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Inclusive assessments in English language classrooms: Why does it matter?

Arum Perwitasari, Ph.D.
ETS EMEA
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Agenda

What is inclusive assessment?

Why does it matter?

Key principles of ELP assessment

Designing inclusive assessment workshop

Q&As

What is inclusive assessment?

Inclusive Assessment



“Design and use of fair and effective assessment methods and practices that enable all students to **demonstrate to their full potential** what they know, understand and can do”

(Hockings 2010)

“Inclusive assessment design provides **all students with equal opportunities** to demonstrate their learning and achievements and it reduces the need for individual adjustments to assessments”

(Tai et al, 2022)

Why does inclusive assessment matter?

The participation, progress and success of all of our learners is important

“Assessment has struggled to deal with the increasing **diversity** of students in higher education [...] In fact, assessment is deemed so inaccessible that assessment accommodations (e.g., extra time in exams) are administered”. (Nieminen, 2022)

Our classrooms are traditionally set up - as a **‘one-size-fits all’ model** - means some learners can feel excluded or experience barriers with assessments.

ADVERTORIAL

Diversity in EAP classrooms: why inclusive assessment matters



In the dynamic landscape of higher education, the importance of diversity and inclusivity cannot be overstated. A recent study by the UK Government on Further education participation (GOV.UK, 2023), reveals a shifting demographic in the UK. Over the past decade, the total number of individuals in higher education decreased from 4.2 million to 2.5 million. Concurrently, the percentage of individuals from Asian, Black, Mixed and 'other' ethnic groups increased, from 19.3 per cent to 23.6 per cent.

Decoding educational shifts: what the statistics tell us

The statistical narrative underscores the pressing need to re-evaluate assessment methodologies, including those in EAP classrooms. As the demographics of students transform, the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to assessment objectives is no longer tenable. Crucial reflection on the purpose of assessment and its alignment with diverse student needs emerge: why and who do we assess? We also need to consider the appropriate selection of assessment approaches and understand precisely when and why particular methods should be deployed within the inclusive framework.

Inclusive assessments: beyond the one-size-fits-all approach

Why do we assess? The primary purpose is to improve learning for all students, irrespective of their diverse learning needs. This encompasses assessment for learning (formative assessment), assessment of learning (summative assessment) and pre-assessment (diagnostic assessment). In an inclusive classroom, assessment becomes a dynamic process that collects, synthesises and interprets data about each student's learning to inform teachers' decision-making and create a continuous cycle.

Inclusive assessment goes beyond what we want to assess, it also considers individuals we aim to evaluate. From being



Arum Perwitasari, PhD, is an Academic Relations Lead at ETS Global Amsterdam, overseeing institutional partnerships and academic initiatives. She has 17+ years of English teaching experience and 6+ years of expertise in digital learning and assessment. In addition to her roles, she has served as a member of the IATEFL Publications Executive Committee for over 3 years.

originally designed for individuals with disabilities and special needs, it has evolved and is recognised as a good pedagogical practice benefiting all students. It considers various aspects from the development of marking criteria to feedback methods. With Inclusive assessment, factors such as diverse race, culture, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, immigration status and individual experiences in a classroom do not prevent students from reaching their full learning potential.

Implementing inclusive assessments

Ideally, a good test should measure the construct and is not influenced by other skills irrelevant to the construct. A test can suffer from 'construct irrelevant variance' if it is influenced by skills not part of the construct being measured. For example, in reading comprehension tests, the stimuli should align with the construct being tested. A reading test for college admission should include texts that align with an entry level college standard. Similarly, in assessments of language proficiency, such as the TOEFL iBT® test, the level of complexity and challenge of the stimuli and test items should be entirely determined by the construct being assessed (ETS, 2022).

Inclusive assessments are designed to proactively minimise the likelihood of exclusion, overlooking or disadvantaging students. Some ways this can be achieved is by, for example, conducting so-called fairness reviews. The list of fairness reviews may include item writers and, therefore, reviewers should be trained to follow the fairness guidelines; or item writers cannot serve as reviewers of items they have written themselves (ETS, 2016). Using statistical measures of differential item functioning (DIF) also becomes an ally as



an empirical check on the fairness of items. DIF helps determine if items are performing in a biased manner against some group of examinees, e.g. related to their gender, ethnicity or first language.

Learn more about inclusive assessment at the IATEFL Conference in Brighton

Inclusive assessment will be one of the topics discussed during the IP&SEN SIG (Inclusive Practices and Special Educational Needs Special Interest Group) Showcase at the upcoming IATEFL International Conference and Exhibition in Brighton (scheduled for Thursday 18 April 2024). Find out more about this session and discover all scheduled IATEFL Conference presentations to be delivered by ETS experts.

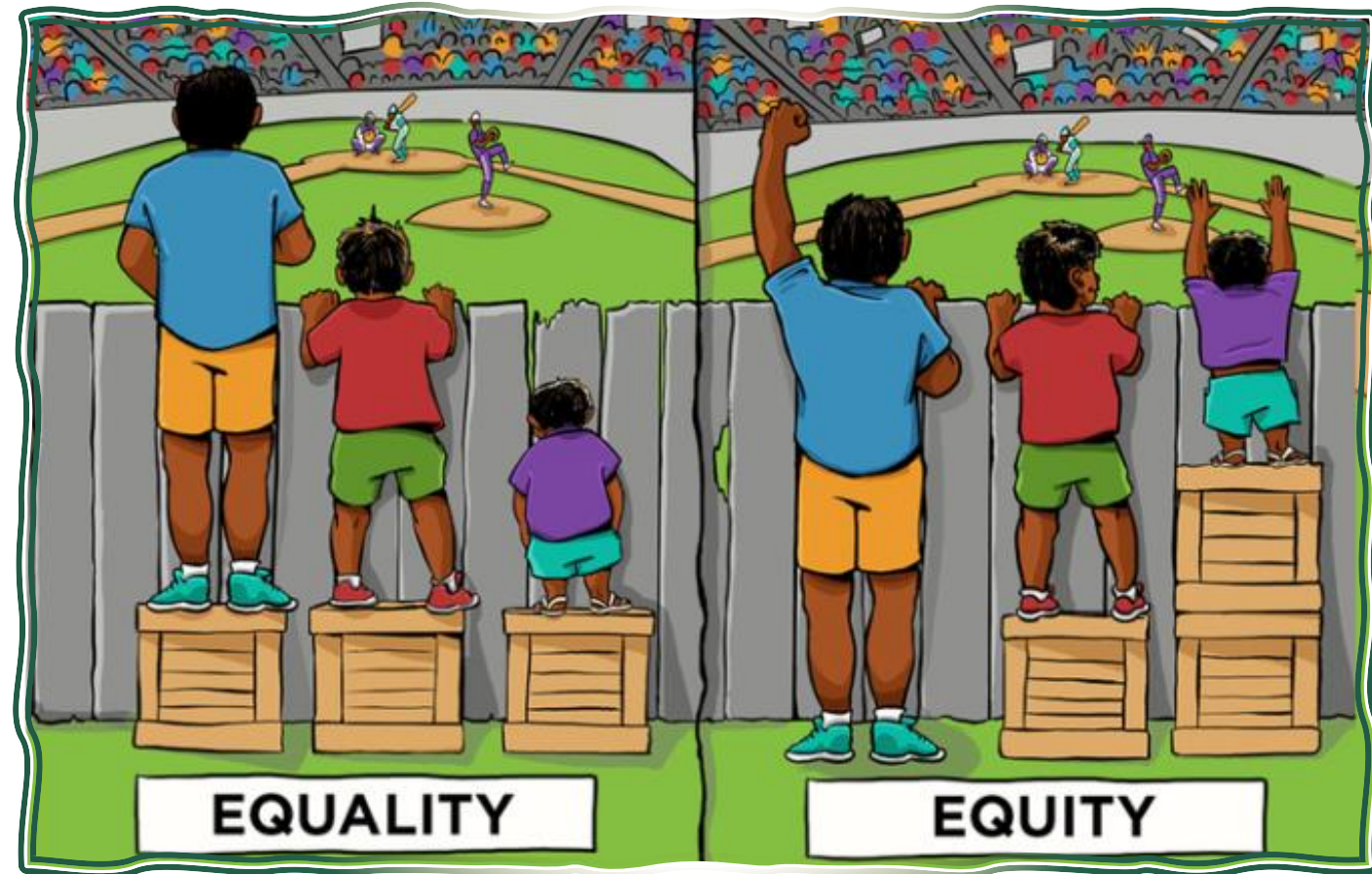
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Inclusive Assessment

Ensures fairness and equity for all students

- Originally focused on students with disabilities; It's considered good pedagogic practice for all
- Aims to tackle assessment at the point of design; Considers all aspects, from marking criteria to feedback methods
- Takes linguistic and cultural diversity into account; Ensures assessments do not exclude any students



Vulnerable Students in English Language Learning

Students who may potentially be at risk of exclusion

Students:

- with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds
- with special education needs
- with additional or different communication needs
- with behavioural or attendance issues
- with social, emotional, and mental health needs
- who are very young
- who are asylum seekers, refugees, and newcomers
- who have had adverse childhood experiences or trauma
- whose families are economically disadvantaged



Case – English & Dutch L2 learner

Sarah
Student

Do you have any students like Sarah in your classes?

Sarah is a 9-year-old girl in your 1st-grade class in the Netherlands. German is her mother tongue (L1). She recently moved to the Netherlands and started learning English and Dutch for the first time at school. Sarah uses only German at home.

Sarah regularly finds it difficult to accurately transcribe spoken words to written form in English and Dutch.

When presenting language, Sarah often struggles with fluency and word retrievals during verbal communication. She sometimes doesn't appear to understand instructions or tasks.

Sarah doesn't enjoy reading long texts, prefer shorter with visually engaging books or audiobooks. She tends to be more reserved in classroom discussions.



How can we help Sarah fulfil her potential?

As teachers, it's our responsibility to set up the conditions where all learners, like Sarah, can succeed and thrive

How can I help students like Sarah to participate more?

How can I help my vulnerable students?

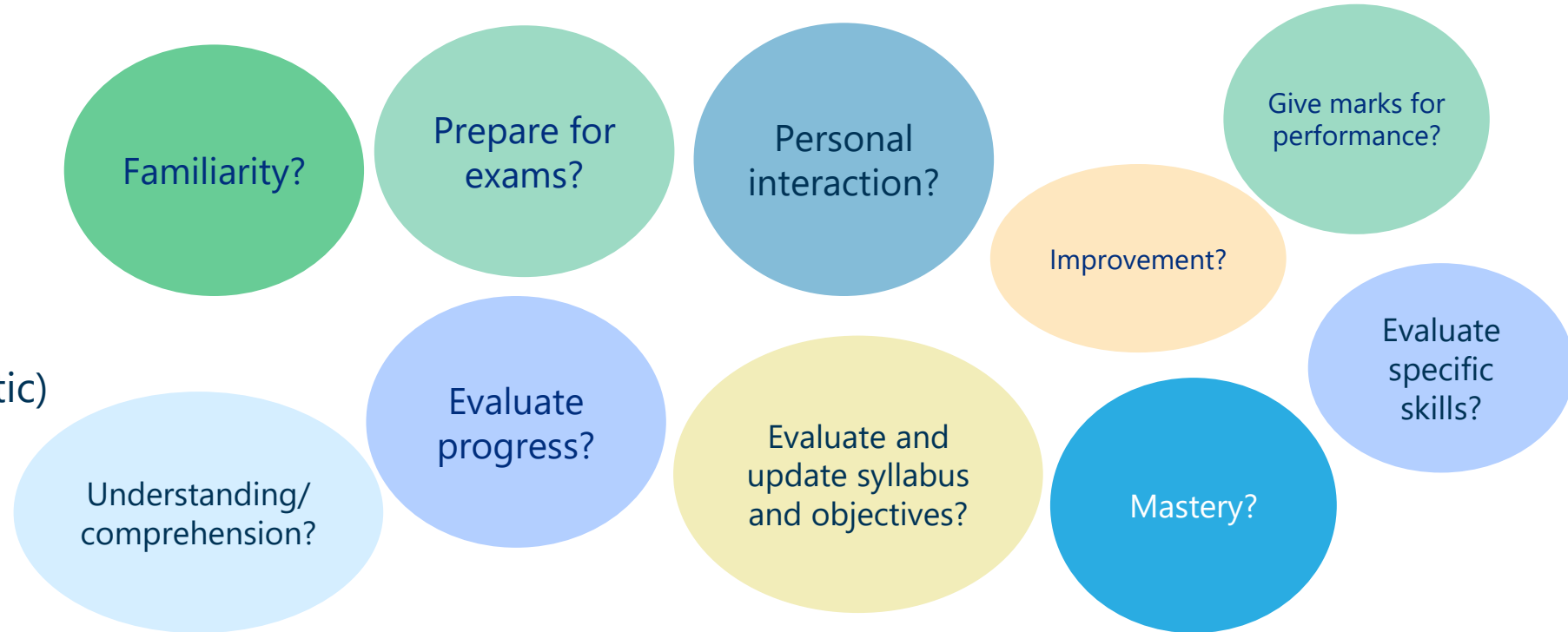
How can I make my classrooms and my evaluation more inclusive?

How can I...?

Why are we assessing students?

The primary purpose of assessment is to improve learning for all students, including those with diverse learning needs.

- Assessment for Learning (Formative Assessment)
- Assessment of Learning (Summative Assessment)
- Pre-assessment (Diagnostic)



In an inclusive learning environment, assessment is the process of collecting, synthesizing and interpreting data about each student's learning to aid the teacher's decision making.

Key principles of English language proficiency assessment

- A **correspondence** between language test **performance** and language **use**

“In order for a particular language test to be useful for its intended purposes, test performance must correspond in demonstrable ways to language use in non-test situation.”

- A clear and explicit definition of **qualities of test usefulness**

“Usefulness = Reliability + Construct Validity + Authenticity + Interactiveness + Impact + Practicality”

(Bachman & Palmer, 1996)



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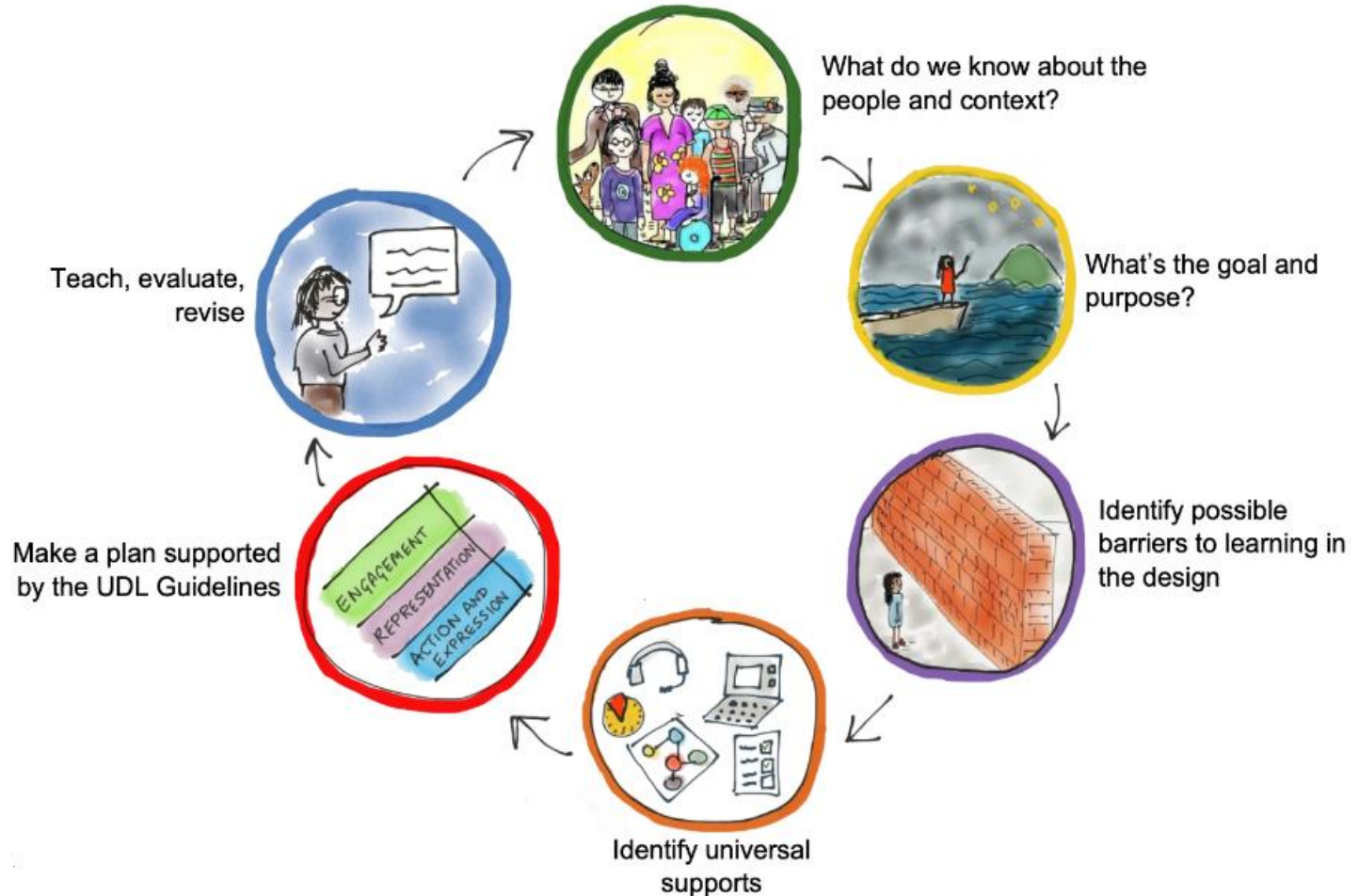
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Principles



Universal Design for Learning

A framework developed by CAST to guide the design of learning experiences to proactively meet the needs of all learners.

- Provides flexibility in:
 - Presenting information
 - Student responses and demonstrations of knowledge and skills
 - Keeping students engaged
- Reduces barriers by:
 - Offering appropriate accommodations
 - Providing supports and challenges
 - Maintaining high achievement expectations for all students, including those with disabilities and limited English proficiency



Universal Design for Assessment (UDA) Standards

Rooted in the UDL; A set of inclusive assessment methods and approaches that are designed to be flexible and adaptable

Inclusive assessment population	Precisely defined constructs	Accessible, non-biased items	Amenable to accommodations	Simple, clear and intuitive instructions and procedures
Opportunity for participations for all students regardless of physical characteristics, culture, linguistic background, or cognitive abilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Points awards for knowledge or performance (e.g. speed, handwriting, spelling, grammar),• Clear and straightforward language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Words, phrases, and concepts are commonly used across cultures and languages.• No pop culture references (e.g TV, music).• No stereotype or offensive terms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Horizontal text.• No construct irrelevant graphs or pictures.• Graphics are simple and clear.• Keys and legends at top of right item.• No time limits.• Provide extended time.• Subsections of tests are independent of each other.• Multiple modes of response (e.g written, oral or visual formats)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consistent instructions (e.g. circling correct answer).• Directions allow students to work independently without questions.• Practice or sample items are provided.• Numbered items



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Understanding students profiles and learning barriers

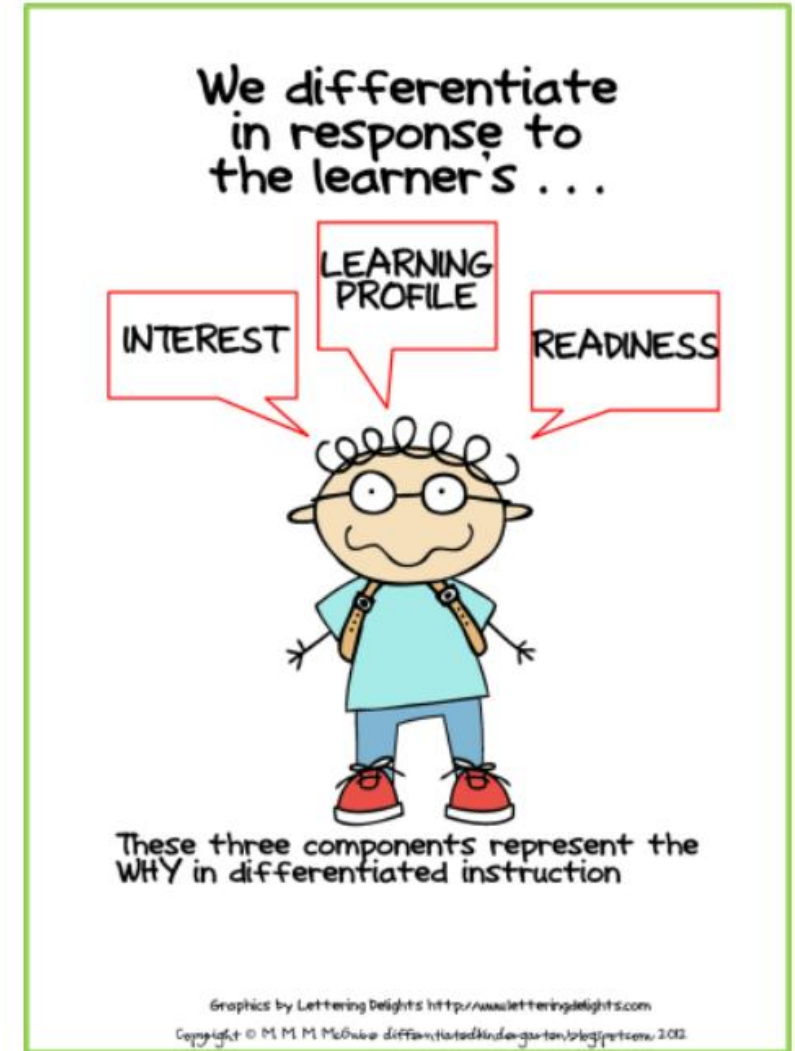


Understanding Student Profiles

Recognizes that students vary in their abilities and learning styles and adapts assessment accordingly to support their unique strengths and areas for growth.

- **Previous Learning:** What students have learned before.
- **Readiness:** Language, knowledge, and cognitive skills.
- **Learning Styles:** How students prefer to learn.
- **Academic Standing:** Current performance levels.
- **Abilities:** Skills and talents students possess.
- **Strengths and Weaknesses:** Areas of excellence and areas needing support.
- **Culture and Backgrounds:** Consideration of diverse backgrounds.

Teachers continuously gather data to understand students' needs and strengths.



Understanding Learning Barrier

A 'barrier' is something that gets in the way of a learner being successful.



Samples of Learning Difficulties



Cognitive

- Specific Learning Difficulties: dyslexia, dyscalculia
- Moderate learning difficulties: difficulty understanding basic concepts, having trouble reading, difficulties saying words or narrate stories, reduce working memories



Emotional, Social and Mental Needs

- Depression, fear of failure, lack of purpose, lack of previous knowledge, low motivation, lack of focus, lack of time, loud or unstable learning environment, low confidence
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorder, social disorders
- Mental health issues



Communication and Interaction Needs

- Speech and language communication needs
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)



Physical/ Sensory/ Health needs

- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Multisensory impairment
- Physical disability

Universal Tools

Available to all students,
based on student preference
and selection

Extended time	Using concise instructions	Simplified language
Using a glossary of key terms	Using visual aids (images, charts, graphs) along side written instructions	English dictionary
Expandable passages and/or items	Highlighter & Line reader	English thesaurus
Keyboard navigation	Spell check	Scratch paper
Read aloud	Adapting the text to an appropriate reading level	Strikethrough
Reducing # of questions	Breaking the tests into smaller parts and administer them at separate times	Breaks during a test

Designated Supports

Available to Specific Situations or Groups

Scribe or Translator (students dictate their responses)

Flexible scheduling

Native language instructions

Color contrast

Noise buffers (ear muffers, white noise)

Bilingual dictionary

Text to Speech

Simplified test instructions

Translations/ glossaries

Medical supports

Turn off any universal tools

Color overlays

Translated test instructions in Sign Language

Translated version of test in students' native language

Text to Speech in native language

Separate test setting (time, location, lighting)

Masking/ blocking off content

Amplification/ adjusting volume control

Accommodations

Individualized Supports

Note taking aids

Providing vocabulary lists/ word banks

Flexible grouping

Simplified test instructions

Audio record responses

Providing a separate room

Braille/ Braille transcript

Adjusting the format/ content of the test

Sign language

Speech to text

Text to Speech

Word prediction

Closed captioning

Scribe

Read aloud

Adapted keyboards

Human reader

Large print test book

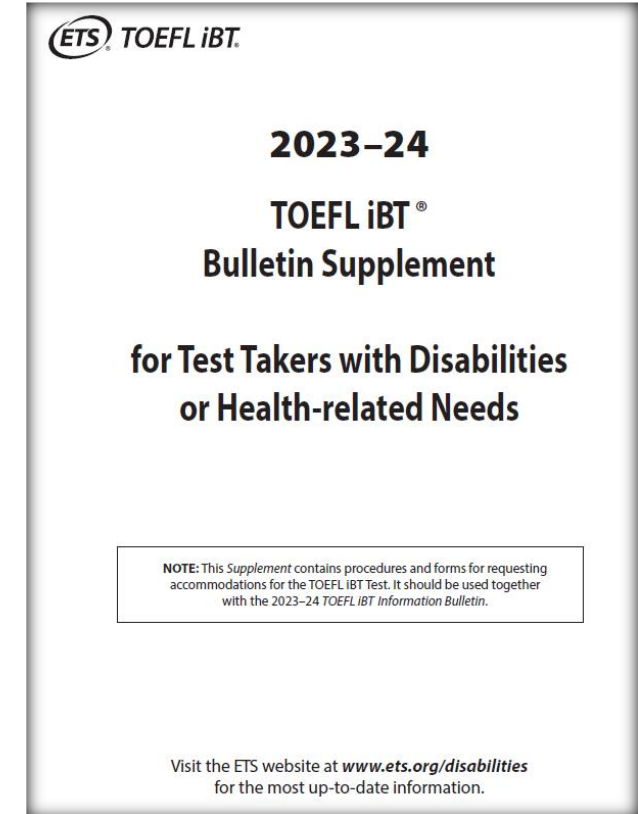
Common Testing Accommodations – ETS

Health-related needs are most commonly those affecting digestion, immune function, respiration, circulation, endocrine functions, etc., and frequently require only minor accommodations.

Extended test time (not all tests are timed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 percent (time and one-quarter) • 50 percent (time and one-half) • 100 percent (double time)
Extra Breaks	Breaks aren't included in test time (can be used for medication, snacks, trips to the restroom)
Accommodations for Computer Delivered tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ergonomic keyboard • Keyboard with touchpad • Screen magnification • Selectable background and foreground color • Trackball mouse
Assistance	Human reader Human scribe
Assistance for spoken directions	Assistance for check in and spoken directions (only for applicants who are deaf or hard of hearing) – oral interpreter, sign language interpreter
Alternate test formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braille • Large print test book • Large print answer sheet • Recorded audio

Specific Accommodations – ETS

<p>Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Psychiatric disability Physical disability</p>	<p>50% extended test time (time and one-half) or less and/or extra breaks</p>
<p>Visual Impairment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screen magnification • Screen reader • Selectable background and foreground colors • Braille • Large print (test book and/or answer sheet) • Recorded audio • Human reader • Scribe • Braille slate and stylus for note-taking only • Perkins braille for note-taking only • Extra breaks • 50 percent extended test time (time and one-half) or less • 100 percent extended test time (double time) when also requesting braille, a human reader, recorded audio, or a screen reader
<p>Hearing Impairment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 percent extended test time (time and one-half) or less • Extra breaks • Sign language interpreter (for check-in assistance and spoken directions) • Oral interpreter (for check-in assistance and spoken directions)



(2023–24 TOEFL iBT® Bulletin Supplement, 2023)



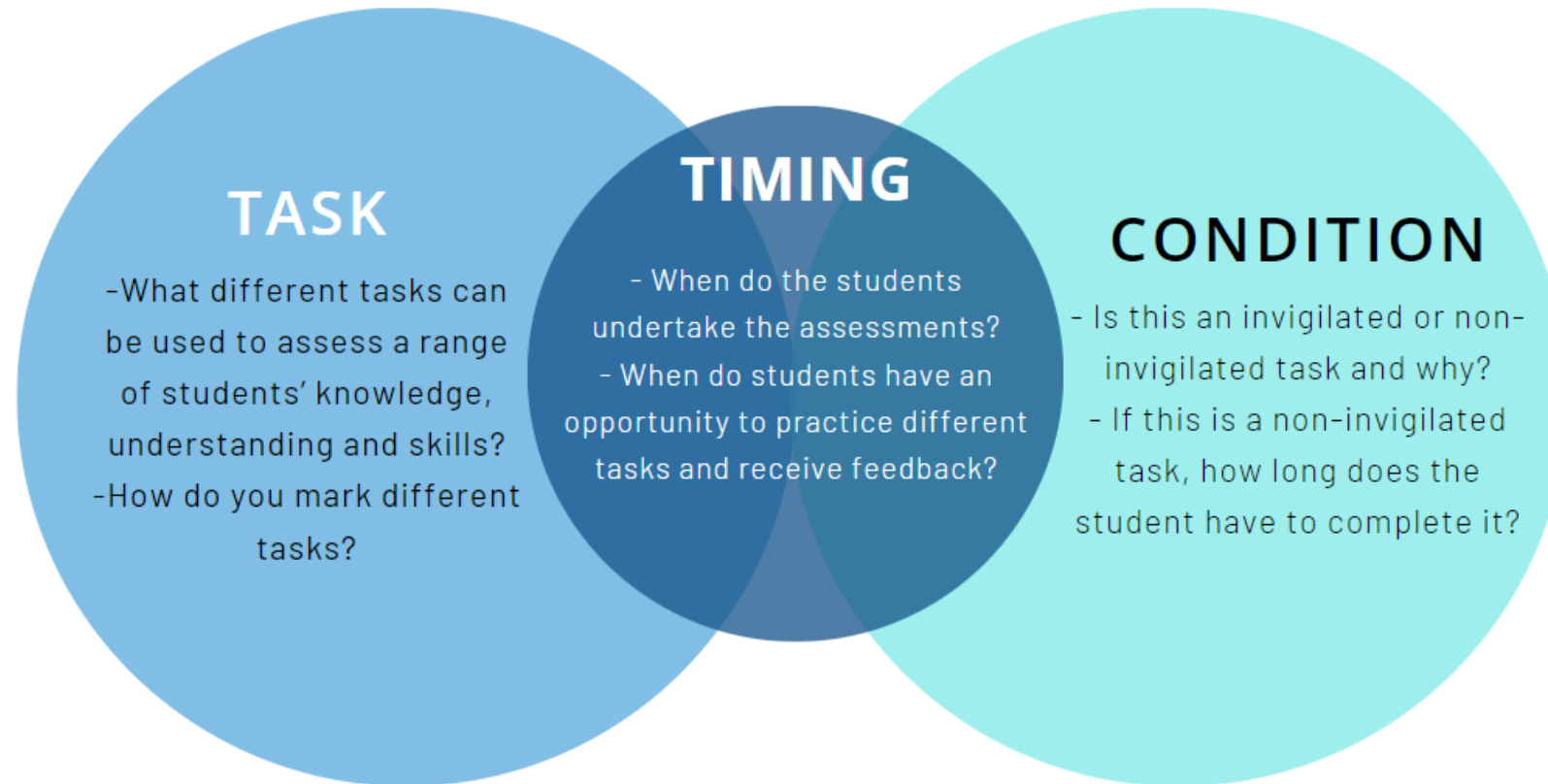
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Designing Inclusive Assessment



Elements to consider in designing inclusive assessment

Being proactive in approaches to assessment design from the outset



(Sotiriadou et al, 2020)

Variety of Tasks in Language Assessment

Receptive skills

True/ False, multiple choice, matching, short response, extended response, personal responses, gap-fill, intrusion, sequencing, summary and recall, dictation, repeat, read aloud, rating tasks, recording tasks

Writing

copying tasks, sequencing, error correction, sentence building, guided writing, narrative, reports, essays, reading(or listening) into writing, multiple drafts, portfolio assessment

Speaking

extended monologue, interview, information gap, discussion, roleplay

Inclusive Assessment Design

Sample

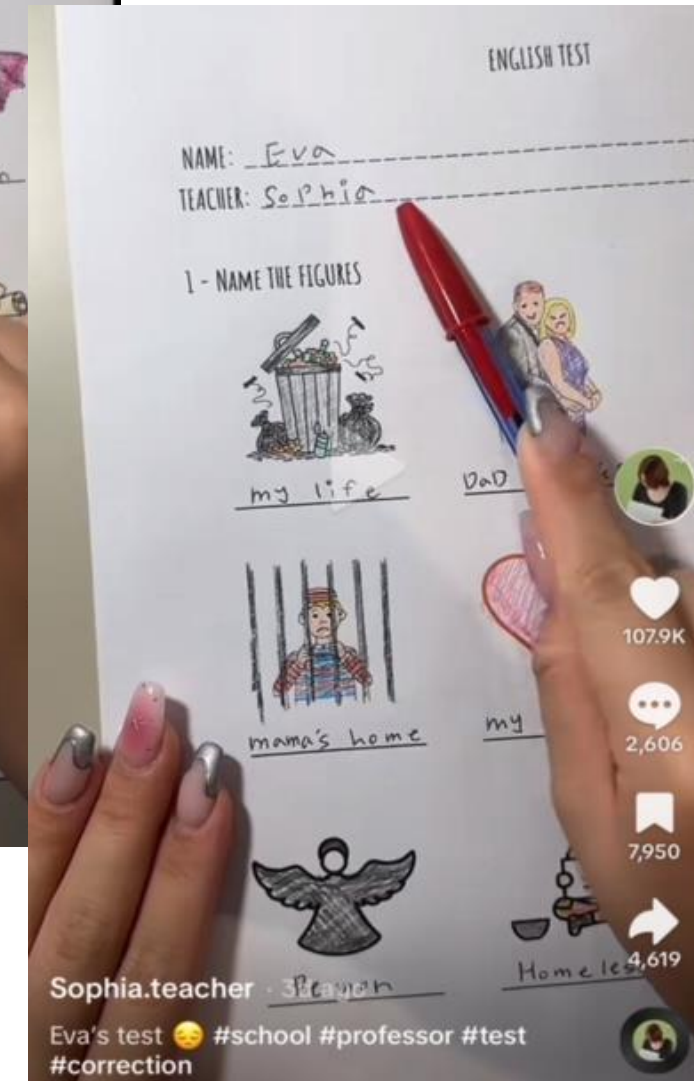
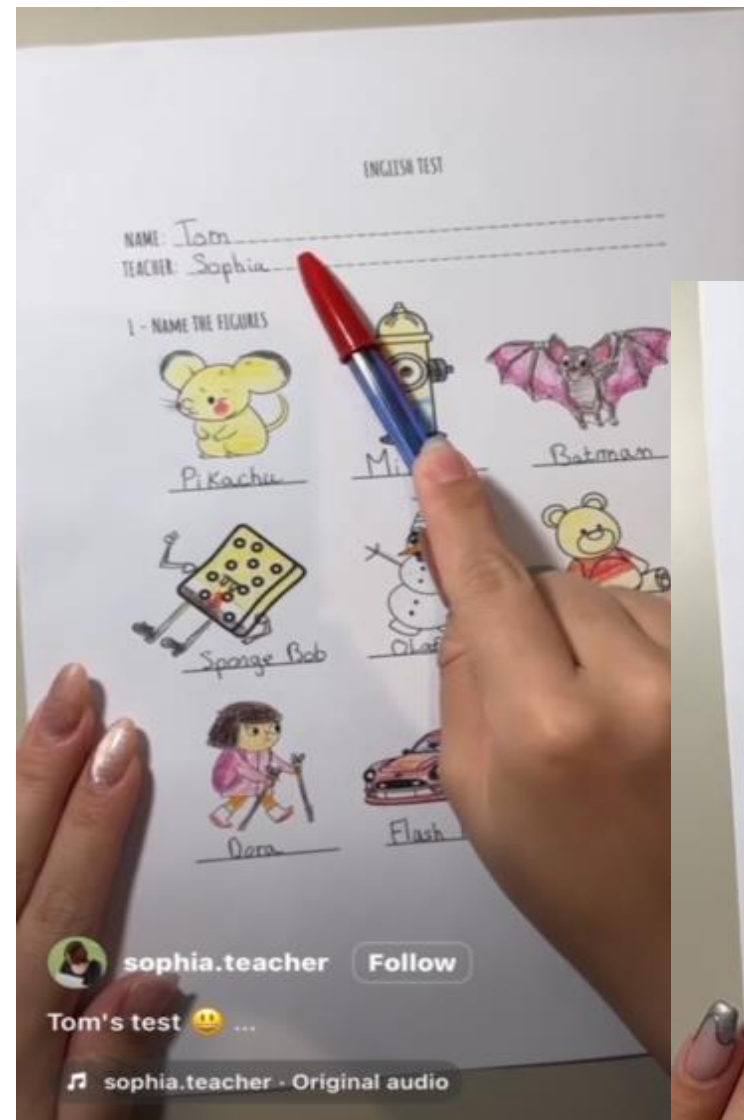
	Student Profiles	Potential Learning Barriers	Inclusive Classroom Activities to Minimize Barriers	Appropriate Inclusive Assessment
Student A	Prefers learning through written materials than verbal interactions; silence in class	Lack of confidence in speaking, anxious about offering opinions	Small group sharing opinions; low pressure situations	Project based tasks; Live class debate; Written reflections
Student B	Visual impairment: Low vision	Low vision learner can't adjust size of text; Difficulty reading small text	Use visuals in written assessment	A printed handout; Digital text with screen reader support; Use visuals; Extended time
Student C	Difficulty in recognizing words; struggles with spellings and pronunciation; difficulty learning new vocabulary	Learners with phonological processing difficulties	Phonetic awareness exercises; word walls; flashcards	A written essay task

Key Takeaways

- Implementation strategies (UDL, UDA, understanding learners' profiles and learning barriers) articulate the actionable steps to achieve inclusive assessments for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Ensure the effective integration of diverse and tailored approaches while concurrently upholding the principles of reliability and validity in assessment design.

Reflection:

How do you plan to implement inclusive assessment practices in your classroom?



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Questions?

Group activity – 20 minutes

Let's design an inclusive assessment for your student in your English classroom!

10 minutes

- Share a case study of a student
- Choose what skills you are teaching: reading, speaking, listening or writing.
- Fill in the Student profile form: define the student profile (v), learning barriers (v), inclusive classroom activities and appropriate inclusive assessment.

5 minutes

- Present findings to other groups

STUDENT PROFILE

STUDENT'S NAME:

GROUP	CLASS	DATE
DETAILS (AGE, GENDER, COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, ETC..)		POTENTIAL LEARNING BARRIERS
LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND		
INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES		
INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT OPTIONS		

Case Study :

Name: Javier

Age: 13

Gender: Male

Ethnicity: Mexican

Country of Origin: Mexico

Language Background: Spanish (L1)

Education Background: Javier was in Junior High School in Mexico. He is currently enrolled in a high school in the NL.

Personal Interests:

- Enjoys playing soccer and follows professional soccer leagues closely.
- Demonstrates a keen interest in technology, particularly video games and coding.

Learning Barriers:

- Javier struggles with acquiring and retaining new vocabulary, particularly in English.
- Due to limited exposure to English outside of school, Javier has difficulty with a wide range of vocabulary beyond basic conversational terms.

As a teacher of English, how can you design inclusive classroom activities and assessments that cater to Javier's diverse needs and minimize his barriers to learning?

Reading	Student Profiles	Potential Learning Barriers	Inclusive Classroom Activities to Minimize Barriers	Appropriate Inclusive Assessment
Student:	<p>Name: Javier Age: 13 Gender: Male Ethnicity: Mexican Country of Origin: Mexico Language Background: Spanish (L1)</p>	<p>Vocabulary Acquisition; Limited Exposure to Diverse Vocabulary; Language Proficiency Discrepancy; Cultural and Linguistic Differences (language usage, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references); Limited Exposure to Technology-Related Vocabulary</p>	<p>Soccer-themed Vocabulary Games (word matching, vocabulary bingo); Collaborative Soccer-themed Projects; Soccer Storytelling Circle</p>	<p>Reading Comprehension with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bilingual support materials, such as a glossary of soccer and technology terms in Spanish and English. - Allow extended time for completing tasks, considering Javier's learning barrier related to vocabulary acquisition. - Offer multiple modalities for demonstrating understanding, such as verbal responses, written answers, or visual presentations.

Listening	Student Profiles	Potential Learning Barriers	Inclusive Classroom Activities to Minimize Barriers	Appropriate Inclusive Assessment
Student:	<p>Name: Javier Age: 13 Gender: Male Ethnicity: Mexican Country of Origin: Mexico Language Background: Spanish (L1)</p>	<p>Limited Vocabulary; Auditory Processing Difficulties; Attention Span; Depending on the content of the listening activities, If the content does not capture his interest, he may become disengaged and struggle to maintain focus.</p>	<p>Guessing Game: a whistle blowing, crowd cheering, or ball bouncing; audio devices featuring soccer-themed stories, songs, or podcasts</p>	<p>Listening Comprehension with: - Provide visual supports such as picture cards, visual aids, or written instruction; Offer additional time or repetition of audio materials to accommodate his processing speed; Provide verbal or visual cues to help Javier stay focused and attentive during the assessment tasks.</p>

Speaking	Student Profiles	Potential Learning Barriers	Inclusive Classroom Activities to Minimize Barriers	Appropriate Inclusive Assessment
Student:	<p>Name: Javier Age: 13 Gender: Male Ethnicity: Mexican Country of Origin: Mexico Language Background: Spanish (L1)</p>	<p>Limited English vocabulary for expressing ideas and opinions. Difficulty with pronunciation and intonation due to Spanish language background.</p> <p>Lack of confidence in speaking English, especially in front of peers.</p> <p>Challenges in participating in discussions and expressing thoughts fluently.</p>	<p>Vocabulary games like charades or relay races with soccer and tech terms.</p> <p>Pair and group discussions on soccer matches or tech advancements.</p> <p>Role-playing real-life scenarios like ordering at a stadium or troubleshooting a game.</p> <p>Show and Tell sessions for sharing soccer memorabilia or coding projects, boosting confidence in familiar topics.</p>	<p>Solo talks on favourite soccer players.</p> <p>Group discussions on soccer or tech news to assess speaking and engagement.</p> <p>Peer feedback for collaboration and communication skills improvement.</p> <p>Pronunciation practice with personalized feedback to enhance clarity and fluency.</p>

Writing	Student Profiles	Potential Learning Barriers	Inclusive Classroom Activities to Minimize Barriers	Appropriate Inclusive Assessment
Student:	<p>Name: Javier Age: 13 Gender: Male Ethnicity: Mexican Country of Origin: Mexico Language Background: Spanish (L1)</p>	<p>Limited vocabulary for academic and technical writing. Difficulty with expressing complex ideas in English. Challenges in understanding grammar and sentence structure. Potential frustration with tasks unrelated to his interests or too advanced.</p>	<p>Vocabulary exercises tailored to academic and technical writing, related to soccer and technology. Scaffolded writing tasks with clear instructions and support materials. Peer review sessions for feedback and language modeling. Contextualized writing prompts based on soccer and technology interests.</p>	<p>Short essays on soccer or technology topics with clear rubrics. Portfolio assessment to track writing progress. Individual writing conferences for personalized feedback. Reflection activities to promote self-awareness and goal setting.</p>

Thank you!

aperwitasari@etsglobal.org