

**TESL531.001
LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT – Fall 2009**

*Course
Syllabus*

Wednesdays: 5:30-8:00 PM

Revised
09/09/09

American University, TESOL Program

Dr. Helen Carpenter, course instructor

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Office hours: Thursdays, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM (make appt.)

Course Description

The course will expose students to terminology, current trends, research findings, and psychological/political aspects of language testing and assessment as they relate to the measurement of language knowledge at different levels and contexts for adult learners of English. In addition, students will gain experience in development of reliable and valid assessment tools that are performance, task, and content-based for classroom research and L2 instruction. Students will gain a better understanding of (a) the relative merits of tests of discrete and holistic language abilities, (b) rubrics and evaluation criteria, and (c) washback. Also explored are alternatives to standardized tests, such as self-assessment and portfolio-based evaluations.

Course Objectives

1. Learn the terms and theories related to L2 testing.
2. Learn how to develop different types of tests.
3. Develop professional savvy about theoretical issues involving L2 testing.
4. Learn how testing fits into the context of the classroom and how it affects the stakeholders involved (students, teachers, administrators, institution, community, etc.) This involves understanding the educational, social, psychological, and political contexts of tests and the uses of tests for these purposes.
5. Learn about alternative methods of measuring language knowledge, such as self- and portfolio assessment.
6. Learn about the various criteria for assessing the quality of measurement instruments—also learn methods for developing different types of assessment procedures which have high levels of reliability and validity.

Blackboard

We will use Blackboard to carry out discussions and exchange information. In the event that we are unable to attend class physically (e.g., due to H1N1), we will hold class on Blackboard. Students are expected to respond by the deadlines provided; lack of participation will be reflected in the final grade.

Grades	Description and Expectations	Due Dates	
A Class participation (10%)	It is vital that you read the readings before the class in which they are to be covered and that you attend class to discuss them. Your regular attendance and the quality of your class participation will be important considerations in your final class participation grade. Similarly, your participation on Blackboard is required if a discussion is being held there.	10%	
B Four homework assignments . Work in pairs. (12% each)	Assignment #1: Contact an administrator or teacher who works with adult ESOL assessment and interview them about testing practices in their program. Examine any available tests or look at non-secure example items in order get a feel for the kinds of items and tests that are used. Write a brief paper (4 pages, double spaced, 1” margins, Times New Roman font, normal kerning, etc.) describing the program itself (teaching approach, student population, teacher/administrator backgrounds), and its approach to assessment—placement tests, diagnostic tests, summative assessment, formative assessment, norm- or criterion-referencing, extent to which tests are valid and reliable, reference to standards, use of alternative assessment, etc. Write densely and include rich details. Contact the informant with an email outlining your questions prior to visiting them. They don’t have much time and you want to represent yourselves, American University, and this class in a very good light.	12%	Submit by email by 5:00PM Sept. 16
	Assignment #2: Design a set of listening and reading test items (3 each) that are targeted to specific levels according to the ACTFL (ILR) criteria. Pilot test items on an adult ELL and describe the results.	12%	Submit by email by 5:00PM Oct. 7
	Assignment #3: Design a set of speaking and writing test items (2 each) that are targeted to specific levels according to the ACTFL (ILR) criteria. Pilot test items on an adult ELL and describe the results.	12%	Submit by email by 5:00PM Nov. 4
	Assignment #4: Design a test of L2 English using multiple choice items (6) and (a) cloze passage(s) (9 blanks). Pilot test items on an adult ELL and describe the results.	12%	Submit by email by 5:00PM Nov. 18
C Test discussion	Ten-to-fifteen-minute presentation of a test, given in class (4%), focusing on critical views and application of what have learned in class. You will prepare a one-page handout (3%) and a short PowerPoint presentation (3%). You will sign up for a specific test and present it on the day it is scheduled on the syllabus. You will discuss the test’s purpose, stakeholders, items and tasks, scoring criteria, validity, reliability, etc. You will provide examples of all different test items/tasks and discuss these as well.	10%	Due in class, beginning Sept. 16

D. Final Class Project – *Pick One*

Gold	Test development project	Develop a language assessment tool for classroom use. The test may have one or more forms, for example, one for diagnostic or placement purposes, one for formative assessment, and one for summative assessment. Over the course of the semester, you will follow these steps: specify the purpose of the test(s), describe the constructs it is based on (content and language), describe the content for which it will be used, decide on the tasks, methods of administration, methods of rating the language or scoring the test, and ways for examining the quality of the tool (the validity and reliability of the test) and the tasks. You will report on these steps in your final paper. Also, you will discuss how the results can be used in practice and what the results may mean. You will pilot the instrument—administer at least one of the instruments to a small number of students—and report your results in your report, explaining what changes you made to the test(s) in light of your piloting and illustrating these with examples, if appropriate. This test cannot comprise the items you develop for homework assignments during the semester. A draft proposal (1 page) with a bibliography is due mid-semester.	32%
Silver	Position paper	You will write a paper (double-spaced) that positions your beliefs and views of a language test or language tests currently used by language practitioners in the field. The language test(s) you focus on and make the center of your position paper must be for a current adult ESL class or a standardized L2 test that you can adequately review either by receiving a copy of it or by obtaining detailed information about the format of the test. The paper will first describe the test that you would like to focus on and/or discuss, who the stakeholders are, what the intended purposes of the test are, etc. You should thoroughly discuss your views on the reliability and validity of the test(s) in light of the literature on L2 testing and SLA, and suggest ways to implement change/revise the instrument(s)/develop a new test, etc., if you believe this is needed. Discuss implications for washback, positive or negative. This paper requires a thorough review of literature. You must read and synthesize findings from scholarly research articles on language testing (provide a chart). Your opinions are not allowed unless they can be motivated by research that is cited. A draft proposal (1 page) with a bibliography is due mid-semester.	32%
Platinum	Grant	The Obama administration has encouraged research and development in the fields of education and science through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). More information is available here: http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/programs.html . Identify an appropriate discretionary grant for an assessment project you have in mind (e.g., FIPSE; note that you can use a non-active grant that may be active in a future funding cycle). You will write a draft grant application (double-spaced) that motivates the need for a new test or approach to assessment, and then describes the assessment product(s) you would like to have funded. This paper requires a thorough review of competing products to make sure you are not developing something that already exists. You will identify the program, stakeholders, and collaborators who will assist you. A draft proposal (1 page) with a bibliography is due mid-semester.	32%

Classroom-based Expectations

- Communication will be accomplished via email and through Blackboard.
- All assignments are expected to be well written and relatively free of grammatical errors. Take advantage of free writing assistance at the writing center if desired. You are also encouraged to ask your peers to review your writing before submitting it to me. This is recommended not only for non-native speakers of English, but for native speakers of English as well. This is good practice for reviewing grammar, for promoting peer discussion, and for receiving peer comments on the content of your work. Peer review will show and make a substantial difference in the quality of your work. Note that all assignments MUST be turned in on time; extra time for having your work reviewed is not an excuse for a late paper.
- You are responsible for handing in all assignments and exams on time. I will typically refuse acceptance of any late paper because it renders the assessment procedure less reliable and jeopardizes the validity of the class assessment program.

Required Readings

Bailey, K. M. (1998). *Learning about language assessment*. Pacific Grove: Heinle & Heinle.

*Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. White Plains, NY: Longman

Articles and other publications will be posted on Blackboard.

Recommended Textbooks

(For concepts, definitions)

Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for Language Teachers*. (2nd ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

(For writing style guide, citation formatting)

American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

L2 Testing Websites

- CAL's Foreign Language Test Database: <http://www.cal.org/nclrc/fltestdb/>
- CAL tutorial on FL testing: <http://www.cal.org/flad/tutorial/>
- Interagency Language Roundtable: <http://www.govtllr.org/>
- American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL): <http://www.actfl.org>
- International Language Testing Association: <http://www.iltaonline.com/>
- Midwest Association of Language Testers: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~mwalt/homepage.html>
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition: www.ncela.gwu.edu, www.ncela.gwu.edu/assessment/
- TESOL resource Center: http://www.tesol.org/s_tesol/trc_genform.asp?CID=1253&DID=7561
- Testing listserv: LTEST-L, <http://lists.psu.edu/archives/ltest-l.html>

Wk. 1	<u>Aug. 26</u> Overview of syllabus, introduction. Case studies: ourselves, Diane. Basic terminology.	Readings Chapter 1 of Bailey Chapter 1 of Brown	Assignment(s) Due
Wk. 2	<u>Sept. 2</u> Introduction to the field and its terminology continued: Advanced reliability and validity concepts, washback. Basics of test construction. Multiple choice items.	Readings Chapters 2 and 3 of Brown	Assignment(s) Due Choose the test you would like to discuss for your class presentation.
Wk. 3	<u>Sept. 9</u> Standards and standards-based assessment. Rating scales (ACTFL/ILR, Council of Europe, Virginia Adult ESOL Standards). Student presentation 1: TOEFL (Marissa)	Readings Chapters 4 and 5 of Brown	Assignment(s) Due
Wk. 4	<u>Sept. 16</u> We will meet in the computer lab: Anderson B11. Assessment of speaking skills. Writing tasks/Rating speech samples using the ACTFL criteria. Student presentation 2: Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI; Katia).	Readings Chapter 7 of Brown Gregerson & Horwitz, 2002	Assignment(s) Due Assignment 1 is due.
Wk. 5	<u>Sept. 23</u> Assessment of speaking skills continued. Developing speaking tasks. Case study: FL NAEP. Student presentations 3 & 4: Test of Spoken English (TSE; Brandy); Versants (formerly PhonePass; Joonsik).	Readings Luoma, 2004 Chapter 11 of Bailey	Assignment(s) Due

Wk. 6	<u>Sept. 30</u> Assessment of writing skills. Designing writing tasks. Student presentation 5: Test of Written English (TWE; Nina)	Readings Chapter 9 in Brown Weigle, 2002 Chapter 12 in Bailey	Assignment(s) Due Tell Prof. Carpenter what you would like to do for your final project.
Wk. 7	<u>Oct. 7</u> We will meet in the computer lab: Anderson B11. Assessment of listening. How to make a listening task. Student presentation 6: Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC; Katie)	Readings Chapter 6 of Brown Buck, 2001 http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/listening/assesslisten.htm	Assignment(s) Due Assignment 2 is due.
Wk. 8	<u>Oct. 14</u> We will meet in the computer lab: Anderson B11. Assessment of listening continued. Case study: the development of the web test. Time permitting: Dictation. Assessment of Vocabulary. Dictocomp. Student presentation 7: Listening Comprehension Test (LCT; Kathy)	Readings Chapters 2 and 10 of Bailey	Assignment(s) Due
Wk. 9	<u>Oct. 21</u> Assessment of reading skills and reading comprehension. Reading test item development. Cloze tests. Student presentations 8 & 9: CLBPT (Glenn); TESOL Online Resources on Language Assessment (Afsenah)	Readings Chapter 8 of Brown Chapter 5 of Bailey http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/reading/assessread.htm	Assignment(s) Due
Wk. 10	<u>Oct. 28</u> Assessment of reading skills continued. Literacy. Assessing vocabulary. (Guest Speaker: Daniel Lieberson. Basic English Skills Tests - Plus (BEST-Plus)). Student presentation 10:	Readings Chapter 4 of Bailey Read, 2000 http://www.cal.org/BESTPlus/demo.html	Assignment(s) Due Draft abstract (1 page, double spaced) explaining your final project due, with proposed bibliography.

**Comprehensive Adult Student
Assessment System (CASAS;
Jacqueline)**

Wk. 11	<u>Nov. 4</u> “Alternative” assessment. Portfolio assessment, interviews, and can-do statements. Swiss self- assessment checklists. Assessing pragmatic knowledge. Student presentations 11 & 12: Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE; Pete); Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT; Lama)	Readings Chapter 10 of Brown Chapter 13 of Bailey Roever article TBD	Assignment(s) Due Assignment 3 is due. Note: ECOLT Conference Nov. 6- 7 www.cal.org/ecolt2009/index.html
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Wk. 12	<u>Nov. 11</u> Factors that affect raters. (Guest speaker Rachel Lunde, FBI?) Grading and feedback. Student presentation 13: MELAB (Pontia)	Readings Weigle et al. 2003 Chapter 11 of Brown	Assignment(s) Due
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Wk. 13	<u>Nov. 18</u> Washback and ethics in testing. ILTA Code of Ethics. Simple statistics. Student presentations 14 & 15: IELTS (Qiong); IB Foreign Language Test (Angelica)	Readings Shohamy, 2001 (brief) Cheng & Curtis, 2004 Chapter 7 of Bailey	Assignment(s) Due Assignment 4 is due.
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Wk. 14	<u>Dec. 2</u> Computer-assisted Language Testing (CALT). Case study: the COPI. Planning time and performance. Task based language assessment. Student presentations 16 & 17: ESL Computerized Adaptive Placement Exam (ESL-CAPE; Eunyong); CARLA Virtual Item Blank (Lori)	Readings Chapelle & Douglas, 2006 Kenyon & Malanonga, 2001 Mislevy et al., 2001	Assignment(s) Due
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Final Exam Week	Final Paper Due Final paper emailed to Prof. Carpenter <u>by 7:00 PM, Wednesday, December 9.</u>		
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GRADING SCALE

Grading is an extremely complex task. For this class, grading is criterion-referenced. Thus, I assign grades based on how well students achieve course goals. Prior to each assignment I will post criteria for your review. Since you are all Master's level students, I expect professional-quality work.

Mastery-Based (Criterion-Referenced) Grading

If you get a 94% or above in this class, you will receive a 4.0. This shows that you met all requirements for the course and demonstrated your learning to an exceptional degree, and you even exceeded expectations in this course. Scores between 88% and 93% are a 3.5, 82% to 87% are a 3.0, etc.

94% or above is generally a 4.0 (A)	The student met all requirements and demonstrated his or her learning to an exceptional degree and exceeded expectations.
88% to 93% is generally a 3.5 (A-)	The student met all requirements and demonstrated his or her learning very well.
82% to 87% is generally a 3.0 (B)	The student met most of the requirements and demonstrated his or her learning relatively well.
76% to 81% is generally a 2.5 (C+)	The student did not fulfill all requirements. Learning was demonstrated adequately.
70% to 75% is generally a 2.0 (C)	The student did not fulfill requirements. Learning was demonstrated somewhat adequately.

Why do I want students to participate in class discussions?

I want students to participate so they can learn from each other and so that we can have a dynamic and engaging class. We know that active involvement in learning increases what is remembered, how well it is assimilated, and how the learning is used in new situations. In making statements to peers about their own thoughts on a class topic, students must articulate those thoughts and also submit them to (hopefully constructive) examination by others. In listening to their peers, students hear many different ways of interpreting and applying class material, and thus are able to integrate many examples of how to use the information. Especially in a course that stresses application of material like this one, extensive participation in class discussions is an essential element of your learning.

Grade	In-class Participation Grade Criteria
6 or below	When called upon, this student may or may not be prepared or may just read from his or her notes rather than synthesizing information or expressing his or her views. The student is an active participant in small group work, but rarely volunteers information in class. This student may have missed several or many classes such that a participation score is difficult to assign.
7	This student participates voluntarily in discussion every once and a while. When called upon, this student generally is prepared and can synthesize information or express his or her own views.
8	This student comes to class prepared and makes thoughtful comments. This student shows an interest in and respect for others views and participates actively in small groups. This student may actively be participating in class, but his or her contributions may be less developed or less frequently volunteered, but the comments still advance the conversation and demonstrate his or her interest and views.
9-10	This student comes to class prepared and contributes readily to the conversation. He/she makes thoughtful contributions that advance the conversation. This student puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. This student also contributes to the cooperative nature of the class, suggests alternative ways of approaching material, and helps the class analyze materials and approaches. This student also responds to other students in the class and helps them learn.

Additional Ways to Participate

Strategy 1: Raise your hand. If you want to jump in to the discussion and are not sure how, raise your hand. That will flag that you have something to say.

Strategy 2: Email your questions. If you are very quiet in class and having a hard time breaking out in class discussions, you might come to life through email. If you have questions about the course materials or wish to comment on any parts of the class (upcoming classes or a class we just had), feel free to send emails to Dr. Winke. We can also set up discussion boards online if you want.

Strategy 3: Come to office hours. You are invited to come to my office to discuss any course materials or class discussions. Share your perspectives there, and we can bring up your points in the next class.

Strategy 4. Keep a list of questions to ask or comments about things you noticed. You might want to create a list of questions you want to ask or about your observations that are based on the readings for that day. You can build up this list when reading the articles and book chapters for class. Questions and comments can be mechanical, but even better are ones that express your critical views on the subject matter.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.