Assessing Language Ability in Young Adults and Adults

This course explores why language assessment is important and considers how teachers can assess language skills on an ongoing basis. You'll begin by exploring the value, design, and scoring of language assessments. Next, you'll investigate the importance of analyzing the results of a language measure. To help translate theory into practice, you'll also learn a teacher-friendly means for calculating item difficulty and review a checklist for evaluating a language measure.

In the second half of the course, you'll move to the assessment of English language learners' writing. You'll look through key concerns related to both the teaching and assessing of written language, describe possible formats for assessing written expression, and identify and critique scales that have been used to assess essays. You'll conclude the course with an investigation of ways to conduct performance assessments, how computer-assisted language testing differs from traditional assessment, and guidelines for the ethical use of tests.

Course Objectives

- Explain the value of language assessment and describe what it means to assess authentic language use.

- Learn how to design an assessment measure and understand the impact that both learner characteristics and test administration procedures have on the reliability of test results.

- Explain how to determine the value of items on a language measure, describe different scoring methods, and explain how to convert raw scores into values that are easier to interpret.

- Learn how to evaluate a language measure in a systematic and rigorous way and be able to identify issues of concern in interpreting test results.

- Identify different types of tests and test-taking strategies.

- Learn how to write test instructions.

- Understand the range of options that can be used to generate items and procedures for language measures.

- Describe common formats used to assess comprehension and vocabulary knowledge on reading assessment instruments.

- Explain the processes involved in reading in a first and second language.

- Identify key components involved in assessing listening, speaking, and writing skills.

- Learn how to conduct performance assessment.

- Explore how computer-assisted language testing differs from traditional assessment.

- Review guidelines for the ethical use of tests.

Course Syllabus

Module 1	**Introduction and the Nature of Assessment**
	• Reading: Language Assessment for Adults
	• Reading: Ongoing Language Assessment
	• Reading: Assessing What Students Really Know
	• Reading: The Role of Quizzes and Tests in Ongoing Classroom
	• Reading: Identifying Objectives
	• Reading: The Anatomy of Assessment Items
	• Reading: Item Types: Alternate Response and Multiple Choice
	• Reading: Respondents' Characteristics and Results
	• Reading: Administering the Language Measure
	• Reading: Summary
	• Application: Assessing Language Acquisition
	• Module Journal
Module 2	**Scoring and Evaluating Language Assessment Measures**
	• Reading: Determining the Value of Items on a Language Measure
	• Reading: Objective and Subjective Scoring
	• Reading: Scoring Methods
	• Reading: Weighting Items
	• Reading: Converting Raw Scores and Interpreting the Results
	• Reading: Analyzing a Test
	• Reading: Item Difficulty and Item Discrimination
	• Reading: Revising the Language Measure
	• Reading: Evaluating a Language Measure
	• Reading: Reporting Results
	• Reading: Summary
	• Application: Scoring Language Assessments
	• Module Journal

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Module 3	**Test-Taking Strategies and Assessment Formats** • Reading: What Can Students' Responses Tell Us • Reading: What Are Test-Taking Strategies? • Reading: The Use of Verbal Report to Investigative Test Taking Strategies • Reading: Strategies Used with Indirect Assessment Formats • Reading: Strategies Used with Direct Assessment Formats • Reading: The Role of Instructions on Language Measures • Reading: Preparing Instructions and Testing the Test • Reading: Practice in Test-Taking • Reading: Summary • Application: Test-Taking Strategies • Module Journal
Module 4	**Assessment Tools and Reading Comprehension** • Reading: Discrete-Point and Integrative Assessment • Reading: Integrative Items: Different Types of Meanings • Reading: Item Elicitation: Oral Formats • Reading: Item Elicitation: Written and Nonverbal Formats • Reading: Formats for Item Response • Reading: Reading in a First Language • Reading: Reading in a Second Language • Reading: Communicative, Structured-Response, and Fixed-Response Formats • Assessing Vocabulary Knowledge • Summary • Application: Assessment Tools and Reading Comprehension • Module Journal

Module 5	**Assessing Listening and Speaking**
	• Reading: An Introduction • Reading: An Introduction to Assessing Listening • Reading: Assessing Intensive Listening • Reading: Assessing Extensive Listening • Reading: The Processing of Listening Comprehension Items • Reading: Self-Assessment of Listening Ability • Reading: Interviews and the Use of Oral Proficiency Scales • Reading: Semidirect Interviews • Reading: Measuring Speaking Ability in the Classroom • Reading: Assesing Pragmatics • Reading: Rating Communicative Ability • Reading: Summary • Reading: Application: Assessing Listening and Speaking • Module Journal
Module 6	**Writing, Performance, Computer-Assisted, and Critical**
	• Reading: The Teaching and Learning of Writing • Reading: The Assessment of Essay Writing • Reading: Rating Scales: Holistic Scoring • Reading: Analytic and Primary Trait Scoring • Reading: Multitrait Rating • Reading: In Summary: The Four Rating Scales • Reading: Designing L2 Performance Assessment • Reading: Computer-Assisted Language Assessment • Reading: Critical Language Assessment • Reading: Ethical Testing Practices • Reading: Lessons Learned from the Course • Reading: Summary • Application: Writing, Performance, Computer-Assisted, and Critical Language Assessment

	• Module Journal