



Council of Europe
Language Policy Unit
DGII – Education Department
www.coe.int/lang-migrants

Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants



Assessment of language learning

Functions of assessment

Assessment of language learning serves one of two functions: either to measure learners' proficiency without reference to a language course, or to measure the extent to which they have achieved the goals of a particular programme of learning. Within the latter function it is usual to distinguish between formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment takes place during the course of learning in order to provide learners with feedback on their progress and alert the teacher to any aspects of the course that may need adjustment; it is sometimes referred to as 'assessment for learning'. Summative assessment takes place at the end of the course and seeks to measure overall learning achievement; it is sometimes referred to as 'assessment of learning'.

Forms of assessment

Assessment usually takes one of two forms: either a test that generates a score which can be translated into a statement about the learner's proficiency/achievement, or a compilation of evidence that illustrates what the learner can do in his or her target language. The evidence may take the form of written text (essays, letters or other documents relevant to the learner's target repertoire) or recordings in audio or video which demonstrate the learner's oral capacities. It is often presented in a portfolio.

Alternative forms of assessment like portfolios have three advantages over tests: evidence may be collected under non-threatening conditions, which gives it greater validity as evidence of a learner's true ability; evidence may be derived from the performance of real-world tasks that have been identified as particularly important for the learners in question; and there is greater potential to judge learners' performance holistically and thus to focus on their underlying ability to complete tasks successfully.

Tests sometimes entail sanctions while alternative forms of assessment are often intended to enhance learners' motivation.

The European Language Portfolio as an assessment instrument

The Council of Europe's European Language Portfolio (ELP) includes checklists of 'I can' descriptors arranged according to the activities and proficiency levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The checklists are used by the learner to identify learning targets and assess learning outcomes. When evidence of proficiency is systematically linked to checklist descriptors, the ELP can complement or replace a test that is linked to the CEFR. The use of the ELP as an assessment instrument requires continuous support from the teacher, especially as self-assessment will not have played a role in the previous educational experience of many adult migrants.

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Related Resources

- *Responding to the language needs of adult refugees in Ireland: an alternative approach to teaching and assessment*, 2008 - David Little.
- *Language tests for social cohesion and citizenship – an outline for policy makers*, ALTE Authoring Group (Association of Language Testers in Europe), 2008
- *The European Language Portfolio for Adult Migrants: Learning the language of the host country*, 2012, Barbara Lazenby Simpson. (pages created for this ELP cover a ranger of possible teaching contexts and can be adapted according to needs). Accompanied by
 - *Linguistic integration of adult migrants and the ELP: an introduction*, David Little
 - *ELP for adult migrant language learners: A Guide for Teachers*, Barbara Lazenby Simpson
 - *Goal-setting and Self-assessment Checklists*, David Little
 - *Workshop activities to introduce the CEFR and the ELP*, David Little