

Proper Assessments

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A New Experience

<http://youtu.be/zgwBX9rPwhQ?t=4m40s>

Our Question

How can I assess my student's knowledge of content without the results getting contaminated by their knowledge of English?

- We want to know if there are good strategies to use in order to create assessments that will test the student's theoretical knowledge of content independently from their content literacy and English fluency

Rationale

- Assessment should accurately reflect the intellectual landscape of the classroom
- Recovery strategies for students that don't understand theories are wildly different from the recovery strategies for students that can't properly communicate their ideas.

Sources

The varied approach: Theoretical and Practical sources of knowledge

Educational Journals:

The Reading Teacher, Journal of Research in Science Teaching, and The American Educational Research Association

We also talked with a middle school teacher in Washington Township.

Key Research Ideas

Where do the problems come from?

What are the proposed solutions?

Are there acknowledged problems with those solutions, if so, what are they?

What the sources say

The problem lies with the assessments being in English.

“An overwhelming majority of assessment tools are in English only, presenting a potential threat to the usefulness of assessments when ELLs’ lack of English prevents them from understanding test items” (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, Sun-Irminger, 2006).

What the sources say

State assessments test what students should have learned in an entire year, rather than specific skills that have been learned.

“...the target of state assessments under NCLB is what students are expected to learn in an entire year of schooling in a subject matter given state standards for this expectation. This is very different from attention to how to assess isolated learning and problem-solving skills better where attention can be focused solely on assessing learning that does not bear any intended relation to other kinds of learning expected of students.”

(Duran, 2008)

Potential Problems

- Counter-intuitively, assessments should be given in the language of instruction. Translation can introduce new ambiguities and confusions into the text (Siegel, 2007)
- Academic English has different communicative goals than conversational English, forcing ELLS to do double or triple the decoding

Did we answer our question?

The proposed solutions are:

- Offer students opportunities to show and practice knowledge in nonlanguage-dependent ways through Venn diagrams, charts, drawings, mind maps, or PowerPoint slides. (Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, Sun-Irminger, 2006)
- Provide reference materials for content literacy vocabulary that is contextualized within the structure of the class

Professional Resource

“You can demonstrate a type of problem and then ask a student to show it back to you. Unfortunately, most application problems involve understanding a word problem. Drawing pictures – labeled when possible – is very helpful to get them past the language. Simplifying the language to as basic as possible is also necessary.” (Mrs. Reel)

How do we know?

- Only the linguistically modified items reduced the performance gap between ELs and non-ELs (Siegel, 2007)

Standardized Testing

In regards to Standardized testing...

- Those tests aren't going to be made specifically for the needs of ELL students.
- It's important to teach your students how to cope with those problems.
- It's important to give the students practice with the types of problems they will encounter on the Standardized tests (Mrs. Reel)

Did we cover everything

- What are we missing?
- What's still a problem?
- We should ask the rest of the class for more questions?

Works Cited

Duran, R. P. (2008). Assessing english-language learners' achievement. *American Educational Research Association*, 32(1), 292-327.

Lenski, S. D., Ehlers-Zavala, F., Daniel, M. C. and Sun-Irminger, X. (2006), Assessing English-Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 60: 24–34.

Siegel, M. A. (2007), Striving for equitable classroom assessments for linguistic minorities: Strategies for and effects of revising life science items. *J. Res. Sci. Teach.*, 44: 864–881.