

Assessing Adult ESL Learners: A Workshop for Teachers of Adult ESL Learners

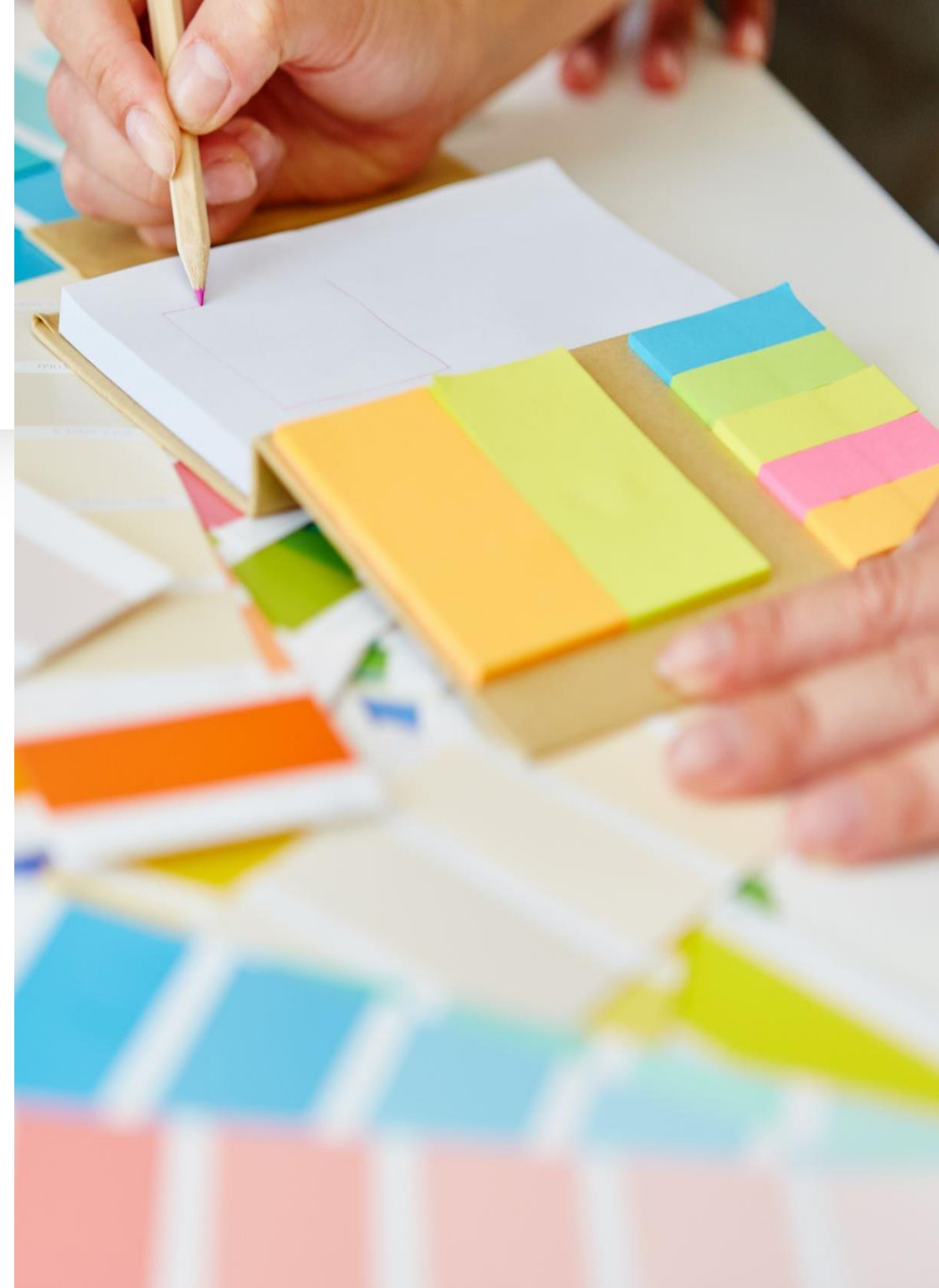
Nilima Hakim Mow

Linguistics PhD Student, George Mason University

Email: nmow@gmu.edu

Workshop Objectives

- Understand key principles of effective ESL assessments
- Explore different types of assessments (formal, peer, self-assessment)
- Discuss reliability, validity, and practicality in assessment design
- Engage in hands-on activities to apply assessment strategies



Why Assessment Matters in Adult ESL Learning

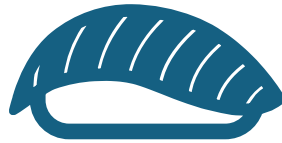
- Helps track learner progress
- Provides feedback for improvement
- Encourages self-directed learning
- Ensures fair and equitable evaluation

What challenges do you face in assessing adult ESL learners?

Understanding Your Learners



Target audience: Lower-intermediate adult ESL learners



Background diversity: Different native languages (Chinese, Spanish, Korean, Bangla, Burmese, Japanese, etc.)



Learning goals: Improve vocabulary, writing, speaking, reading

Key Assessment Principles

- **Practicality** – Easy to administer and grade
- **Reliability** – Consistent results across different students and instructors
- **Validity** – Measures what it intends to measure
- **Beneficial Consequences** – Positive washback and feedback loops

Which principle do you struggle with the most?



Different Kinds of Assessments

Vocabulary Assessment

(Formal, summative, multiple-choice test)

1. Objective: Assess vocabulary comprehension

2. Example Question:

IMLD started in 1999 with the objective of ____ linguistic and cultural diversity.

- a) promoting
- b) disregarding
- c) removing

1. Scoring: Dichotomous (0 or 1)

2. Feedback Plan: Review distractors & explain correct choices

Feedback

1. IMLD started in 1999 with the objective of _____ linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

- a. promoting
- b. ruining
- c. removing

The stem contains all necessary information to select the key (a). Selection of distractor (b) and (c) should elicit a discussion on the comprehension of the meaning of these two vocabulary words. These two distractors are anticipated to be crossed out by higher-level students. Though they are grammatical but offer opposite meanings to the key.

Vocabulary Assessment Activity

Let's develop a feedback plan.

Feedback Plan: Review distractors & explain correct choices

1. International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is _____ every year by member states of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

- a. observes
- b. observed
- c. started
- d. protested

Writing Assessment

(Summative, analytic rubric-based assessment)

- **Objective:** Assess organization, logical progression, grammar, and vocabulary
- **Task:** Write a short essay (e.g., “The best place you have ever traveled to?”)
- **Rubric:** 4-point scale for each criterion
- **Revising & Feedback:** Peer and instructor feedback before final submission

Writing Prompt: Where is the best place you have ever traveled to?

Write down a short essay explaining the best place you have ever traveled to. It can be a place in your own country, or abroad. Compose your essay using correct grammar and mechanics. Incorporate travel vocabulary to demonstrate your meaning comprehension. This is an open-book exam. So you can take help of a dictionary or thesaurus. No electronic devices are allowed during the assessment.

Some questions to help brainstorm the prompt:

Where is the best place you have ever traveled to?

When did you go there?

Whom did you go with?

Why did you go there?

What did you like most about that place?

Would you like to go there again?

Any other experience related to that visit?

Time: 40 minutes for writing the first draft. Students will also be given a chance to revise and resubmit their draft for a final score after they receive scores and feedback on their first draft. This draft will also get peer-reviewed by their peers following the instructions offered by the instructor.

Rubrics

Criteria	Exceeds Expectations (5 to > 4 points)	Meets Expectations (3 to > 2 points)	Needs more work (1 to > 0 point)	Feedback
Organization	Essay is very well organized and constructed with a variety of complex structures.	Essay is well organized and constructed with some complex structures.	Essay is not well-organized and not well-constructed as it includes limited use of structures.	
Logical Progression	Essay maintains logical progression of ideas with graceful transition words.	Essay maintains logical progression of ideas with some generic transition words.	Essay does not maintain logical progression of ideas with transition words, or the transition words they use are unsuitable.	
Grammar	The writer uses effective and adequate grammar. Grammar is consistently used correctly and creates no issues in understanding the content.	The writer uses grammar correctly while using some specific grammatical forms but makes mistakes in others which influence the understanding of the content.	The writer consistently makes errors in using different grammatical forms that hardens the understanding of the content.	
Vocabulary	The writer uses topic appropriate, clear, and varied vocabulary demonstrating effective meaning comprehension.	The writer uses some topic appropriate vocabulary which are limited in variety and might be vague at times which decreases effective expression of meaning.	The writer uses unsuitable vocabulary that lacks variety and interferes with meaning comprehension.	
Total-				

Reading Assessment

(Formal, summative, multiple-choice test)

- **Objective:** Assess reading comprehension (main ideas, inference, details, vocabulary in context)
- **Task:** Read a passage and answer multiple-choice questions
- **Scoring:** Dichotomous (0 or 1)
- **Feedback Plan:** Review answers, discuss distractors

Speaking Assessment

(Monologic speaking task)

- **Objective:** Assess sentence structure, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation
- **Task:** 3-minute monologue on “How do you spend your weekends?”
- **Scoring Method:** Scaled checklist (1-3 points per category)
- **Feedback:** Individual feedback with common errors discussion

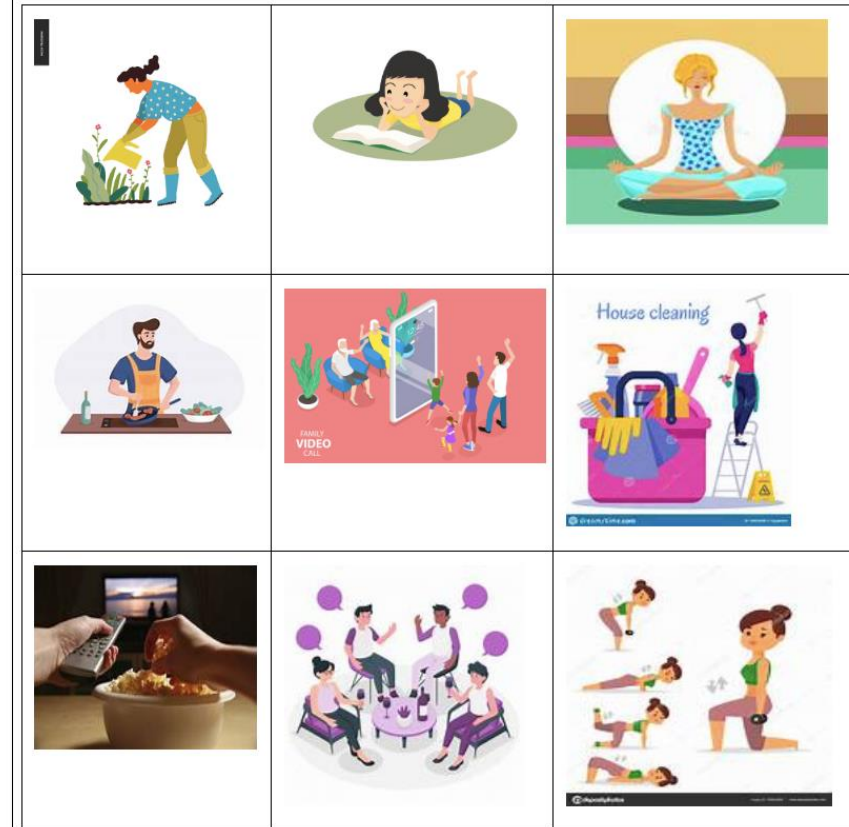
Speaking Assessment

Speaking Prompt: How do you spend your weekends?

Picture-cued Task: Responsive Speaking

Tell us how you do spend your weekends. Here are some pictures of activities that you might find related to the prompt questions. You will include them in your description. If any of the pictures don't go with your answers, say why that doesn't go. Also, if anything you do but is not present among the given pictures, feel free to add that to your monologue. Lastly, share what you used to do back home (when you were not in the US) to spend your weekend.

❖ **How do you spend your weekend?**



❖ **How did you spend your weekends when you were in your country/ before coming to the US?**

Speaking Assessment Rubrics

Grading Key:

Exceeds Expectations: 3

Meets Expectations: 2

Needs More Work: 1

Criteria	Points	Feedback
Sentence structure (Develop adequate and various sentence structures for a 3 <u>minutes</u> monologue)	1/2/3	
Wide range of vocabulary (Adequate and wide range of vocabulary relevant to the prompt)	1/2/3	
Use of past and Present <u>form</u> in proper places (Proper use of present and past forms where necessary)	1/2/3	
Clear and understandable pronunciation (Pronunciation is clear and understandable and intelligibility is not impacted anyway)	1/2/3	
Total:		
Additional Comment:		



Peer Assessment as an Alternative

- **Objective:** Encourage critical thinking & self-improvement
- **Task:** Review a peer's writing draft using a structured worksheet
- **Challenges:** Bias, inaccurate feedback, lack of confidence
- **Solutions:** Provide clear guidelines, scaffold peer review sessions

Peer Assessment Worksheet

Peer Assessment Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions for the Worksheet: After reading your peer's draft, answer the following questions below to provide them with feedback and help guide their revisions. Please provide specific, detailed answers using complete sentences.

Point distribution: Each answer is worth 1 point. Feedback session worth 3 points for 3 comments (1 point for extra credit). Another 1 point for extra credit for the question session.

General thoughts on your peers' paper

1. What do you think of this draft? Share your first impression. (1 point)

2. What did you like most about your peer's draft? (1 point)

Comments on Grammar (Strengths & Weaknesses)

3. Does the essay show strengths in using grammar? Explain where and how. (1 point)

4. Does the essay show weaknesses in using grammar? Explain where and how. (1 point)

Comments on Organization (Strengths & Weaknesses)

5. Share your peer's strengths in organization. (1 point)

6. Share your peer's weaknesses in organization. (1 point)

Comments on Vocabulary (Strengths and Weaknesses)

7. Does your peer use a wide range of vocabulary? (Share your peer's strengths in using vocabulary.) (1 point)

8. Does your peer not use a wide range of vocabulary? (Share your peer's weaknesses in using vocabulary.) (1 point)

Feedback

9. Offer constructive feedback on your peer's draft. Offer at least 2 specific pieces of feedback that will help and guide your peers to revise their drafts and improve their learning. (1 point for each comment. One extra comment will earn you an extra point; total 3 points)

Question

10. Do you have any questions for your peer regarding their draft? (Extra credit - 1)

Total points: ____/10

Self-Assessment in Writing

(Process-based reflection tool)

- **Objective:** Encourage independent learning & self-reflection
- **Task:** Writing process checklist (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing)
- **Scoring:** Completion-based, encourages reflection rather than grading

Sample Self-assessment

Checklist

Student's Name:

Name of the Writing Project:

Mark each category with a tick mark when you complete each step. Also, keep a log of how you are doing things.]

Writing Process	Steps	Tickmark	Writing Log (Share briefly how you completed this step - one sentence is fine)
Prewriting Planning Time	Brainstorm your prompt		
	Do some research on your topic		
	Create an outline of your project		
Drafting Writing Time	Do some freewriting on your topic		
	Develop Introduction		
	Develop Body Paragraphs		
	Develop Conclusion		
Revising (First Draft) Review, modify and organize your work	Revise the first draft by rephrasing, restructuring, reorganizing, adding and deleting as needed		
Editing Proofread and correct the errors after a careful reading	Check Grammar, Check Spelling, Check Punctuation		

Assessment Portfolio

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Peer Review and Instructor's Feedback Get constructive feedback from your peers and instructor.	Get feedback from your Peer		
	Get feedback from your instructor		
Revising Review, modify, and organize your work following the feedback you have been offered	Reorganize, rephrase, add, delete, rephrase as required		
Submitting Submit the last revised draft.	Submit on canvas/ submit a printed copy. (As your instructor requires)		

Grading Key:

Excellent: Completes the task by marking each category and writing log for each step = 3

Good: Partially completes the task by marking and writing log for 7 categories out of 14 = 2

Below Average: Marks and writes log for less than 7 categories = 1

Criteria	Points
Mark Checklist	1/2/3
Complete research Writing Log	1/2/3

Assessment Description:

This assessment is a type of self-assessment for students working on one of their major

Discussion

How do you incorporate self-assessment in your teaching?

Balancing Practicality, Reliability, and Validity

- **Trade-offs in Assessment Design**
 - Highly reliable = Often less practical
 - Highly valid = Sometimes less practical
 - Need a balance to ensure effectiveness

How can we make assessments both reliable and practical?

Final Thoughts & Takeaways



Use a mix of assessment types for a well-rounded evaluation



Consider students' diverse backgrounds when designing assessments



Provide clear rubrics and feedback to maximize learning impact



What's one assessment strategy you will implement from today's session?



Questions?



Thank You!