

TKT: Module 1 – Aspects of assessment

Overview: These practice materials by Russell Whitehead are designed to help with the Module 1 exam, in particular with the 'Background to language teaching section' of the test. In these materials you will think about assessment and how it relates to your work as a teacher and to your learners. You will consider the purposes of assessment, methods of assessment and the design of assessment tasks and activities.

Part of exam: Module 1 (Background to language teaching): Assessment types and tasks

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student

Time: 30–60 mins

You could put a list of tests from various fields on the board, e.g. London taxi drivers' knowledge test, various scientific tests, economic tests (this will take a bit of research on your part!), and discuss the relative methods and challenges of each.

Bring in – and get trainees to bring in – examples of various tests. You can discuss them in relation to the terms raised in these materials. Trainees could then be asked to work in pairs to write short evaluations of each test or testing situation.

Put the trainees in groups and give each one a different brief. They have to design different tests for different purposes.

Teacher's notes

Notes for teacher trainers

As a way into the topic, you could begin the session by getting the trainees to take a test. This could consist of a wide range of content and methods. Questions or tasks could range from the more doable, e.g. 'write down the dates of birth of everyone in the class/group', to the practically impossible, e.g. 'make an origami swan', or 'sing a top C', etc. You could then go through the test, discussing the various issues arising.

You could write some of your own test results on the board, e.g. *Pass, 64 %, B, Bronze*, etc, and get the trainees to guess what result was for what test, and what the result means.

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Stage 1: Considering

- a) *Trainee's own answers*
- b) *Trainee's own answers*
- c) *Trainee's own answers*
- d) *Trainee's own answers*

Stage 2: Experimenting

- e) *Trainee's own answers*
- f) *Trainee's own answers*
- g) *Trainee's own answers*
- h)
 1. F
 2. A
 3. D
 4. E
 5. B
 6. C – *If you want to promote learner independence, then it's logical to extend this principle to assessment. You can share with the learners how they can measure their progress, achievement, accuracy, etc, and then have them mark their own work or performance.*
 7. J
 8. K – *You may not feel that a 'normal' test can really reflect the range of activities and achievements that the learners do on a course. Therefore, making a collection of different things they have done may be a better reflection of what they are learning.*
 9. G
 10. L
 11. H – *You don't always need a big and complicated test, and you may feel that the learners take enough tests in their lives anyway. So you may decide just to make a few notes on each student, which you can do quite easily while they are working in groups, etc.*
 12. I
- i) *Trainee's own answers*
- j) *Trainee's own answers*

NOTE: For sentences 4 and 10, you may wish to point out that you cannot really assess a written assignment objectively – it isn't simply right or wrong. Criteria needs to be used and the written assignment interpreted though these. You might say, for example, that the content of the assignment, in terms of ideas, is good, while the grammar is weak, but the vocabulary is quite rich.

- k)
 1. C
 2. A
 3. D
 4. B

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Stage 1: Considering

a) Think about all the tests you have taken in your life. Also, think about all the tests you expect to take in the future. Make a list.

b) Which of these tests was/will be:

- the hardest?
- the most stressful?
- the most fun?
- the most useful?
- the most interesting?

Why? If possible, compare this list with a colleague and discuss your ideas together.

c) Look at these statements about assessment. Do you agree or disagree with them? Why?

1. The only real test of learning a language is talking to native speakers in their own countries and seeing if they understand you.

2. I don't need any external tests. I'm the teacher here, and I know best what my students have and haven't learnt.

3. People are just too different from each other – it doesn't make sense to give them the same test.

4. Tests can be a very useful part of the learning process.

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Worksheet

5. You don't really know if someone has learnt something unless you can see the test result.

6. Failing tests can damage people's confidence forever.

7. I use the test my learners are going to take as a syllabus to plan the course.

8. I don't know how to decide if a particular test will be relevant for my learners.

d) Try to discuss the eight statements above with a colleague or colleagues, or with your teacher trainer.



Think about:

The fact is that most people working in education have no choice: we are required to deal with assessment. We have to take tests, our learners have to take tests, our schools and colleges are inspected and assessed, governments tell everybody what tests they have to do, etc. It's our duty then, to make sure we understand these assessments as best we can.

Stage 2: Experimenting

e) Think about all the English language tests that you know about. Make a list.

f) What differences do they have? How are they similar?

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- g) Assessment is a complex area, and there are certain key concepts and terms you need to know. How many of the following are you already familiar with?**

A peer assessment	B formative assessment	C self-assessment
D diagnostic test	E subjective testing	F proficiency test
G objective testing	H informal assessment	I aims
J summative assessment	K portfolio assessment	L criteria

- h) Now read the following sentences 1–12, and choose from A–L in the box above to complete the definitions.**

- One common kind of language test is a _____, which tests learners' level of English without being based on a particular course or syllabus that the learners have taken.
- Sometimes we encourage learners to assess each other, and this is called _____.
- Before starting a new course, learners may be given a _____ to do, the results of which would help the teacher(s) to know what areas to focus the course on.
- Assessing learners' productive work, such as writing tasks or speaking in interviews, by basing judgements on criteria is called _____.
- At the end of term, it is quite likely that the learner's progress will be assessed and this process is called _____.
- There is no reason why learners cannot assess their own progress or achievement individually, and this is called _____.
- When a course has been completed, we may assess the learners' achievement over the course as a whole, and this process is called _____.
- If the learners collect different examples of their work during a course and this forms the basis of their assessment, this is called _____.
- If a test consists of tasks with right-wrong answers, this is easy to mark and is called _____.
- We often use _____ for making assessments; for a writing task, for example, these might include accuracy of grammar, organization of ideas, range of vocabulary, etc.
- Although we often think in terms of formal assessment, teachers often make use of _____ – for example, notes they make on learners' progress.
- Assessment is completely dependent on the _____ for which it is carried out, and it is essential to understand these.

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- i) **Make sure you understand these terms well before you go on. These are the main basic ideas in talking about assessment in Module 1's 'Background to language teaching' assessment types and tasks.**
- j) **Look back at what you listed in e) above. Relate these testing terms to those tests.**
- k) **Now try this part of a sample TKT task. Match the assessment aims 1–4 with the assessment types A–D.**

Assessment types:

- A Portfolio assessment
- B Self-assessment
- C Subjective testing
- D Informal assessment

Assessment aims:

- 1 To discover how well learners are able to produce written assignments
- 2 To use various tasks completed by learners over time to decide their level of English
- 3 To keep a quick and simple record of learners' progress
- 4 To develop autonomy in assessment

**Think about:**

Measuring things is part of life. Assessing risks around us is a crucial part of survival. If we can't tell when something is too hot, or poisonous, and so on, we won't live very long. When you decide whether to buy something, you assess its cost in relation to its value to you. Is language testing any different?

Stage 3: Reflecting**Set yourself a target**

Over the next few days or weeks, try to come up with a new example of each of the terms and ideas you have looked at in these materials (part g). Then you will be able to re-write the sentences in h) above with these new, 'real' examples.

Suggestion for independent learning

Find some practice materials for a test that you haven't done, (onestopenglish contains a lot of such material, which can be found here www.onestopenglish.com/exams) and spend some time 'taking' it. Then, evaluate the experience. Make some notes about the test and your performance, using the terms and ideas in these materials.

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You can also read more about assessment, for example here on onestopenglish:

www.onestopenglish.com/clil/methodology/fielded-discussion-on-clil/assessment/501144.article

www.onestopenglish.com/exams/assessment-matters

www.onestopenglish.com/skills/speaking/speaking-matters/speaking-matters-assessing-speaking/154439.article

www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/teaching-tips/skills-work/skills-assessing-speaking-skills/146607.article

www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/teaching-articles/applied-linguistics-for-the-language-classroom/applied-linguistics-empowering-language-learning-through-assessment/555928.article



Don't forget:

Assessment is a big and varied subject. It is very much part of our lives in many ways. You will have a better and deeper understanding of English language assessment if you remember to think about it in relation to general principles.