance-based assessment evaluates students' ability to use language in real-life tasks. This type of assessment focuses on practical language skills, such as speaking, writing, and listening. Examples include oral presentations, written essays, and interactive dialogues.

D. Peer and Self-Assessment

- Peer assessment is defined as “an arrangement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality of success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status” (Topping, 1998).
- Peer assessment involves students in the evaluation process as it allows students to evaluate each other's work, fostering collaboration and critical thinking.
- “Self-assessment is where learners assess their language proficiency, rather than a teacher doing it” (British Council, n. d.).
- Self-assessment also involves students in the evaluation process by encouraging them to reflect on their own learning, setting goals, and identifying areas for improvement.

You can ask yourself these questions:

- » What fundamental purposes of assessment do I align myself with?
- » How well do I promote Assessment for Learning in my classes?
- » What is the quality of the feedback I provide to my students?
- » How effectively do I promote self-assessment and peer assessment?

Practical activities

Here are some practical activities to help you identify and understand the differences between formative and summative assessments. By engaging in these activities, you can enhance your assessment practices to better support student learning.

Activity 1: Case study scenarios

Here are two sample case studies focused on assessment in Pre-A1 level English classes. Each case study describes a different classroom scenario involving assessment. Identify whether the assessment described is formative or summative.

Case Study 1: Assessment with picture cards

Context

Ms. Smith teaches an English class for primary school students. The focus of the lesson is on vocabulary related to animals.

Assessment strategy

Ms. Smith uses picture cards featuring various animals. During the lesson, she shows each card and asks students to name the animal in English. At the end of the lesson, she conducts a quick “animal quiz” where she holds cards, and students raise their hands to answer.

Outcomes

Ms. Smith observes that most students can correctly identify common animals like “cat”, “dog”, and “elephant”. However, a few students struggle with less familiar animals like “kangaroo” and “giraffe”. She decides to provide additional practice with these specific words in the next lesson using songs and games to reinforce their learning.

Case Study 2: Peer assessment with group presentations

Context

Ms. Garcia teaches a class where students are learning about colors and shapes. To assess their understanding, she organizes a group project.

Assessment task

Students work in small groups to create a poster that includes drawings of different shapes in various colors. Each group presents their poster to the class, describing the shapes and colors they used. Classmates provide positive feedback and simple comments about each presentation.

Outcomes

During the presentations, students demonstrate their understanding of colors and shapes effectively. The peer feedback encourages them to use English phrases like “I like...” and “It is...” which enhances their speaking skills. Ms. García notes that this collaborative approach boosts students’ confidence and promotes language use in a fun way. She decides to implement more group activities in her curriculum.

Both case studies illustrate effective assessment strategies focusing on vocabulary, comprehension, and speaking skills while providing opportunities for both individual and peer assessments.

Case Study 3: The unit assessment

Context

At the end of a unit on “Daily Routines and Time”, Ms. Johnson plans to evaluate her students’ understanding and ability to use vocabulary and structures related to their daily activities. The assessment is designed to measure the students’ overall progress and proficiency at the A2 level.

Assessment strategy

Ms. Johnson explains that this assessment will help her understand what each student has learned over the past weeks. She emphasizes that it is not just a test but an opportunity for them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

The assessment consists of two parts: reading a text to answer some questions under time-constrained conditions and writing a brief paragraph for a post on a chat, to tell a distant friend about their daily routines in a new school, using the vocabulary and structures learned during the unit.

Assessment criteria

The rating scales that were developed to assess the A2 level.

Outcome

Ms. Johnson grades the tests. The results are recorded in the grade book as part of the student's overall performance for the course. This summative assessment allows Ms. Johnson to evaluate each student's progress.

About the three case studies previously presented, it is important to consider that the first two case studies illustrate effective assessment strategies focusing on vocabulary, comprehension, and speaking skills while providing opportunities for both individual and peer assessments. However, because no grade is assigned which counts towards the students' final grade, both are formative.

Feedback is most important, and providing students with formative feedback promotes their motivation and performance. Teachers can also identify areas needing improvement in order to inform their future lesson planning.

The third case study clearly illustrates a summative assessment scenario. It demonstrates how the assessment is structured to evaluate students' cumulative knowledge and skills acquired over a specific period, providing a measure of their learning outcomes at the end of the unit.

Activity 2: Create your own assessments

Create one example of a formative assessment and one example of a summative assessment for your specific subject. You should outline the purpose, format, and expected outcomes for both assessments.

Outcome

This activity allows you to apply your understanding of formative and summative assessments in a creative way.

Activity 3: Reflection

Read and answer the questions in the following prompts to later discuss them with any of your colleagues:

- How do you currently use formative assessments in your classroom?
- What challenges do you face when implementing summative assessments?
- How can you incorporate more formative assessments in your teaching practice?

Outcome

This reflective practice helps you connect your experiences with assessment types and consider improvements in their teaching strategies.

IV. Designing Assessment Tools

A. Developing Rubrics and Checklists

Rubrics and checklists provide clear criteria for evaluating student performance. They help ensure consistency and transparency in grading. The rubrics and checklists you create should be tailored to the specific assessment tasks. The descriptors in the CEFR and the CEFR CV can be a useful starting point to design rubrics, but rubrics, like the assessments themselves, should be trialed before being implemented to ensure that everyone using them understands what level of performance a given descriptor relates to.

B. Principles of Effective Assessment

Effective language assessment is grounded in key principles that ensure accuracy, fairness, and relevance. These principles include validity, reliability, and practicality. Validity ensures that assessments measure what they are intended to measure, while reliability ensures consistent results. Practicality ensures that assessments are feasible and manageable within the classroom context. In the glossary given as an **Appendix 2** of the handbook, you can find their meanings as well as those that have to do with the qualities of test usefulness: construct validity, reliability, authenticity, interactiveness, practicality, and impact.

C. Creating Effective Test Items

Designing effective test items is crucial for accurate assessment. This includes crafting clear instructions, selecting appropriate question formats, and avoiding ambiguity. (In **Appendix 3** you will find some of the recommendations given for creating multiple-choice questions, and short-answer questions in reading comprehension tests).

V. Implementing Assessments in the Classroom

The classroom is where traditionally most of the magic related to assessment takes place, and even when more Information and Communication Technology (ICT) mediated spaces are taking place, it also becomes more relevant to be aware of the subjective and almost imperceptible details around assessment in the classroom. Beyond teaching styles, theoretical assumptions, or mandatory regulations by the administration, there

should be a humanistic approach to the pedagogical performance of teachers. It is a distinctive feature of the Cuban pedagogy.

A. Planning and Scheduling Assessments

Proper planning and scheduling ensure that assessments are manageable and effective, and that they enhance learning rather than create undue stress. This section will offer strategies for integrating assessments into the curriculum, balancing different types of assessments, and scheduling them to minimize stress for both teachers and students.

Diverse assessment types

- **Formative assessments:** Incorporate regular, low-stake formative assessments (quizzes, exit tickets, peer reviews) throughout the learning process. These provide ongoing feedback and help identify areas needing improvement without the pressure of high-stake testing.
- **Summative assessments:** Schedule summative assessments (final exams, projects) at the end of units or terms. Ensure that students are aware of the assessment criteria and expectations well in advance.
- **Performance-based assessments:** Use presentations, group projects or portfolios that allow students to demonstrate their understanding in creative ways. These assessments can be integrated into regular classroom activities, reducing stress by making them part of the learning process.

Assessment calendar

- There should be a term-based assessment calendar that outlines all planned assessments. This should be shared with students and parents at the beginning of the term to set clear expectations.
- Assessment should be spread out to avoid overwhelming students.

Integration with curriculum

- **Align assessments with learning objectives.** Ensure that all assessments directly relate to the curriculum goals and learning objectives. This alignment helps students understand the purpose of each assessment and reduces anxiety about their relevance.
- **Use real-life contexts.** Design assessments that relate to real-life situations or students' interests. This makes assessments more engaging and meaningful.

Student involvement

- **Involve students in planning.** Allow them to have a say in how they will be assessed. This could include choosing project topics or formats for presentation. This involvement can increase motivation and ownership of their learning.

Self-assessment opportunities. Teach students self-assessment techniques, enabling them to reflect on their own progress. This can reduce anxiety as they become more aware of their strengths and areas for growth.

Feedback mechanisms

- Timely feedback. Provide timely and constructive feedback or assessments to help students understand their performance and how they can improve. Feedback should focus on specific skills or knowledge areas rather than general comments.
- Create opportunities for students to discuss feedback with teachers in one-on-one or small group settings. This dialogue can clarify misunderstandings and reinforce learning.

Stress management techniques

- Equip students with test-taking strategies such as time management, question analysis, and relaxation techniques to reduce anxiety during assessment.

Professional collaboration

- Work with other teachers to share best practices for assessment planning and scheduling. Collaborating can lead to innovative approaches that benefit all students across subjects.
- Professional development. Engage in professional development opportunities focused on assessment literacy and strategies for effective assessment planning.

As a whole, by thoughtfully planning and scheduling assessments, teachers can create a balanced approach that supports student learning while minimizing stress. This strategy also fosters a positive learning environment where students feel confident and prepared.

B. Adapting Assessments for Diverse Learners

In today's classrooms, teachers encounter learners with different ability levels, needs and challenges, unique strengths, and diverse learning styles. It is essential for teachers to learn how to adapt assessments to accommodate these differences for fostering an inclusive learning environment, ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to demonstrate their language proficiency. This section includes strategies for differentiating instruction and assessment tasks to support all students effectively.

Understanding diverse learners

- Identifying learning needs. Begin by assessing students' learning profiles, including their strengths, weaknesses, and preferred learning styles. You can use tools such as observation, surveys, and formative assessment to gather this information.
- Recognize and understand any potential barrier that may affect student performance; for example, learning disabilities or socio-economic factors.

Flexible assessment formats

- Varied assessment types. Offer multiple formats or assessments (e. g., written tests, oral presentations, projects) to allow students to demonstrate their understanding in ways that suit their strengths.
- Provide students with options for how they can complete an assessment. For example, they could choose between writing a postcard (letter), designing a poster, etc.

Adjusting content and expectations

- Design assignments that offer varying levels of complexity based on students' levels. This allows all students to engage with the same content while working at their appropriate challenge level.
- Break down assessment into smaller, manageable tasks with clear instructions and examples. Provide scaffolding, such as graphic organizers or prompts to help students organize their thoughts.

Collaborative assessments

- Encourage collaborative assessments where students work in groups. This not only allows for peer support but also enables students to learn from one another's strengths.
- Incorporate peer assessment opportunities where students can evaluate each other's work using clear rubrics.

Ongoing feedback and reflection

- Conduct regular check-ins with students during the assessment process to provide immediate feedback and guidance. This can help address misunderstandings.
- Encourage students to reflect on their own learning and assessment experiences. This can be done through journals or discussions where they consider what strategies worked for them and what they might do differently next time.

Professional development and collaboration

- Participate in professional development focused on differentiated instruction and assessment strategies. Learning from experts can provide valuable insights into effective practices.
- Work closely with specialists to develop tailored assessments that meet the needs of diverse learners.

Using technology

- Use digital tools to create interactive assessments that cater to different learning styles and provide engagement assessment options: self-assessment surveys, reflective journals, language portfolios, goal-setting exercises, peer evaluations, language learning apps, and online language proficiency tests.
- Students can complete self-assessment surveys or questionnaires that ask them to rate their language skills in various areas like speaking, listening, reading, and writing on a scale. They can also assess their confidence levels in using English in different contexts.
- Students can keep language journals where they record their language learning experiences, challenges, and achievements. They can periodically review their journals to reflect on their progress.
- Similar to journals, students can maintain language portfolios. These can include samples of their written work, recordings of spoken English, and reflections on

their language-learning journey. The Council of Europe uses Language Portfolios as part of its framework for the learning of European languages (Figure 3).

- Many online platforms offer free language proficiency tests that students can take periodically. These tests provide immediate feedback on their language skills and offer a snapshot of their proficiency level.

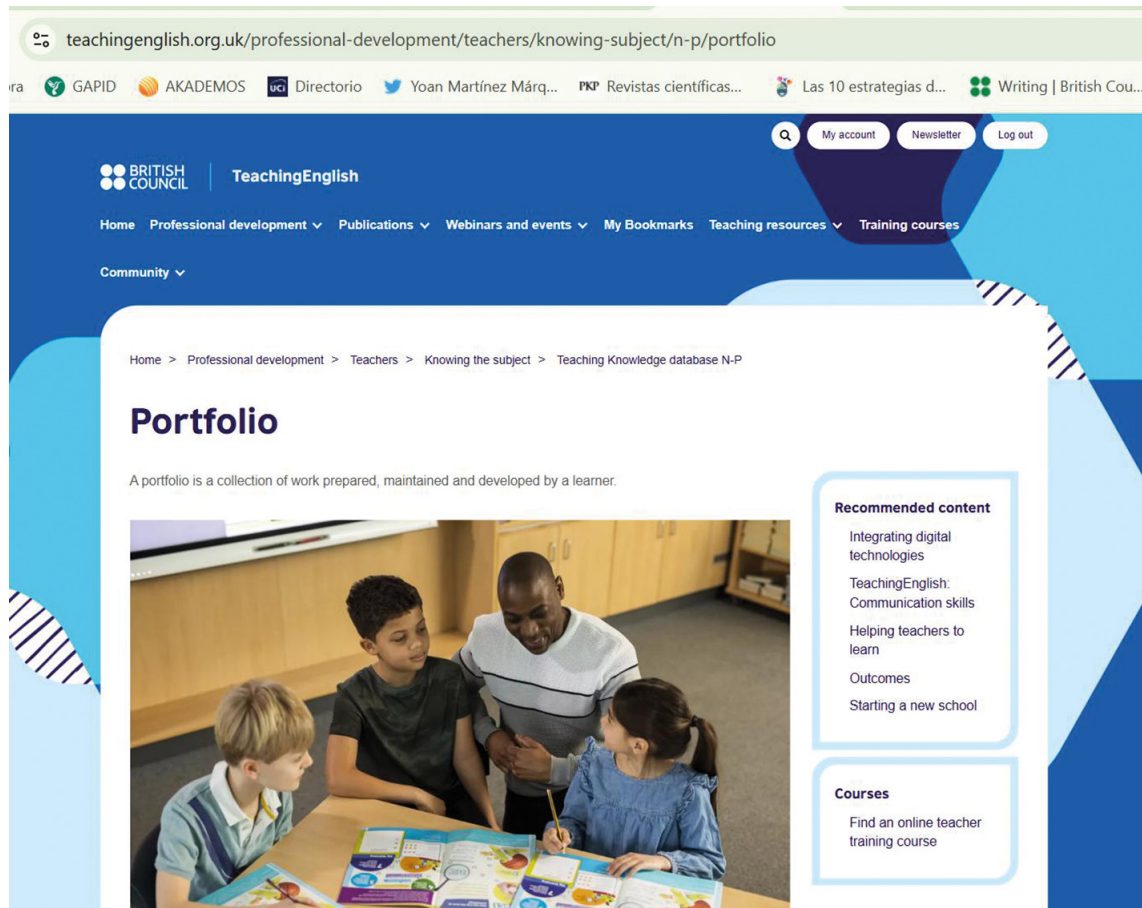


Figure 3. The European Language Portfolio.

Source: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/knowning-subject/n-p/portfolio>

- Language learning apps often include self-assessment quizzes and tests that students can take independently to measure their vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension (Figure 4).
- Some language learning apps and websites provide tools for recording and comparing spoken English to native speakers. Students can use these tools to assess their pronunciation and fluency.

By implementing these strategies for adapting classroom assessments, teachers can create a more equitable learning environment where all students can succeed. Differentiating instruction and assessment not only supports diverse learners but also enriches the overall classroom experience for everyone.

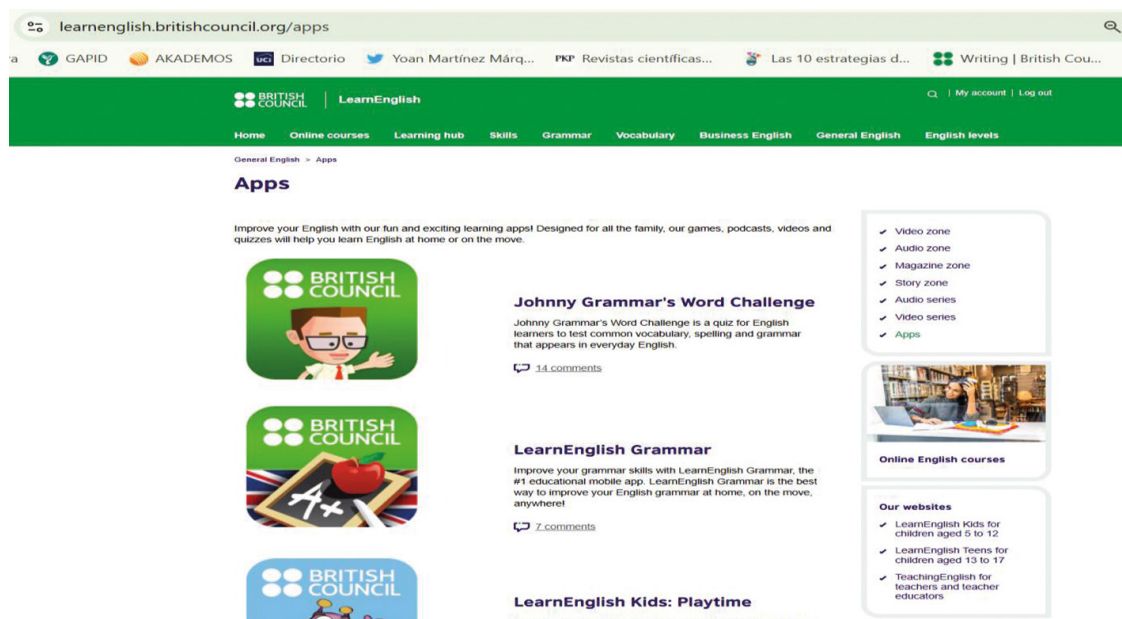


Figure 4. Examples of Language Learning Apps Teachers Could Promote with Their Students.

Source: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/known-subject/n-p/portfolio>

Under constraints regarding access to devices, ICT solutions, and network services in the classrooms, teachers must be tactful while including ICT-mediated assessment opportunities. However, when introduced properly to the current generation of students, fruitful dynamics could be activated for self-assessment and assessment for learning.

C. Practical Strategies for Classroom Assessments

Example 1: Incorporating real-world connections

Setting: A teacher designs assessments that relate to real-life situations or current events.

Intervention: The teacher creates a project that involves the community with a real-world challenge.

The relevance of this kind of activity helps students see the value in their learning and encourages deeper engagement. Working in a project not only enhances learning, but it also develops crucial skills such as collaboration and problem-solving.

Example 2: Implementing student self-assessment

Setting: A teacher introduces self-assessment checklists for speaking skills. Students reflect on their own performance.

Action Taken: The teacher analyzes the self-assessment data to identify common areas where students feel they lack confidence (e. g., pronunciation of plurals or intonation of questions). This feedback informs the next set of speaking activities designed to address those specific concerns.

Example 3: Addressing Diverse Learning Needs (a case study)

In a mixed-ability classroom, a teacher used diagnostic assessments at the start of the semester to identify varying levels of language proficiency among students.

Intervention: The teacher designed tiered assignments that allowed students to work at their level while still engaging with the same content. For example, while all students read the same text (a post on social media describing his/her favorite place at school) to answer some yes or no questions, advanced learners write a post describing their own favorite place, while beginners look at two images to identify the place that is being described.

Outcome: This approach fosters a more inclusive environment where all students feel successful and motivated to improve.

Questions for reflection

Here are some questions that can help you regularly reflect on your assessment in classroom practices:

- » How do your planning and scheduling of assessments match student's reality?
- » How do you evidence the adaptation of assessments for diverse learners?
- » What alternative(s) did you implement to mitigate constraints in the classroom?
- » What other practical examples and strategies could you elaborate on?
- » Considering the example above, what are the risks of providing differentiated assessments?

VI. Providing Feedback

A. Types of Feedback

Feedback is a powerful tool for guiding student learning. This section explores different types of feedback, including formative, summative, verbal, and written feedback. Teachers will learn how to provide feedback that is specific, constructive, and motivating.

According to Carlyn Westbrook (2023) and the position shared by participants of her workshops on Linking Teaching, Learning, Assessment, and Feedback in the classroom, the most common kind of feedback is the traditional one, the sandwich approach (Figure 5). Many teachers follow this approach by telling the students something they have done well, something they have done badly, and something they have done well again. Though it leaves a positive impression on students it does not serve the purpose of clearly showing the way for learning, it is mainly a justification of granting a grade.

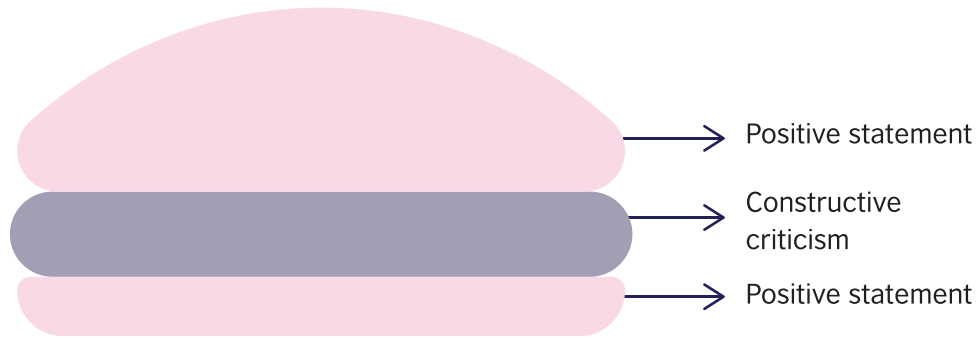


Figure 5. Sandwich Type of Feedback.

Source: Westbrook, 2023.

Pursuing a type of feedback that provides a more comprehensive approach to what needs to be done to promote learning, Hill and McNamara, 2012, in Westbrook, 2023, went through five types of feedback; they divided it into: Person-referenced or Task-referenced —Confirmatory, Explanatory, and Corrective— (Figure 6).

- Person-referenced: It aims at the person's ego and takes the form of reward or punishment, approval or disapproval; for example, with a comment such as "Well done!".
- Task-referenced: It relates to performance in terms of the task requirements or standards.
 - » Confirmatory: It validates that the task has been completed correctly, i. e., *Task completed correctly.*
 - » Explanatory: It also explains what has been done well, i. e., *I like the way you compared X and Y and then explained why you preferred Y.*
 - » Corrective: It is used to highlight the gap between the students' performance now and what the expected performance would be, i. e., *You had a clear structure and introduction in the presentation and the content was well developed but you finished abruptly.*

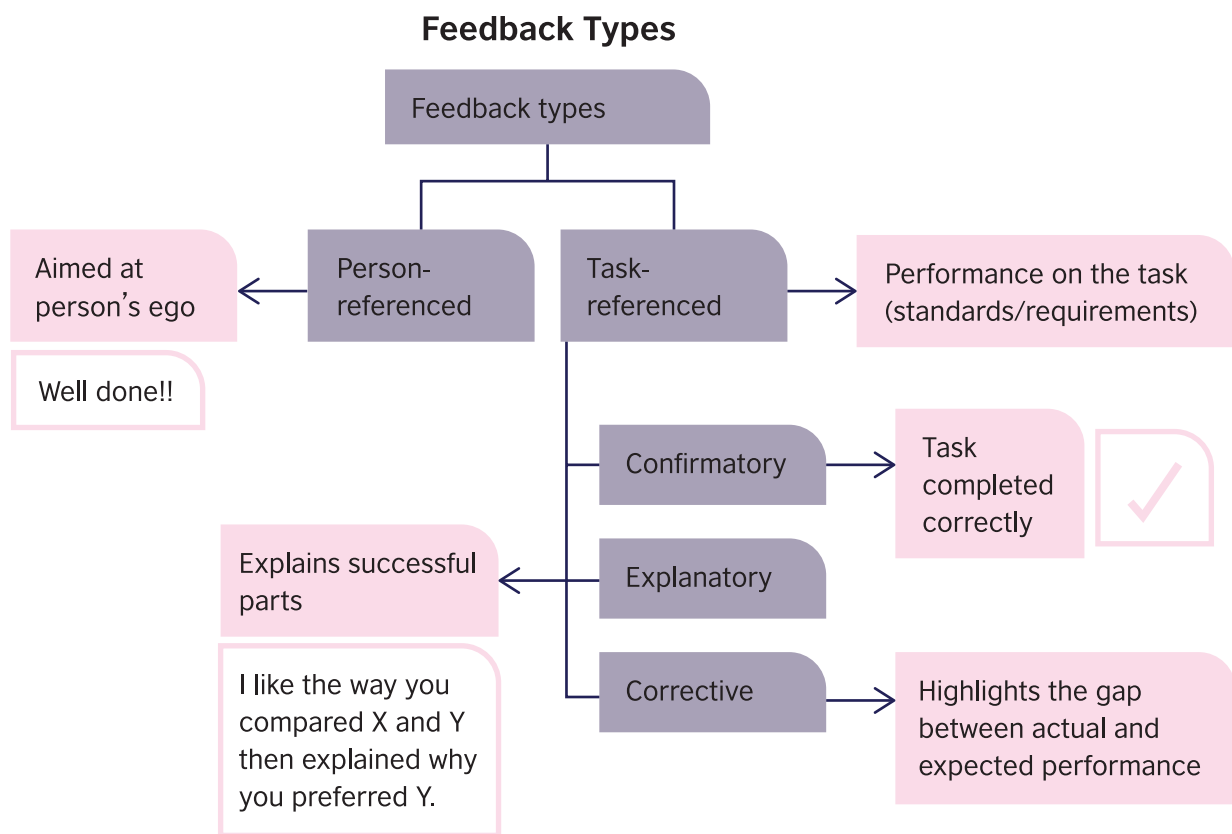


Figure 6. Types of Feedback.

Source: Westbrook (2023), based on Hill and McNamara (2012).

In summary, the most useful types of feedback considering its contribution to learning are the explanatory and corrective ones. It is always positive to have a person reference approach based on the humanistic approach of Cuban pedagogy. However, it is not enough to promote assessment for learning. It is important to help students to move forward through feedback, it should show what was done well, what was done badly and most importantly how to improve performance, based on the evidence obtained with the assessment task.

B. Strategies for Constructive Feedback

Effective feedback goes beyond pointing out errors. It involves providing actionable suggestions for improvement and encouraging students to reflect on their performance. Teachers will find strategies for delivering constructive feedback that supports student growth.



Figure 7. Feedback and Feedforward Approach.

Source: Westbrook, 2023.

Teachers committed with the improvement of their students are going to find this feedforward approach presented in the workshops as a great tool to support learning and personal growth. In Figure 7 there is an example about how feedback tends to describe what the student did while the feedforward shows the way to improvement. It is necessary to highlight that we are not refusing the impact of feedback, but thinking of learning is not enough to move on.

C. Engaging Students in the Feedback Process

Engaging students in the feedback process helps them take ownership of their learning. This section offers techniques for involving students in self-assessment and peer assessment activities. By actively participating, students can better understand their progress and areas for improvement.

Both peer and self-assessment are an essential aspect of formative assessment.

1. *Self-assessment techniques:*

Checklists: Create checklists based on can-do statements or learning objectives. After completing an assignment, students can use these checklists to evaluate their performance.

Example: A checklist for a speaking activity might include items like:

- Interaction
 - » Understanding and answering questions.
 - » Interacting with the interlocutor.
 - » Handling social exchanges.
- Coherence and fluency
 - » Producing prepackaged utterances or lists of points.
 - » Showing a logical sequence or connection among ideas.
 - » Linking words or groups of words with connectors.
- Vocabulary (Range and appropriateness)
 - » Showing a range of vocabulary or memorized phrases.
 - » Expressing communicative needs and information.
 - » Causing strain for the listener or requiring a sympathetic listener.
- Grammar (Range and accuracy)
 - » Showing evidence of sentence structure with grammatical phrases.
 - » Making grammar or syntax mistakes that the listener may misunderstand.
- Pronunciation
 - » Pronouncing clearly enough to be understood.
 - » Showing the influence of the mother tongue in pronunciation and intonation.

Reflection prompts: Provide specific prompts for students to respond to after assessments or projects.

Example: What did I do well in this assignment?

What could I improve next time?

2. Peer assessment techniques:

Peer Review: Organize structured peer review sessions where students exchange their work and provide constructive feedback using rubric.

Example: Provide a rubric that includes criteria such as use as language use (use of pronouns, time expressions, connectives). Students can score each other's work and depending on the level, of course, offer specific comments.

Think-Pair-Share: After a lesson or an activity, have students pair up to develop this activity.

Example: In pairs, students share their thoughts on a reading assignment before sharing them with the whole class.

Feedback Circles: Arrange students in small groups to share their work and receive feedback from their peers.

Example: Each student presents their work, which the others in the circle listen to and then provides one positive comment and (depending on the level) one suggestion for improvement.

Additional tips

Model the process; that is, demonstrate self-assessment and peer assessment techniques with examples before you ask students to practice on their own; create a safe environment where students see mistakes as opportunities for growth; if possible, try to incorporate digital tools to make the feedback process more engaging.

This checklist is suggested from the workshops carried out by Carolyn Westbrook (2023) to provide feedback with a feedforward approach.

Remember to include:

1. What the student did well.
2. What they did not do so well.
3. What they need to do next time to improve (i. e., what the gap is between the actual performance and the expected performance).
4. A suggestion of a task to provide further practice and training. (i. e., this would enable students to learn how to close the previously mentioned gap).

Questions for reflection

- » What types of feedback do you commonly use in your classroom?

- » Would it be worth asking students to provide feedback to their classmates?
- » What do you need to be able to provide feedforward to your students?
- » Would you develop an item bank of predefined feedforward templates for your students' performance based on the mistakes they commonly make?

VII. *Challenges and Solutions in Language Assessment*

Language assessment is a critical component of language education, and it brings its own set of challenges that can arise during the process. This handbook outlines some of the most common challenges in language assessment.

Recognizing challenges and addressing them requires thoughtful planning and flexibility. Formative assessment is a powerful tool for addressing the challenges of language assessment in the classroom. It emphasizes ongoing feedback and learning rather than solely focusing on the outcome. This handout will also offer suggestions to show how these common challenges can be approached through formative assessment strategies to create a more effective and inclusive assessment environment that supports all learners in their language development.

A. Common Challenges in Language Assessment

Challenge 1

Students come from diverse backgrounds, so there are differences in familiarity with content based on students' backgrounds and environments. This can affect their understanding and performance during class and assessment activities as well. For example, a student from a mountainous region may be familiar with topics related to nature, agriculture, or local wildlife, while a student from an urban area may relate more to subjects involving city life. Students who are not familiar with certain contexts or examples may struggle to engage with the material being taught or assessed, thus leading to feelings of frustration.

Challenge 2

Language assessment can be subjective, especially in speaking and writing tasks, leading to inconsistencies in grading. Lack of clarity and understanding of expectations on the part of students, and lack of involvement of students in the assessment process. Assessment does not promote higher order thinking or real-world application.

Challenge 3

A lack of clarity and understanding of expectations on the part of students, and a lack of involvement of students in the assessment process means that teachers inadvertently set them up to fail.

Challenge 4

The assessment does not promote higher-order thinking or real-world applications.

Challenge 5

Feedback gap: Students may not receive timely or constructive feedback on their performance, hindering their ability to improve.

Challenge 6

Assessment of different language skills. Assessing all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) can be challenging within limited timeframes. Emphasis on rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules rather than real-world language use and comprehension.

Challenge 7

Constraints faced by teachers: Time constraints, differing teaching styles, insufficient materials, lack of access to technology, lack of collaboration, and resistance to change.

One must recognize that teachers have different teaching styles and even philosophies. Some teachers may be resistant to collaborative practices due to concerns about workload or change in routine.

B. Strategies for Overcoming Common Challenges

Strategy 1

Culturally relevant examples: Teachers can adapt lessons and therefore assessment tasks to include examples and references that resonate with all students. This might involve integrating local culture, geography or experiences into the lesson plans.

Differentiated instruction: Teachers can provide varied materials and activities that cater to different backgrounds, ensuring this way that all students in the classroom have access to content that is engaging and relatable.

Collaborative learning: Encourage students to share their own experiences related to the topics being taught which can enrich the classroom environment. Group projects, for example, can allow students from different backgrounds to learn from each other. Create projects that allow your students to explore topics relevant to their own culture, using both the native and the target language.

Other supplementary resources: Teachers can bring to the classroom, or provide students with additional resources, for examples videos or pictures that reflect diverse environments and experiences that can help them bridge the gap between the textbook contents and the students' realities.

Strategy 2

Using checklists: Teachers can provide students with self-assessment checklists for them to reflect on their own performance against established criteria.

Peer assessment: Conduct peer assessment where students evaluate each other's work using simple checklists or rubrics, which can also be created collaboratively. This can ensure clarity and understanding of expectations. Use classroom discussion and oral presentations as assessment tools that require minimal resources.

Use available resources creatively for formative assessment or develop clear rubrics with specific criteria to guide grading and ensure transparency. Design assessments that prioritize communication skills, such as role-plays or project-based tasks.

Strategy 3

Rubrics: Develop detailed rubrics for assignments that clearly outline the criteria for success and share them with students before they begin their work.

Encourage students to assess their own work using the same rubrics. This promotes reflection and helps them understand expectations better.

Learning objectives: Clearly state learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson or unit. Make sure students understand what is expected and how they will be assessed.

Strategy 4

Incorporate authentic materials that require critical thinking and application of language skills. Engage in collaborative grading sessions with colleagues to ensure consistency and fairness.

Strategy 5

Set clear timelines for feedback: Establish specific deadlines for when feedback will be provided after assignments are submitted. Communicate these timelines to students so they know when to expect feedback.

Schedule feedback sessions: Implement brief one-on-one or small group feedback sessions to discuss their work directly and ask questions about the feedback provided.

Create a feedback culture: Foster an environment where feedback is viewed as a valuable part of the learning process. Encourage students to seek clarification on feedback and to view it as an opportunity for growth rather than criticism.

Strategy 6

Use integrated assessments by creating tasks that combine multiple skills (e. g., listening to a simple story and then reacting to it with a drawing, reading different morals to choose the best one, writing a simple end or a moral themselves, having a group discussion or answering some follow up questions).

Spread assessments out throughout the term or semester.

Use collaborative group work where students must communicate effectively, combining listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

Schedule periodic assessments throughout the course to cover all skills rather than assessing them all at the same time into one test.

Strategy 7

Teachers need to find time for collaboration to better understand the challenges, and it can be challenging due to busy schedules. Prioritizing collaboration by incorporating

it into existing meeting times or dedicating specific days for collaborative planning on language assessment strategies and sharing assessment tools and ideas among teachers could help. Use collaborative tools that facilitate discussion and ensure that everyone is informed about decisions made during meetings.

Approach differences with an open mind and focus on finding common ground. Emphasize the importance of flexibility and adaptability in collaborative efforts to accommodate diverse perspectives.

Address resistance to change by highlighting the benefits of collaboration for both teachers and students, focusing on the value of collaboration and effective teamwork strategies.

C. Case Studies and Real-Life Examples

Case studies and real-life examples offer valuable insights into effective language assessment.

By incorporating formative assessments, peer assessments, and engaging activities, teachers can create a supportive learning environment that fosters language development and build confidence among learners.

Case study: Portfolio-based assessment

Context: A teacher incorporates the use of portfolio-based assessment with his twelve-grade students as a communication tool with his students to assess their language skills over time and foster a collaborative approach to language learning. The process of compiling a portfolio encourages active participation in learning, allowing the students to take ownership of their work and providing real evidence of their learning progress.

Assessment strategy: Students compile their work over the term, including writing samples, and if possible, depending on technology assessment, recordings of spoken English, and reflections on their learning process through self-reflection sheets.

Insights:

- **Holistic View:** Portfolios provide a comprehensive view of each student's progress, capturing improvements in different language skills over time.
- **Self-reflection:** Students engaged in self-assessment by identifying or reflecting on their strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Showcasing Progress:** At the end of the term, students can present their portfolios to show their achievements, and they can also show their readiness to engage in further education.

Real-life example: Using picture prompts

Context: The teacher wants to assess speaking skills in a class for young learners at the A1 level by using visuals. Very young learners learn best through play and visual stimuli since their attention spans may be short, so engaging materials are essential at this level to make learning more enjoyable and motivating. Visuals can facilitate the learning of

words and phrases by associating them with images and they can also make it easier for them to remember and recall information.

Assessment strategy: The teacher uses picture prompts to elicit responses from students. Each student in a group is shown a picture that conforms to a story and asked to describe what they see to the others, or they all see the set of pictures and are asked to organize them to create a short story based on it. Students can practice speaking in a low-pressure environment.

Insights:

- Visual stimuli: Pictures engage students and provide context for vocabulary use, making it easy for them to express themselves.
- Low anxiety environment: The informal setting reduces anxiety associated with speaking in front of the teacher and the peers, allowing students to communicate more freely.
- Assessment of vocabulary and structure. The teacher can assess both range of vocabulary usage and sentence structure while allowing for creativity in responses.

Questions for reflection

- What challenges do you recognize in language assessment with your students in the classroom?
- What strategies could you use to mitigate the identified challenges?
- What other areas in language assessment would you need training on to improve your professional development?

VIII. Professional Development for Teachers

In this section, we present the results of the collaborations established with national and international institutions. The Language Center (CENID) currently has postgraduate courses on the National Center for Distance Education's (CENED) Moodle platform. This center provides permanent support and coaching in the instructional design of the courses and their design on the platform through the participation of Noralvis de Armas Rodríguez Ph. D. and Iván Pérez Mallea M. Sc., in methodological activities.

Collaborations have also been established, through the British Council, Cuba. Examples of these actions are St Giles Educational Trust, London-Brighton, UK, for the delivery of postgraduate courses related to language assessment, teaching the basic levels of the CEFR for language teaching, and the development of key competencies of the CEFR at A2 level.

These courses have benefited from the contributions of: Simon O'Donovan Ph. D., Erika Lindley, Mike Williams, and Arthur Laing. Also in the UK, but this time at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, an introductory course on academic writing in English was given by Vander Viana Ph. D. Finally, a course on Information and Communication Technologies in Education was given at MyUni, London-Brighton, UK, by David Marrani Ph. D.

Previous work related to the training of English teachers provides important context for this discussion. Notably, participation in the network program Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad-University Development Cooperation (VLIR-UOS) has been focused on the Professional English for ICT (PETICT) group, which specifically targets English language instruction for information and communication technology.

Within the framework of the VLIR-UOS network program, several training initiatives have been implemented to enhance communicative competence in English for professional contexts among its members. Professors Eric Caers Ph. D. and Eva Cordery Ph. D., from the University of Hasselt, Belgium, contributed to the delivery of hybrid postgraduate courses from the University of Informatics Sciences (UCI) to other Cuban universities. Additionally, they developed training sessions in English for VLIR-UOS network members, using the Telegram application, specifically in the Telegram Café group.

Another significant precedent is the development of ten training workshops under the leadership of international assessment expert Claudia Harsch Ph. D. from the University of Bremen, Germany. These workshops were developed as part of an institutional project to benefit the Cuban Language Assessment Network (CLAN). This network of assessment specialists, which was initially led by Ivonne de la Caridad Collada Peña, M. Sc., with 40 participants representing all the universities in the country.

In May 2023, Yoan Martínez Márquez Ph. D. and Antonio Pérez Correa M. Sc., participated in the New Directions LATAM 2023 conference in São Paulo, Brazil. New Directions in English Language Assessment is the British Council's flagship language testing and assessment conference. The conference provides perspectives and insight on trends and approaches in English language assessment at a local, regional and international level.

The proposal presented was “Teachers’ Literacy as a decisive point for the alignment between internal and external assessment in Cuban English education” (Martínez & Pérez, 2023) on behalf of the Cuban Language Assessment Network (CLAN). This brought a fruitful debate among participants and new alliances started with Carolyn Westbrook Dr., which led to her workshop at UCIENCIA 2023 international convention and post-event workshops for professors in General and Higher Education in Cuba. Indeed, the work carried out by many prestigious professionals and excellent human beings makes it possible to present this handbook and the following training programs and courses.

A. Training Programs and Workshops

These training programs and workshops are integrated into a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program to enhance language assessment literacy among general and higher education English teachers. It is supported by the Academic Committee of Project *#InglésParaElDesarrollo* with the British Council, Cuba. The program aims to empower educators with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively assess language proficiency, thereby improving student outcomes and instructional quality.

The CPD program focuses on key areas such as understanding assessment principles, developing and implementing various types of assessments, analyzing assessment data, and providing constructive feedback. Through a combination of workshops, collaborative

learning communities, and practical applications, teachers gain a deeper understanding of assessment practices and their impact on learning.

Professors from higher education, who belong to the Cuban Language Assessment Network (CLAN), have participated in 11 workshops, working towards developing the Cuban English language proficiency certification system. Meanwhile, educators from both ministries have participated in 5 online courses, including Fundamentals of Language Assessment (Collada, 2021), Teaching CEFR Level A1, Teaching CEFR Level A2 (Williams, 2021), Fundamentals of Classroom-based Language Assessment (Collada, 2022), and Linking Teaching, Learning, Assessment and Feedback in the Classroom (Westbrook, 2023).

By participating in the CPD program, Cuban teachers are equipped with the tools to design and implement fair, reliable, and valid assessments, ultimately fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment. This is essential for staying up to date with the latest assessment practices. Teachers can find here some links to training programs and workshops:

- Fundamentals of Language Assessment
Available at: <https://aulacened.uci.cu/course/view.php?id=69>
- Fundamentals of Classroom-based Language Assessment
Available at: <https://aulacened.uci.cu/course/view.php?id=6220>
- Teaching CEFR Level A1
Available at: <https://aulacened.uci.cu/course/view.php?id=322>
- Teaching CEFR Level A2
Available at: <https://aulacened.uci.cu/course/view.php?id=323>
- Linking Teaching, Learning, Assessment, and Feedback in the classroom
Available at: <https://aulacened.uci.cu/course/view.php?id=6178>

A fruitful training program has been carried out within the renewal of an agreement between the General Education Ministry in Havana and the British Council in Cuba, in August 2023. The Havana Community of Practice in Action under the guidance of Yuliet Pons Arozarena B. A. has organized training workshops about lesson planning with Julián Hernández Angulo Ph. D. and English language learning assessment with Yoan Martínez Márquez Ph. D. Participating in these workshops offered a deeper understanding of teachers' and students' needs about language assessment in general education.

B. Resources for Continuous Learning

In this section, teachers will discover a range of resources for ongoing learning, including books, articles, online courses, and professional organizations. This list of additional reading materials will enable you to expand your knowledge of language assessment. It offers valuable insights and practical tips with useful materials to support teachers' professional growth.

The first invitation is to be “part of the world’s largest online English teaching community” (British Council, n. d. b.).

TeachingEnglish is a global programme for English teachers and teacher educators, drawing on UK and local expertise, and the unique insight and experience of the British Council. Build your professional network, share ideas and know-how, and stay up to date with the latest research and innovations in teaching. You’ll find lesson plans, events, and learning resources to support your practice, as well as new opportunities to help your career grow – whether you’re taking your first steps as an English language teacher, or your next steps as a teacher educator.

(British Council, n. d. b)

1. Council of Europe (2001). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680459f97>
- This document establishes a framework for the teaching and evaluation of languages in European contexts. The TLU domain was introduced by Bachman and Palmer (1996).
2. Council of Europe (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languagelearning-teaching/16809ea0d4>
- This document establishes a comprehensive framework for language proficiency that includes additional descriptors for intercultural competence as well as updated guidance on the use of the CEFR in diverse contexts.
3. Collada Peña, I. C. et al (2023). *Handbook for Standardised Proficiency Test Development in Cuban Higher Education. Preliminary Version*. Cuban Language Assessment Network (CLAN). Ediciones Futuro.
- This document is a compilation of materials from a work in progress by the Cuban Language Assessment Network (CLAN).
4. Mackenzie, A. S. (2021). *Introduction to CEFR. Focus on A1*. Available at: https://postgradosvirtuales.ucf.edu/cu/course/view.php_id=609
- This link will take you to the materials shared by Allan Mackenzie from TransformELT for a training course delivered at the University of Cienfuegos.
5. O’Sullivan, B. (2020). *British Council Perspectives on English Language Policy and Education: The Comprehensive Learning System*. Available at: https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/cls_bcps1_bos_30-09_2020_final_pdf

- This document deals with an explanation of the Comprehensive Learning System and the integration of its core elements.

C. Collaborative Learning Communities

Collaboration among teachers is essential for creating a positive and productive learning environment. When teachers work together, they can share resources, ideas, and best practices, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes. This section provides valuable insights into effective collaboration for teachers at all levels and practical tips for it.

Effective collaboration among teachers is vital for enhancing teaching practices and student outcomes. Teachers can work together effectively despite common challenges by establishing clear goals, utilizing technology, engaging in co-teaching, and fostering a supportive environment. Embracing collaboration enriches the educational experience for students, and also promotes professional growth and satisfaction among teachers. As you implement these tips in your practice, remember that collaboration is an ongoing journey that requires commitment, flexibility, and open-mindedness.

Importance of collaboration

1. Enhanced student learning: Collaborative teaching approaches lead to more engaging and diverse learning experiences for students. When teachers share their expertise, they can develop more comprehensive lesson plans that address various learning styles.
2. Professional growth: Working with colleagues allows teachers to learn from one another, gain new perspectives, and develop professionally. Collaboration fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in teaching practices.
3. Supportive community: Collaboration creates a sense of community among teachers. It fosters relationships built on trust and shared goals, which can improve job satisfaction and reduce feelings of isolation.
4. Resource sharing: Teachers can pool resources such as lesson plans, assessment tools, and teaching materials, making it easier to implement effective instructional strategies.

Practical strategies for fostering collaboration

1. Establish clear goals:
 - Begin collaboration by setting clear, shared goals. Define what you want to achieve together, whether it is improving student performance or implementing a new teaching strategy.
 - Use SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) to ensure that goals are well-defined.

2. Create regular meeting Times:

- Schedule regular meetings for collaborative planning and discussion. Consistency helps build momentum and ensures that collaboration remains a priority.
- Consider joining professional learning communities or grade-level meetings to facilitate ongoing collaboration.

3. Use technology:

- Leverage technology tools to enhance collaboration. You can find on the web different educational apps and platforms like Google Meet and Microsoft Teams, for example, that allow teachers to share resources, communicate effectively, and collaborate in real-time.
- Use online forums or discussion boards to continue conversations outside of scheduled meetings. WhatsApp and Telegram chatting systems are very popular among teachers and students. They can be used in synchronous or asynchronous debates, as well as for videoconferencing.

4. Engage in co-teaching:

- Implement co-teaching to share responsibility for planning, delivering instruction, and assessing students. Co-teaching allows for diverse instructional strategies and better support for students with varying needs. Explore what works best for your context.

5. Share best practices:

- Share successful strategies and resources during meetings or through informal discussions sharing both your successes and challenges.
- Participate in workshops, webinars or scientific conferences or events where teachers can present innovative ideas or results of the research they have implemented successfully.
- Participate in collaborative teams that include all stakeholders to promote a holistic approach to student support.

6. Foster a safe environment:

- Create or take part in a safe space where you feel comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas without fear of criticism. Encourage constructive feedback and active listening during discussions.
- Establish or follow norms for collaboration that promote respect, inclusivity, and open communication.

7. Celebrate successes:

- Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of collaborative efforts. Recognizing progress does not only boost morale but also encourages continued collaboration among teachers.
- Consider creating a bulletin board or digital space to showcase successful projects or initiatives resulting from collaboration.
- Share with colleagues the work done as projects or final evaluations in postgraduate courses, presentations made for scientific meetings or articles published in journals to encourage more engagement in these kinds of activities.

Questions for reflection

- » What training programs or workshops have you participated in?
- » What experiences can you share with your colleagues?
- » What resources are more useful for continuous learning according to your needs?
- » Is there any interest or need you have that is not covered by these resources?
- » Do you belong to a collaborative learning community? Share your experiences.

References



A comprehensive list of references, including books, journal articles, and online resources is provided here to support the information presented in this handbook. Teachers can use these references to further explore specific topics and deepen their understanding of language assessment.

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Appendixes



Appendix 1. Can-do Statements according to the Companion Volume 2020

Council of Europe (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion Volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr

	OVERALL ORAL COMPREHENSION
A2	<p>Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type, provided people articulate clearly and slowly.</p> <p>Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g., very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment), provided people articulate clearly and slowly.</p>
A1	<p>Can follow language which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for them to assimilate meaning.</p> <p>Can recognise concrete information (e. g., places and times) on familiar topics encountered in everyday life, provided it is delivered slowly and clearly.</p>
Pre-A1	<p>Can understand short, very simple questions and statements, provided they are delivered slowly and clearly and accompanied by visuals or manual gestures to support understanding and repeated if necessary.</p> <p>Can recognise everyday, familiar words/signs, provided they are delivered clearly and slowly in a clearly defined, familiar everyday context.</p> <p>Can recognise numbers, prices, dates and days of the week, provided they are delivered slowly and clearly in a defined, familiar everyday context.</p>

	OVERALL READING COMPREHENSION
A2	<p>Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language.</p> <p>Can understand short, simple texts containing the highest frequency vocabulary, including a proportion of shared international vocabulary items.</p>
A1	<p>Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.</p>

Pre-A1	Can recognise familiar words/signs accompanied by pictures, such as a fastfood restaurant menu illustrated with photos or a picture book using familiar vocabulary.
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	OVERALL ORAL PRODUCTION
A2	Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines, likes/dislikes, etc., as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list.
A1	Can produce simple, mainly isolated phrases about people and places.
Pre-A1	Can produce short phrases about themselves, giving basic personal information (e. g., name, address, family, nationality).

	OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION
A2	Can produce a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like “and”, “but” and “because”.
A1	Can give information about matters of personal relevance (e. g., likes and dislikes, family, pets) using simple words/signs and basic expressions. Can produce simple isolated phrases and sentences.
Pre-A1	Can give basic personal information (e. g., name, address, nationality), perhaps with the use of a dictionary.

Appendix 2. Glossary of Key Terms

A glossary of key terms related to language assessment will help teachers familiarize themselves with important concepts and terminology. This section provides clear definitions and explanations of essential terms.

1. **Assessment:** The process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting information about a learner’s language skills and abilities to inform instruction and learning.
2. **Benchmarking:** The process of comparing an individual’s performance against established standards or criteria to determine proficiency levels or progress over time.
3. **Criterion-Related Validity:** The degree to which the results of an assessment correlate with other measures of the same construct, such as comparing test scores with actual language use in real-life situations.
4. **Descriptors:** Statements that spell out what is expected of students at each level of performance for each criterion.
5. **Diagnostic Assessment:** Assessments designed to identify students’ strengths and weaknesses before instruction begins, helping teachers tailor their teaching strategies to meet individual needs.

6. **Dynamic Assessment:** An approach that combines assessment with instruction, focusing on a learner's potential for growth through guided interaction and feedback during the assessment process.
7. **Feedback:** Information provided to learners about their performance on assessments, aimed at helping them understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
8. **Feed forward:** A process of providing constructive feedback to students on their work or performance, focusing not only on what they did well, but also on specific suggestions for improvement in future tasks.
9. **Formative Assessment:** Ongoing assessments conducted during the learning process to monitor student progress and provide feedback that can be used to improve teaching and learning.
10. **Item Analysis:** The examination of individual test questions (items) to determine their effectiveness in measuring student knowledge and skills, often used to improve future assessments.
11. **Language Assessment Framework:** A structured approach that outlines the components and criteria for evaluating language proficiency, often including levels of proficiency and specific skills assessed.
12. **Language Proficiency:** The ability to use a language effectively and appropriately in various contexts. Proficiency can encompass speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.
13. **Performance Assessment:** An assessment that requires students to demonstrate their language skills through real-world tasks or projects, allowing for a more authentic evaluation of their abilities.
14. **Portfolio Assessment:** A collection of student work that showcases their language skills over time. Portfolios allow for a comprehensive evaluation of a learner's progress and achievements.
15. **Reliability:** The degree to which an assessment produces consistent results over time or across different raters. High reliability indicates that the assessment yields stable and dependable scores.
16. **Rubric:** A scoring guide that outlines specific criteria and performance levels for assessing student work. Rubrics provide clear expectations and help ensure consistent grading. They can be analytic or holistic.
17. **Scaffolding:** Instructional support provided to help learners achieve understanding and skill mastery. In assessment, scaffolding may involve breaking tasks into manageable parts or providing hints and prompts.
18. **Standardized Test:** A test administered and scored in a consistent manner, often used to compare the performance of different individuals or groups against a set standard.
19. **Summative Assessment:** Evaluations conducted at the end of an instructional period to measure what students have learned, often used for reporting purposes or determining grades.

20. Target Language Use (TLU) domain: refers to the specific context in which students are expected to use the target language. This concept is fundamental in language teaching and assessment, as it helps define the linguistic and communicative skills that students need to develop in order to perform effectively in real-life situations.
21. Test Construct: The underlying trait or ability we are testing. Construct operationalization describes exactly what aspects of language knowledge and use to target and how this is manifested across the curriculum.
22. Validity: The extent to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Valid assessments accurately reflect the language skills they aim to evaluate.
23. Washback Effect: The influence that testing has on teaching and learning practices. Positive washback occurs when assessments promote effective teaching strategies; negative washback occurs when tests encourage rote memorization or superficial learning.

Appendix 3. Reading Task Development. Item Writer Guidelines

Handbook for Standardised Proficiency Test Development in Cuban Higher Education. Preliminary version. 1st edition, December 2023. ISBN: 978-959-286-087-2. Publishing House: Ediciones Futuro.

1. Text selection: choose a text that is appropriate for the target audience and aligns with the test specs. Consider factors such as length, genre, complexity (linguistic level), and content of the text, as well as any specific skills that the text can help to assess. You can use online tools suggested for text evaluation (e.g., <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/textanalysis/>, or <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/text-checker/>).
- Texts must be authentic. Pedagogical texts can be used if they are intended for other subject matters (e. g., textbooks for Biology).
- Texts must not be taken from printed material in other examinations or English language teaching materials.
- The topic of the texts must be accessible to the students' age group (8-18) in line with the test specs.
- Texts must not be offensive, distressing, or violent (see taboo topics in test specs).
- Texts must be of a suitable length depending on the complexity.
- Texts must be of a suitable level of difficulty.
- A text must have a title unless it is used as part of the item.
- Items with different difficulty levels can be created from the same text.
2. Construct: determine what reading behavior(s) (targeted skill) you want to target, given the selected text. Select behaviors according to the level of the task.

3. Mapping: With the reading behaviors in mind, identify the key skills or concepts that the reading comprehension task will assess, and map the text in teams, following the steps suggested in the document TEXT MAPPING, according to the behavior(s) you want to assess.

If you want to assess several behaviors, map separately for each behavior! Document all mapping results in the test specifier and only work with these results!

4. Item formats: open or closed? Determine the question type according to the reading behaviors and the characteristics of the text. Bear in mind the difficulties of developing good MC items! Try to avoid them if not sure but, if used, follow the guidelines for good MCs in the ppt and the article “A taxonomy of multiple-choice item writing rules” (Haladyna, 1989).

5. Develop the answer key.

6. Creating the task. Select and fill in every blank in the test specifier. Do not forget to include the text mapping results and the original text. Consider:

- Use mapping results (based on your mapping results, you have the answer!), develop questions that elicit the targeted reading behavior, and follow the order of the text.
- Have a clear idea of what reading behaviors you intend to test and select the task and text/prompts accordingly.
- Do use the standardised instructions.
- The task type must be familiar to the students who are to be tested. See test specs.
- Tasks must be accessible to the students’ age group.
- Tasks must not be offensive, distressing, or violent.
- The time allocated for each task must be sufficient for somebody to complete the task comfortably within the time limit.
- Students must be able to see easily how the task relates to the text.
- Avoid changing the item format within a single task.

7. Task design:

- Instructions should be brief and clear, understandable for Pre-A1, A1 or A2 students. The item language should never be more complex than that in the reading text.
- There should be a minimum of five items in a task.
- Items must follow the text sequence.
- Items must be spread evenly through the text.
- Items must not elicit information from the first and/or last sentences.
- It must not be possible to answer any item without reference to the text. This must be checked carefully.
- Items related to the gist should be placed at the end.

- In non-sequencing tasks, items must not be interdependent: students should not need one answer to find another.
- Items must not overlap. Two items must not have similar answers.
- Items must have a complete answer key. All possible good answers should be provided.
- The items in each task must be numbered sequentially.
- Examples are not indispensable if the students are familiar with the type of item. If used, the example should be numbered 0.
- “Find the wrong answer” or “both are correct” type items are not acceptable in multiple-choice tasks.
- Distractors should have similar lengths and structures.
- Be sure you are addressing the construct. Example: do not test vocabulary or grammar.
- Do not use frequency adverbs or quantifiers.
- Do not use True/False items.
- Do not use multiple-choice with multiple correct answers.
- In open short-answer questions, they should demand short answers. Misspelling is acceptable unless it changes the meaning of the word.
- Avoid distractors with verbatim information, rephrase as much as possible.
- Do not use negative questions and statements in the items.
- Format the task layout in a way that is easily understandable by the students.
- Each item must score one point.
- Do not write tricky questions.

Appendix 4. Members of the Language Center at the University of Informatics Sciences on behalf of the Higher Education Academic Committee

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1	Yoan Martínez Márquez. Ph. D.	UCI
2	Marisol de la Caridad Patterson Peña. M. Sc.	UCI
3	Guillermo Manuel Negrín Ortiz. B. Eng.	UCI
4	Maydelin Rodríguez Gómez. B. A.	UCI
5	Elianis Cepero Fadrugas. M. Sc.	UCI

