Testing the language and literacy ability of ESOL learners with little or no history of education

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I want to talk about:

• The current situation in the UK
• Issues for learners and teachers
• A message for teacher education
I WANT YOU TO EXAMINE
Tug of war!

Policy needs learner
Testing Reading:

Reasons for wrong answers Test A

- Concept of the question: 59%
- Language of the question: 14%
- Reading of the text: 27%
Reasons for wrong answers Test B

- Concept of the question: 44%
- Language of the question: 29%
- Reading of the text: 27%
Reasons for wrong answers Test C (B2 level control group)

- 95% of the answers were incorrect due to the reading of the text.
- 2.5% each were incorrect due to the concept of the question and the language of the question.
Testing speaking:

• Grammar
• Vocabulary
• Pronunciation
• Coherence and cohesion
• Interactive competence

• All equally important? What’s also crucial?
Three scenarios: A house or an apartment?

1. At home

Event: Discussion

Situation: at home, over dinner (real)

Community: interested friends or relatives
2. In the classroom

Event: Discussion

Situation: the classroom (theoretical)

Community: Sympathetic teacher/fellow learners
3. In an exam

Event:
Discussion

Situation:
Exam (theoretical)

Community:
Judges and judged
Two writers

1. The writer of the text being studied
2. The writer of the rubric and the questions

Two audiences

1. A hypothetical audience
2. The examiner
Domains

Pragmatic intentions of

• **Everyday life?** To amuse, inform, instruct etc.

• **The test?** To demonstrate linguistic and socio-linguistic competence

within a different educational culture

(Simpson 2006)
Intercultural competence

Sercu’s (2006) three facets:

• Affective (sensitivity)
• Cognitive (awareness)
• Behavioural (adroitness)

In the domain of everyday life and the test?
Question

How far are teachers aware of the size of the assessment literacy gap between themselves and their learners?
I don’t know why they don’t get it. Why do I have to keep telling them?
Key findings:

Teachers were drawing on their own educational experience, mainly university, in terms of

• strategies and techniques

• attitudes and feelings
Thank you!

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References

• LevinsonS C (1983) Pragmatics Cambridge: CUP
• Simpson, J (2006) Differing expectations in the assessment of the speaking skills of ESOL learners. Linguistics and Education 17:40-45