

# Exploring assessment

## Introduction

In this teacher development activity, participants explore and share their views of assessment and its role in the language classroom. They look at some of the criticisms of testing and discuss together how they can mitigate these negative factors.



This activity draws on materials and ideas presented by Chris Sowton in his presentation 'What Paulo Freire can teach us about the ELT classroom.'

**Webinar time reference:** 17:15 – 21:03

**Time:** 40 – 60 minutes

**Aim:** To discuss the impacts of testing on classroom practice.

## Preparation:

- Make copies of the views on testing from the materials section.

## Procedure

- Tell the participants that Paulo Freire had quite a negative view of summative testing and the impact it has on teaching and learning.
- Split the participants into two groups. Ask one group to work together in smaller groups of 4 – 5 and brainstorm all the benefits of testing, and ask the other group to split into small groups and brainstorm all the bad things about testing.

- Give them time to think of ideas and then pair participants from each of the groups, so that they share their pros and cons together.
- Give them time to discuss, and then ask all the participants who are in favour of testing to move to the right-hand side of the room and all those who are against to move to the left.
- Give the participants each a copy of the 8 Views of testing. Ask them to read and decide which of the statements they agree with.
- Next, ask the participants to discuss in groups what they can do to mitigate these negative impacts of testing.
- Open the discussion up to the whole class and get them to share their suggestions and comments.

### **Materials:**

#### **8 Views of testing**

1. Teachers correct grammar and pronunciation in class to show that they know particular things about the language as they are not confident in their own pedagogy and because the exams focus on those things.
2. Speaking is seldom assessed because it is complex and subjective.
3. Many students can display their learning 'peacock like' - but remain unable to use the language meaningfully.
4. Many students and parents are often obsessed with test grades and forget about the value of learning.
5. Many students don't take the work seriously unless they think it will be on the test.
6. Many teachers just drill their students for the exam and forget that they'll need to use the language in a meaningful way at some point in their lives.
7. Tests only test students' abilities to pass tests.
8. Some students can be good at English and not good at taking tests.

## Additional resources

### Assessment: Attitudes, practices and needs

- This paper explores teachers' attitudes, practices and needs relating to assessment. One of the key findings of this project is that teachers develop their assessment practices through their own experiences. The observations of practice would suggest that teachers engage in a variety of assessment practices successfully, but consider these practices to be part of good teaching and not assessment. This study will be of interest to teachers, teacher trainers and academics seeking insights into language teaching, testing and assessment.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/assessment-attitudes-practices-and-needs>

### An uncertain and approximate business? Why teachers should love testing

- Many teachers have at best an equivocal attitude to testing, and at worst outright hostility to the whole concept. Yet they do it all the time. This talk looks at the downsides and upsides of high and low stakes assessment and offers a testing vision for both lovers and haters.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/uncertain-and-approximate-business-why-teachers-should-love-testing>

### Inclusive assessment approaches

- Assessment is a crucial part of learning. It can be difficult to know how to identify learners with special educational needs (SENs) in the classroom and how to include learners with SENs in the assessment process.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/inclusive-assessment-approaches>

### Ongoing assessment - fun not fear!

- Jenny Bedwell looks at ongoing assessment and its effective use not only in recycling and revising language, but also in encouraging younger learners to be aware of their own abilities and needs and to perceive assessment as a positive experience.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/ongoing-assessment-fun-not-fear>

### **Managing your teaching staff – how to keep a staff motivated, challenged, and developing professionally**

- In this session, Fiona Dunlop explores ways of identifying what motivates the teachers you manage and how to encourage them to take ownership of their CPD in a way that will benefit not only the teacher but the organisation too. The session covers areas such as developmental observation techniques and focussed action research for teachers.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/graphic-organisers>

### **Understanding emotional and social intelligence among English language teachers**

- This paper explores the role of emotional and social competences as key components of effective classroom practice. The study has two phases. In phase one, a survey was conducted to establish the emotional and social intelligence of English language teachers from across the globe, as well as the role of mediating variables. In the second phase, case studies were employed to examine the beliefs and practices of selected highly emotionally and socially intelligent teachers. Discussing the findings, we reflect on the implications for language teaching, language teacher education and further research in this area.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/understanding-emotional-and-social-intelligence-among-english-language-teachers>