



Using Writing to Assess Secondary Students' Level of English Proficiency

by

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Workshop's Goals:

- to introduce a writing assessment developed to meet a secondary ELD program's need for accurate level placement
- to practice using this assessment by scoring students' responses to writing prompts
- to give and receive feedback that will be used in the future development of this assessment

Rationale

- ☞ Shift from content-based and communicative approaches in ELD instruction to form-focused approaches
- ☞ Need for accurate level placement in the high school program
- ☞ Need for an assessment that is tied to instruction and the ELD curriculum
- ☞ Need for a more authentic assessment that includes highly contextual tasks
- ☞ Need for an assessment that is low-impact in relation to district and teacher resources
- ☞ Need for continuous progress monitoring

Test Purpose

- to measure the English proficiency of secondary English Language Learners
- to provide information that can be used in program placement decisions
- to determine achievement after a lengthy (6 months minimum) period of instruction

Language Abilities Assessed

- General Language proficiency is assessed through writing. It is not a test of writing skills.
- The authors made an attempt to exclude general non-English-specific writing abilities, such as organization and conventions, from the analysis.
- Highly analytical scoring focuses on elements of English proficiency specific to each proficiency level.

Theoretical Foundations

Language Competence

Organizational C.

Pragmatic C.

Grammatical

Textual Illocutionary

Sociolinguistic

Voc

Morph.

Synt.

Phon/graph

Cohes.

Rhet. Org

Language Functions

Speech Acts

Sen. to

dialect

variance

regis., natural.,

fig.speech

Bachman, L. (1990). *Fundamental considerations and language testing*. New

York: Oxford University Press.

Non-theoretical Foundations

- ▣ Oregon English Language Proficiency Standards, grades 7-12
- ▣ Current curricular and methodologies

Target Population

- Secondary English Language Learners
- The test was given only to English Language Learners in a high school program; however, most prompts are designed to include life experiences of middle school students.

Item Format

☛ Prompts

- 4 levels (B, EI, I, EA)
- 2 prompts for broader language sampling, different type of communicative competence for each prompt
 - focused on specific grammatical forms and vocabulary
- designed to elicit an extensive (paragraph-length) response

☛ Rubrics

- 5 aspects of proficiency:
 - Complexity of ideas
 - Complexity of vocabulary
 - Targeted grammatical forms
 - Sentence structure (B, EI)
 - Overall flow of language
 - Knowledge of written forms and their relationship to meaning
- 0/1 rating system

Administration

- ✓ Administer both prompts
- ✓ On-demand writing
- ✓ Begin with the level student is most likely to be placed at in the program
- ✓ Score both prompts using 0 (No)/1 (Yes) scoring system.
- ✓ Score = 10 : administer prompts for next level up
- ✓ Score > 10 : administer prompts for next level down
- ✓ Score 8-10: consider having a second rater score responses

Example: Student is considered to be at the Intermediate level

Early Intermediate Level:

	Ideas	Vocabulary	Grammatical forms	Sentence structure	Overall flow
Prompt 1	1	1	1	1	1
Prompt 2	1	1	1	1	1

Intermediate Level:

	Ideas	Vocabulary	Grammatical forms	Overall flow	Written forms
Prompt 1	1	0	0	1	1
Prompt 2	1	1	0	1	0

Considerations for implementation

- ☞ Training of raters
- ☞ Continual development of prompts
- ☞ Prompts can be recycled every 4-5 years
- ☞ Could be administered as multiple-sample evidence
- ☞ Could be administered in a less formal testing situation

Data (preliminary)

Caveats:

- Assessment was administered to students according to their levels in the program. Only one round of prompts was administered. Therefore, no conclusions can be made about level of proficiency.
- Authors themselves rated all responses.
- Sample is too small for any advanced data analysis to be statistically significant.
- All rubrics and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the prompts have been revised since this initial data collection.

General Data

Prompt	number of responses	# of students who scored above the level of the prompt	# of students who scored at or below the level of the prompt	Average composite score (out of 5)
Beginning Prompt 2	26	12 (46%)	14 (54%)	4.2
Early Int. Prompt 1	15	5 (33%)	10 (66%)	3.6
Early Int. Prompt 2	21	3 (14%)	18 (86%)	3.7
Intermediate Prompt 1	37	7 (19%)	30 (81)	3.6
Intermediate Prompt 2	31	3 (10%)	28 (90%)	2.8
Early Adv. Prompt 1	20	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	2.8
Early Adv. Prompt 2	20	2 (10%)	18 (90%)	3.1

Inter-rater Reliability, percent agreement (2 raters)

Prompt	Ideas	Vocabulary	Gram. Forms	Sentence structure	Flow of language	Overall
Begin. 2	100.00	69.23	84.61	80.78	80.78	83.07
Early Int. 1	80	80	93	86.7	66.7	81.3
Early Int.2	90.6	71.4	95.2	90.5	100	89.5
Average	90.2	73.54	90.93	85.99	84.49	84.62

Inter-rater Reliability (2 raters)

Prompt	Ideas	Vocabulary	Gram. Forms	Flow of Langu.	Written Forms	Overall
Int. 1	94.6	75.67	81	81	84	83.2
Int. 2	81.8	78.8	81.8	63.6	72.72	75.75
E.Adv. 1	90	80	75	75	90	82
E. Adv. 2	74	84	79	74	79	79
Average	85.1	79.6	79.2	73.4	81.43	79.98

Intra-rater Reliability, (20 responses, all Intermediate, 1 rater)

Ideas	Vocab.	Gram.	Flow	Written forms	All
85%	85%	85%	75%	90%	84%

Evidence of Validity - Early Advanced level prompts administered to native English speakers or former ELLs, percentage score of 1

	Ideas	Vocab.	Gram. Forms	Flow	Writ. Forms
Prompt 1	22/23 96%	22/23 96%	20/23 87%	23/23 100%	22/23 96%
Prompt 2	19/19 100%	19/19 100%	19/19 100%	19/19 100%	18/19 95%

Evidence of validity, 3 prompts administered orally, scored on the speaking rubric (in development), matching written scores, Beginning-Early Intermediate

Ideas	Vocab.	Gram. Forms	Sent. Struct.	Flow
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Evidence of validity, 2 prompts administered orally, scored on the speaking rubric (in development), matching written scores, Intermediate- Early Advanced

Ideas	Vocab.	Gram. Forms	Flow
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

To receive materials, contact

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Materials include:

student prompts, rubrics, anchor papers,
and scoring rationales for anchor papers