

SOME EUROPEAN STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' VIEWS ON LANGUAGE TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

A report on a questionnaire survey

Gudrun Erickson and Jan-Eric Gustafsson, Göteborg University, Sweden

The authors wish to thank all the students and teachers who took part in the survey for their important contribution to an increased understanding of issues related to language testing and assessment.

The expressed mission of EALTA – *The European Association for Language Testing and Assessment* (www.ealta.eu.org) – is to promote the understanding of theoretical principles of language testing and assessment, and the improvement and sharing of testing and assessment practices throughout Europe. To achieve this, a number of primary aims and objectives have been defined, one of which focuses on the improvement of practices, another on increasing public understanding of language testing and assessment.

The main aim being to support the initial development of EALTA, a two-year network project, funded by the European Commission, was set up in December 2003. This network, ENLTA (*The European Network for Language Testing and Assessment*), comprised 14 partner institutions in 13 European countries¹ and was coordinated by Lancaster University (Professor J. Charles Alderson).

Eight activities were defined for the ENLTA project. One of these, Activity 4, involved undertaking a survey of assessment policy and practice in Europe. It was originally intended as a follow-up study to a survey of European Foreign Language Assessment Cultures: Policy and Practice, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education. However, this study underwent considerable delay, and was not formally reported until September 2005 (<http://www.nabmvt.nl>). Consequently, Activity 4 was carried out as a more independent study than initially intended.

After discussions within the Activity 4 project group, three aims were agreed upon, all intended for publication on the EALTA website; first, to provide links to a list of readings dealing with assessment cultures and practices (www.ealta.eu.org/resources.htm), and, second, to present a number of links to, and short comments on, official, net-based testing resources in Europe (www.ealta.eu.org/links.htm).

The purpose of this report is to focus on the outcome of the third aim of ENLTA Activity 4, which was to collect reports from a number of European students and teachers on their language assessment practices, although without aiming for comparisons between individual schools or countries.

¹ Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the UK (a list of partner institutions is provided in Appendix 1).

Design: discussions and decisions

Issues of design – what to ask, whom to ask, and how to do it – were discussed within the Activity 4 team², and also in communication with other partner representatives, as well as the project coordinator. With very few exceptions, these discussions were conducted via e-mail, a method that proved to work well.

Obtaining reports from students

Since students should be regarded as important stakeholders in testing and assessment, and also because experiences, for example from Sweden, show that they are capable of contributing substantially to the development of instruments and practices, it was considered essential to give them a voice in the sub-project focusing on assessment practices. Moreover, this approach corresponds well with the expanded view of validity that has developed during the last few decades and is now prevalent in educational measurement and assessment.

Target group

Already at an early stage of the design process, it was decided that the target group should be students at the end of compulsory education. Evidently, even that would imply great variability, but it was felt that including students at upper-secondary level, or choosing to collect responses only among older students, would make the interpretation of the data unnecessarily complicated.

Language to focus on – language to use

To create certain conformity, it was decided to ask students to comment on their first foreign language. Obviously, this was also a language where they had long experience, thus, hopefully, being able to contribute most information.

After some discussion, it was decided that, if at all possible, students were to be asked to give their answers in English. Instructions were to be very clear about the purpose of the survey, emphasizing that it was, by no means, just another way of assessing students' language proficiency, but an attempt to find out about their thoughts and feelings about language testing and assessment. Also, it was to be pointed out that dictionaries could certainly be used, and that teachers were allowed to help. However, if students could not, or would not, use English, the use of their first language was clearly preferable to no answer at all. Again, it would have to be stressed that the focal point of the survey was to find out *what* the students thought, not *how* they were able to express their views. Thus, it was agreed that, if necessary, translations were to be made in each participating country.

Questions

It was felt that the most essential question for students was one focusing on individual definitions of good versus bad language assessment. However, since such a question would certainly be quite demanding, both from a cognitive and from a linguistic point of view, it was generally felt that some type of scaffolding was needed. Furthermore, it was considered important not only to collect as many responses from as many students as possible, but also to try to create a format that would stimulate as wide a range of students as possible to contribute their views. Thus, a combination of wide-open questions and questions with more closed formats was preferred. For the same purpose of optimal inclusion, it was also felt that the envisaged form to be used should be kept as short as possible. Eventually, Likert scale statements were chosen for part of the questionnaire, since multiple-choice questions were considered somewhat more demanding, e.g. requiring more reading comprehension. (This work could draw on experiences from the development of national tests of foreign languages

² The Activity 4 team comprised seven members from four different institutions: Göteborg University (Sweden), The National Examination Board (Poland), Jyväskylä University (Finland), and Lancaster University (UK).

in Sweden, where, since the mid-1990s, large-scale collection of test-taker feedback is done regularly in connection with pre-testing.)

The draft student questionnaire was piloted in three countries (Poland, Slovenia and Sweden), involving c. 100 students, and adjustments were made on the basis of the analyses of the results.

The questionnaire eventually arrived at (Appendix 2) consisted of a single sheet of paper and was to be answered anonymously. On one of its two pages, the students were to supply some background information, for example about age, sex and language in focus. They were then asked to write as much as possible on the basis of the question *What is a good language test/assessment?* and its opposite, *What is a bad language test/assessment?* In both cases they were also asked to answer the question *Why?* and to add any other *Comments*.

On the other side of the form, there were 18 statements, accompanied by five-point scales, focusing on attitudes to language assessment, and also on areas emphasized in assessment. Here, the students were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with what was suggested. A distinction was made between formal tests/exams and continuous assessment (*assessment during lessons*). The statements finally included were chosen to fit both categories. Because of this, and also in order to keep the questionnaire as short as possible, no statements on, for example, assessment methods, task types or item formats were included.

Obtaining reports from teachers

After some discussion on the role of the teachers in the survey, it was agreed that reports were to be obtained from the teachers of the participating students. Under the circumstances, this was considered the most practical solution, hopefully also having some positive effects on the response rate.

The teacher questionnaire (Appendix 3) was, basically, an open-ended form with a few suggested points to comment on. However, to enable some comparison, the scale statements focusing on areas of assessment, were identical in the two questionnaires.

Data collection

The partner representatives in each of the 13 European countries in ENLTA were asked to administer data collection in 6-8 classes (c. 150 students and their teachers), representing as much diversity as possible. The material, including information for participants, was sent electronically to partner representatives, and the questionnaires were printed and distributed in each country. If possible, data collection was to be done in December 2004, if not, as early as possible in the new year. However, the end of the year was considered a favourable time for collecting data, since many students were likely to be in a busy period of the school year with much testing and assessment, therefore, hopefully, having much to say.

Data collected

Eventually, 10 countries took part in the survey (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK). Most of the responses were given in the early spring, since, in many schools, the weeks before Christmas proved too busy for both students and teachers to enable administration of the questionnaires.

Analyses

All quantitative data (background information and Likert scales) were coded and registered in the SPSS system, and one third of the students' comments were typed into a Word file.

Various quantitative as well as qualitative analyses of both questionnaires have been performed, aimed at gaining a thorough knowledge and understanding of the data. [Subsequently, the remaining student comments, as well as teachers' reports, were typed in to form a complete database of the survey.]

Results

All in all, 1,373 student forms and 62 teacher questionnaires were sent in. Numbers varied, with between 64 and 203 student forms, and 2-10 teacher forms per country. Since the aim of the survey was not comparative and, furthermore, there was considerable variability between the different sub-samples with regard to both size and type, national results and differences will not be reported. One exception, however, concerns some of the background variables, which to some extent reflect the diversity of compulsory education in Europe.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The students in the survey

The number of students per country varied considerably, as illustrated in Figure 1.

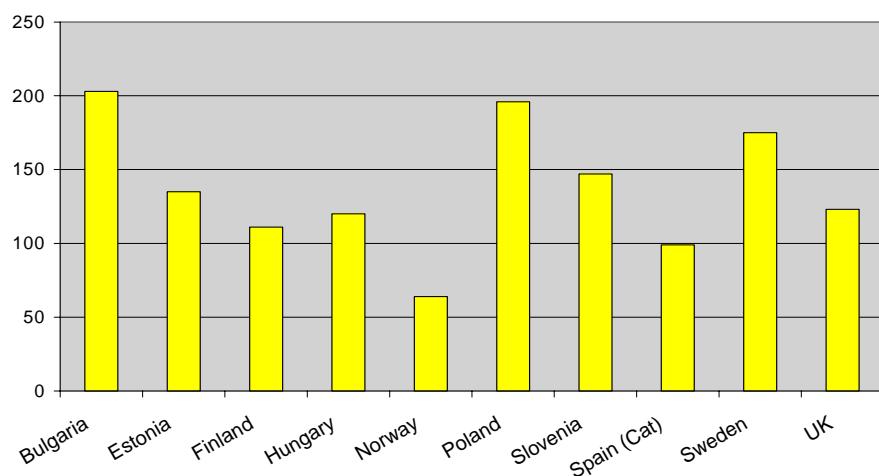


Figure 1. Number of students per country

Also, the types of schools differed. In some countries, a wide variety was represented, whereas in others the schools available for the survey were of a special kind, for example with classes focusing specifically on languages, or with students beyond the stage of compulsory education. On the whole, though, the students in the sample seem to represent a reasonably average group of European teenagers at the end of compulsory education.

Female students dominated in the total survey (58 per cent), although with large differences between countries: from 65 per cent girls in Poland to 49 per cent in Sweden.

The age of the students varied considerably, which of course reflects differences between school systems in Europe. The youngest participants in study were 12 years old, the oldest 21. Usually, however, ages ranged from 14 to 18, with a total average of close to 16. In Figure 2 the average age per country is shown.

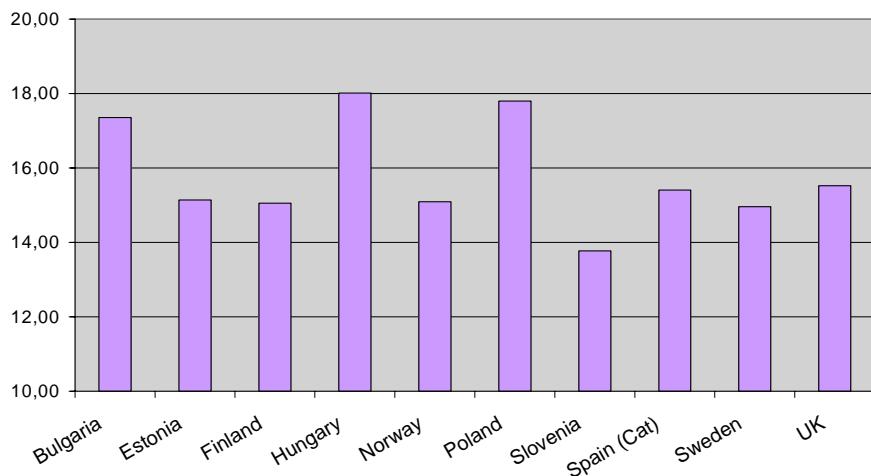


Figure 2. Average age of students per country

As can be seen, the older students in the study came from three of the ten participating countries, viz. Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland (the Bulgarian students being beyond compulsory education), whereas the youngest ones were the Slovenian pupils. The average age of the students was very similar in the seven remaining countries, viz. around 15.

Language in focus

The students were asked to comment on their first foreign language, which in 88 percent of all cases proved to be English (98 per cent English, if the UK is not included). The other languages referred to were mostly French and German. In 95 per cent of all answers, the language commented on was said to be obligatory. In the few cases where this was not so, it can be assumed that the students either did not choose to write about their first foreign language, or referred to the fact that there were options within the framework of a compulsory first foreign language.

The number of years of instruction in the language commented on varied, as can be seen from Figure 3. Hardly surprisingly, this corresponds to a considerable degree to the age of the students. Thus, the Hungarian and Polish students in the sample had studied English for approximately eight and a half years, whereas the Slovenian pupils had had English instruction for less than five years. On the whole, in this sample, the Spanish students seem to have been the earliest foreign language starters, the British the oldest.

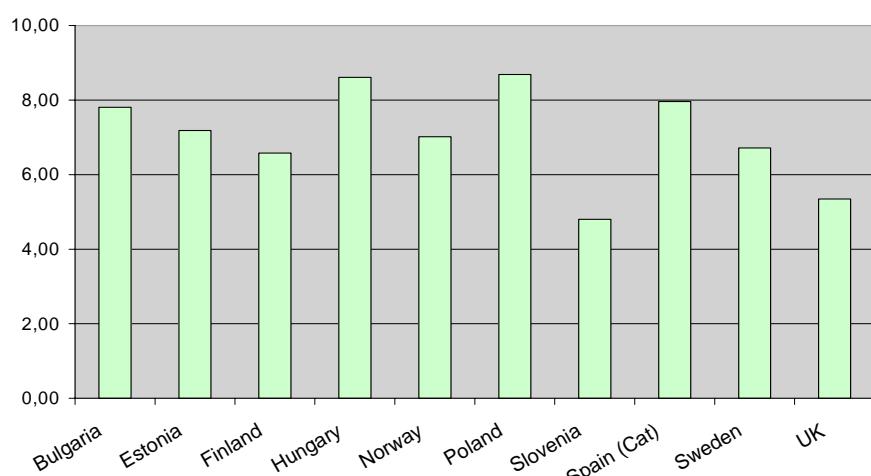


Figure 3. Years of studying the language in focus

General attitudes to the language in focus

The first statements that the students were asked to respond to highlighted two general questions, namely whether they liked learning the language in focus, and to what extent they felt that they were successful in their learning. The answers were given on five-point scales, with 5 meaning “yes, absolutely” and 1 meaning “no, absolutely not”, generating the following results:

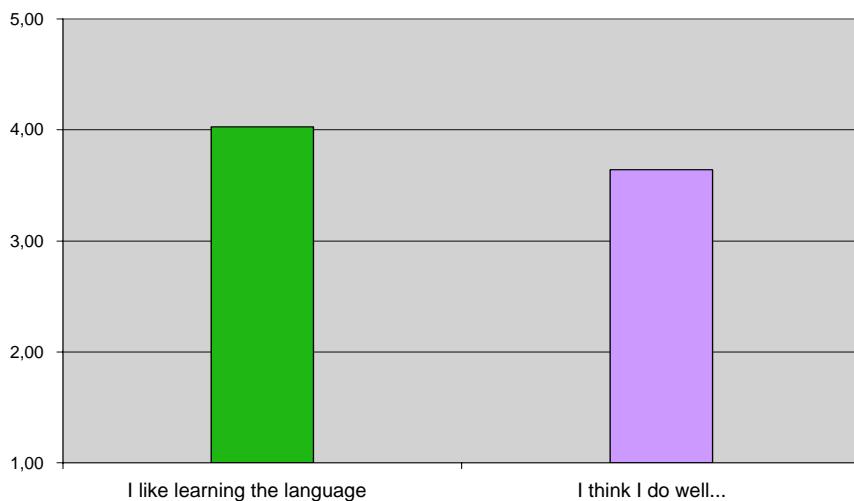


Figure 4. Students' general attitudes to the language in focus

In general, the students seemed to be very positive to the language they commented on. Only 8 per cent chose the two lowest scale values, meaning disagreement with the statement “I like learning the language”, and more than a third (37 per cent) decided on a 5, i.e. the highest value. Only 17 per cent chose what could perhaps be characterized as the “so-so alternative”, i.e. the value 3, which often attracts a fair number of respondents, probably teenagers in particular. The mean value for the whole group was slightly above 4, which definitely indicates a positive attitude.

Furthermore, the students in the study demonstrated good self-confidence: six out of ten gave a positive response to the statement “I think I do well in the language”, and only about one out of ten chose the lower values. In this case, however, almost a third of the students decided on the neutral alternative 3, which may indicate either that they thought their achievement was reasonably ok, or that they didn't really know.

The fact that a substantial majority of the respondents seemed to like the language and feel confident about their achievement is of course very positive. Since the vast majority of answers referred to English, this may well be an indication of the status of that language among young people in Europe today. However, some caution is called for when interpreting the responses, since it cannot be taken for granted that the sample is fully representative. Also, aspects of compliance must be taken into account: the students in the study were asked to fill in their questionnaires during an ordinary language lesson. Hence, the presence of the teacher may of course, in some cases, have influenced the answers – in this case as well in others. However, there are no clear indications of this in the material: in the large majority of cases, responses are very personal and show no signs of influence either from teachers or peers.

Analyses of possible differences between the answers given by boys and girls indicate that the girls in the sample had a somewhat more positive attitude to studying the language, whereas the difference in language related self-confidence was practically negligible. Finally, it should be pointed out that liking the language does not necessarily mean that you consider

yourself a highly proficient language user, the total correlation between the responses to the initial questions being a fairly modest .61.

General attitudes to testing and assessment

There were five statements intended to capture the students' more general, and affective, attitudes to testing and assessment. In this section of the questionnaire, a distinction was introduced between "Formal tests/Exams" and "Assessment during lessons". Areas touched upon were whether the students felt that, in general, assessment gave them the chance to show their language proficiency, and if they thought they learnt something through assessment. Further, a question was asked whether they used to feel nervous during tests and assessments of different kinds. Another statement focused on the things normally tested – whether the students felt that those were the most important things to assess. Finally, the respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent they felt that they normally did well in different assessment situations. The responses to the statements gave the following results:

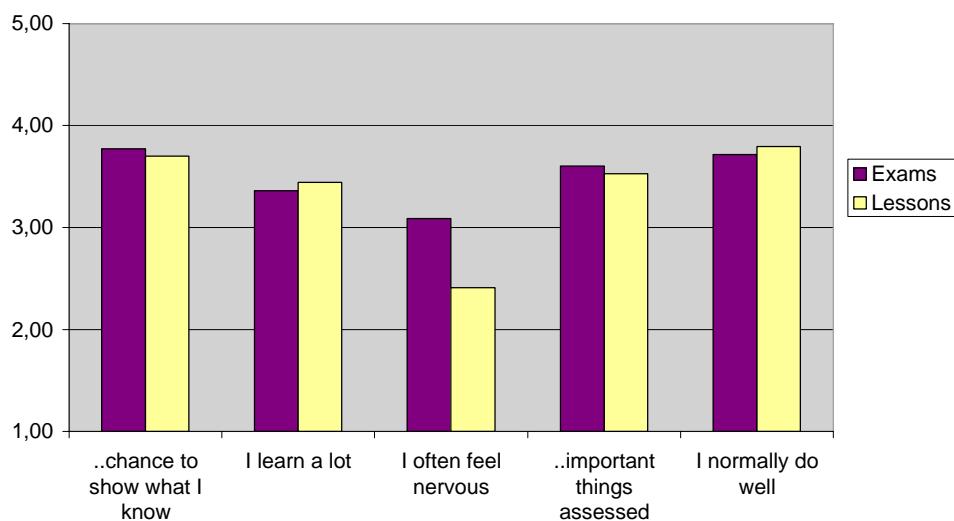


Figure 5. Students' general attitudes to language testing and assessment

In general, the fairly positive attitudes to the language in focus, and to their own achievement, as demonstrated by the students in the initial questions, are also visible in the answers to the questions about testing and assessment. As can be noted in Figure 5, students seem to feel that assessment reasonably well covers important domains, and that they mostly get a fair chance to demonstrate their proficiency. To some degree, testing and assessment also seem to provide a learning potential, to be further discussed in the section reporting on the students' own comments. When asked to indicate how well they thought they succeeded on tests and assessments, students demonstrated similar confidence to that usually expressed in the question about their general level of achievement in the language.

On the whole, students did not distinguish very clearly between formal testing/exam situations, and the continuous assessment going on in the classroom ("during lessons"). One exception, however, was the question about tension, i.e. whether the students felt nervous about testing and assessment. In this case, hardly surprisingly, the mean value for classroom assessment was significantly lower. Generally, however, it should be noted that the students in this sample, as a group, did not express much stress in connection with assessment, although there is considerable variability in the material.

There were some differences in attitude in the responses given by male and female students. Somewhat more often, girls seemed to regard testing and assessment as learning opportunities. More noticeable, however, was the clear difference concerning stress and

tension, where girls indicated much more frequently that they felt nervous, most of all in formal testing or exam situations, but in classroom assessment as well. As regards the other questions, differences were only marginal.

In the analyses, two additional subgroups were studied, namely students who expressed very different views on the language in focus and of their own level of competence. For reasons of simplicity, these groups will be referred to as "The Pessimists" and "The Optimists". The former group consists of the 67 students in the sample (5 per cent) who chose a 1 or a 2 on both the initial statements ("I like learning the language" and "I think I do well in the language"). The second subgroup, the "optimistic" one, comprises students who decided on a 5 on both questions (165 student, i.e. 12 per cent). There is a slight over-representation of boys among the pessimists, whereas the optimistic group has a distribution of boys and girls that fairly well represents the whole sample.

In the five statements focusing on general attitudes, the optimists – not surprisingly – demonstrate distinctly more positive feelings towards language testing and assessment: they feel that they are given the chance to show more of what they know, and also to learn more; they consider the content of the different assessments that they encounter clearly relevant, and they seem very confident about their results. They, too, are nervous at times, but to a much lesser extent than their peers, especially those belonging to the pessimistic group.

Common areas of testing and assessment

The students were asked to indicate how often they encountered a number of common areas, or goals, of assessment. These areas represented two categories: firstly, more general and skill based competences, like listening and reading comprehension, oral production and interaction, written production; secondly, what could be characterized as a number of elements of, or prerequisites for, the skills in question, viz. vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and pronunciation. The former category reflects what in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* is referred to as Reception, Interaction and Production. Furthermore, Mediation in the same document was touched upon through the inclusion of translation as one of the suggested areas of assessment. The language elements in the list are known from experience, as well as previous surveys, to be frequent targets of language assessment. Finally, the students were invited to add other matters, which they considered essential parts of their language assessment, and to indicate the frequency of those matters on the five-point scale. In this case as well, a distinction was made between formal testing and classroom assessment.

The students' answers gave the following picture:

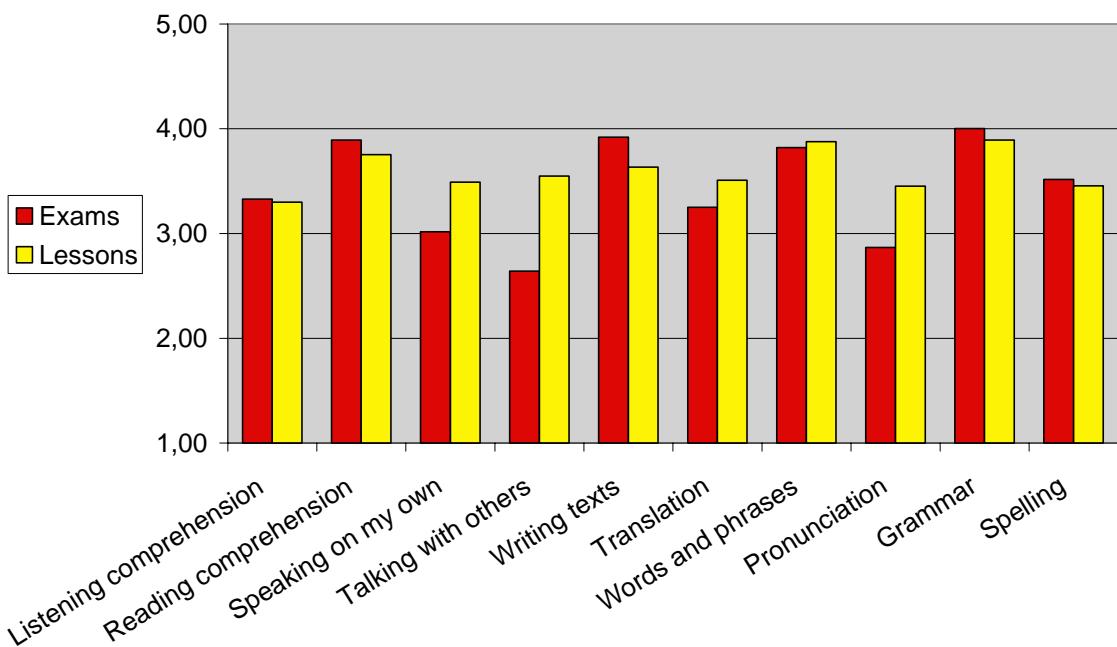


Figure 6. Students' perceptions of the frequency of testing and assessment within different areas

Although there are some obvious differences in the students' responses concerning formal tests versus classroom assessment, there are also definite similarities. Irrespective of situation, the most frequently assessed areas, as perceived by the students, were *grammar*, *words and phrases*, *reading comprehension*, and *writing texts*. Among these, writing in particular seemed to be somewhat more common in formal testing and exams, but differences were quite small.

In some cases, assessment during lessons seems to dominate clearly. This mainly concerns spoken language – oral interaction (*talking with others*), *pronunciation*, and oral production (*speaking on my own*) – but *translation* also seems to be more frequently assessed in the language classroom than in more formalized testing situations.

With regard to *listening comprehension* and *spelling*, the students did not seem to feel that there was much difference in frequency between formal testing and assessment during lessons.

Analyses of responses by boys and girls show that girls tended to feel that testing and assessment occurred more often than the boys in the sample seemed to perceive. This was especially conspicuous concerning *grammar*, *writing* and *spelling*. Whether this should, or could, be connected to the more frequent feelings of nervousness expressed by the female respondents is something that needs to be further analysed and discussed.

There were both similarities and differences between the optimists and the pessimists, i.e. between the groups of students who gave quite different answers to the initial questions on liking of, and confidence in the language commented on. In general, the optimistic group seemed to perceive a higher frequency of testing and assessment than their peers. However, the rank order between the different target areas was quite similar. Here as well, grammar, reading comprehension, words and phrases, and writing dominated, whereas testing and assessment of oral proficiency was reported to be sparse. In the latter case, the optimists considered assessment of oral skills in the classrooms quite common. The pessimists did not share this opinion.

Something else?

Approximately 20 per cent of the students added *something else* to the list of areas of testing and assessment. Somewhat more often, the additions referred to assessment during lessons than to formal tests. Qualitative analyses of a third of all the questionnaires show that the additions fell into different categories, usually related to *language, method of working, and/or personal attitude/behaviour*. Examples of added language-related areas were overall communication ("use in real world"), and culture in a wide sense, including, e.g., literature and films. Among the more method-related additions were – frequently reported – project work and assignments, as well as different kinds of role-play. Some students mentioned portfolio as part of their classroom assessment, while others emphasized "guessing" as something that was frequently assessed, referred to by some students as "multiple choice". Further, a number of students mentioned factors which mainly had to do with their attitude (e.g., "concentration, to study a lot, activity in class", and even "communication with teacher"), or personality and behaviour ("creativity, thinking speed, appearance").

In their additions to the list of possible areas of assessment, students sometimes did not distinguish between teaching and assessment. This also occurred in the personal reports that were given in response to the questions about good versus bad language testing and assessment.

Students' own comments

On one of the two pages of the questionnaire, the students were asked to share as many of their thoughts and opinions as possible about language testing and assessment – what they considered good and bad, and why. They were also encouraged to add any other comments related to the topic. For the present report, every third questionnaire has been selected for qualitative analyses, a total number of 476 questionnaires thus providing the basis for the following short account.

The open-ended part of the questionnaire followed immediately after the introductory section, where background information was asked for. This may have given the impression that the students were required to start with this section. However, in the instruction for the local administrators of the survey, it was pointed out that there was no "first page" in that sense, but that students should be told to feel free to start wherever they liked. For some of them it was probably natural to start off by writing down their own reflections, whereas others may very well have preferred to begin with the more closed format of the Likert scales. By choosing the latter alternative, they may also have got some help with vocabulary and some inspiration for their own comments as well – obviously something that, to some extent, can be considered both an advantage and a disadvantage.

In the analysed sample, just below 4 per cent of the students did not write any comment at all, and approximately 7 per cent chose to write in his/her first language. In a few cases, it was obvious that small groups of students had agreed on the same comments. Whether this was influenced by their teacher or not is not clear. In the vast majority of cases, however, students seem to have willingly submitted their own views on language assessment in comprehensible English, as shown in the verbatim comments quoted throughout this report. The average length of all the comments analysed was 59 words (ranging between 3 and 313). There was no difference worth mentioning between boys and girls in this respect.

Learning, teaching, assessment

Comments on different aspects of learning, teaching and assessment were sometimes intertwined. Apparently, the students did not always separate clearly the one from the other; everything seemed to come together in a description of a general learning process. The following comments are examples of this "unified" view:

I think the most appropriate way of assessment are the discussions we make in class, because everybody expresses his own opinion about some problem and

you don't need to know any theory to do it. But the thing I like most is the project work. I practise my English and enjoy at the same time. Every pupil is very creative and that's the best way to show it. Even when the project work is ready we don't need to be assessed. We are satisfied with the completed work and we are unpatient to present it.

There are a lot of good things. Pronunciation and spelling are on example. Because I would like to speak good this language. I like speaking and writing on my own very much. One of the good things are the reading and listening comprehension, because I would like to now as good as possible what is someone telling or writing me. I don't now what the bad things are. I like the T/F thing, because it is one of the easiest. I think that tests and others in the English hours are very well. I like to learn new languages and it is good that we learn new words and phrases. I think this is all from me.

The most tests is easy. I think that reading comprehension tests is the best way to learn english, because then you have to read and write and that's good.

Hardly surprising, the comments reflecting the perception of assessment as something embedded in learning were generally quite positive. Hence, the tone in the three quotations above is fairly typical of this category of comments.

However, equally well worth quoting under the heading of "Learning, teaching, assessment", is a student who pointed out that, in her opinion, there are things more important than testing!

Students should not focus on assessment but on learning! For me it is important how the teacher teaches, not how he assesses!

Good tests and assessments

Definitions of, and comments on what was described as good language tests and assessments dominated, possibly because this was the first question asked, and probably also since, implicitly, the opposite was intended as a definition of the bad counterpart. The most frequently mentioned positive features concerned *coverage and variety, communicative usefulness* and *learning potential*. These categories dominated clearly over all others.

Students obviously appreciate, or would like to come across, language testing and assessment that is extensive in its coverage of skills, varied when it comes to content and format, and useful in the sense that what is assessed is considered applicable in daily life. Oral proficiency, in particular, is often emphasized. The following comments, and extracts from comments, illustrate these communicative and functional expectations:

For me, writing texts, grammar or vocabulary is the same important as speaking, reading or listening. A good language test is checking all language abilities.

... Tests should be more many-sided because then all skills will be checked. There should be more translation, listening comprehension and writing letters or little stories. A good test is with many parts. ... I think that writing texts is very important because then a child learns to express herself better. There should be more talking with others...

In my opinion the good language test/assessment should include as wider variety of exercises as possible. There should be questions for the different parts of the language and tasks requiring different kinds of skills. It would be better if there were a speaking part, so that the communicative skills of the students are developed and they get used to leading an usual conversation easier.

... But I think the most important thing is being able to speak the language, because if you going to go to the place where the language is spoken you are not going to write an essay on what your house is like, you would want to speek it.

I think that a good language test/assessment should get students chance to show what they know and devolope their skills. It should contain of listening and reading comprehations, as well as writing and grammar part. But the most important thing is to speak in that language, so I think there should be also oral exams. Speaking is the most important, because without it, we wouldn't communicate. Because of that students should also learn pronunciation.

Also, what could be labelled *learning potential* seems important, i.e. that students feel they have the opportunity to learn something, either by doing the actual tasks, or from the feedback or information that is conveyed on the basis of the test results and that, hopefully, helps them to move on. Obviously, the learning effect may also refer to the effort, and effects, of studying for a particular test or exam. – Here is what four of the students wrote:

Good assessment is that you learn something new that you don't know before the assessments.

A good assessment tells you what you're good at and what you should work more with.

I think it is important to do the tests. Test has to be interesting and I'd like to see there funny tasks and even some pictures. I think tests are good for improving one's skills.

In my opinion a student can learn a language if he wants to. For this reason I can point out that tests are not the most important thing. I also believe that one of the best ways to get to know to a language is to listen to native speakers. In this way the student will be able to learn vocabulary. On the other hand tests are really needed because they stimulate the process of learning but they have to be rather interesting. For instance a text has to be not only difficult but also enjoyable.

A number of additional things were defined as characteristics of good testing, although not as frequently as those already mentioned. For example, *clarity* of instructions, and *fairness*, sometimes defined as objectivity, were emphasized by a number of students as important features of good assessment practices. Also, single skills or competences, most often from the list in the questionnaire, were used by some students to describe the contents of a really good test – ‘*there has to be lots of xxx*’. In this, different forms of oral and written language use were the most common suggestions, but grammar was quite frequent as well. Also, *enough time* was sometimes pointed out as a prerequisite for a good language test. Finally, what may be described as general niceness and reasonableness of tests, concerning content, layout, level of difficulty, etc., was emphasized by a fair number of students.

Good or bad tests and assessments

In some cases, certain features or characteristics of tests and assessments were described as both positive and negative, depending on who wrote the comment. This of course reflects individual differences, at the personal as well as at the competence-related level. Comments of this kind sometimes concerned *content*: many students appreciate oral tests, but some do not; grammar is perceived as an essential element of tests by some, whereas others prefer assessments where this type of competence is not tested *per se*, but embedded, for example in writing. The two instances where comments may be considered most conspicuously different, however, concerned *test preparation* and *level of difficulty*. While a number of students find it absolutely essential that tests and tasks correspond to what has been done and prepared in class, others feel that the best test is an unprepared one.

In my opinion a good exam is one that has similar things to those worked in class, with similar exercises and vocabulary, a level that the students can pass if they have studied.

I think a good test is unprepared. If we have an unprepared test I don't feel any pressure because I haven't study well enog. In a unprepared test you get to show what you really know about english. It's not hard to get good grades in a prepared test, if you study hard. If I study very hard the day before a test I forget very much after a week.

Also, when discussing level of difficulty, the students' opinions were sometimes diametrically opposed.

A good assessment is when it's truth. I think that a good test should not be too easy.

good: -we have enough time to learn-we have enough time to do the test-we know the types of tasks-it's not too difficult.

Bad tests and assessments

On the whole, the students seemed more willing, and able to define and discuss good testing and assessment. As previously mentioned, their comments on what they considered bad to a large extent, explicitly or implicitly, represented the opposite of what was described as positive. Thus, the definitions of bad testing and assessment were not as frequent and often shorter and less informative. However, a common critical comment concerned what was described as *limited* tests, covering only certain isolated aspects of language. The *lack of apparent usefulness* was criticized, often focusing on what was needed for communicative purposes. Consequently, focus on what was perceived as *irrelevant* was characterized as bad. The following statements illustrate these attitudes:

I think that there should be more oral exercises and less grammar and writing exercises. I think that it is more important to be able to speak the language, than to be able to write it. I think that writing should give as much points as listening and speaking. Vocabulary tests are a little better than grammar because you have more freedom e.g. you can use synomyms.

A bad test/assessment is the one which is only about grammar, because if a person knows grammar well, it doesn't mean he/she can speak the language as well and communication is the most important thing in language study.

A bad test/assessment is learning vocabulary too detailed. Learning many vegetables that I don't know what the look like and will never need them in real life is absurd. We should be expected to know everyday life vocabulary that we can use for communication with native english speakers.

Bad ones assess unimportant things and things what can be tested with other exercises, adds unimportant plus work to the examinee. By unimportant things I mean for example: when tests assess vocabulary too deeply by asking words that used rarely in life.

I think the tests that we have had, have been pretty hard. There have been lots of grammars and sometimes they are difficult. I wish that there could be more speaking on your own in the tests and lessons. Making a presetation could be fun.

A number of students point out that stress in a wide sense is something that makes testing and assessment negative. Apart from the obvious highlighting of the pressure of having to do

well, this also includes comments on frequency, level of difficulty, familiarity with types of tasks, clarity, time needed, etc. The following quotations illustrate these feelings:

*We were writing word tests very often. The texts are too difficult. We can't do it.
Please, make it easier. Thank you!*

*A bad language test is one where questions are confusing, which is to long and
which includes material that wasn't previously told.*

As opposed to learning potential, emphasized by many students as a positive feature, lack of feedback was sometimes mentioned as something distinctly negative, as illustrated in the following comment:

*A bad assessment is when the teacher only have written the grade whitout any
comment or explanation of the grade.*

Finally, the students' comments sometimes focused on the type of learning preceding test taking, often criticising what could be labelled *memory testing*, i.e. assessment of things thought to be less relevant, and learnt "only for the test":

*A bad test is the one which contains only the material that can be learned by
heart and if a person can't use those things in her/his daily life, so then is no use
in learning things only by heart.*

*A bad language test is a test were I have to remember "not" important things from
a chapter.*

Students' comments – concluding remarks

The students in the survey were certainly given quite a demanding task: filling in a questionnaire of the kind used in the study, not having a concrete test or assessment situation as a point of reference, requires a good deal of reflective, and communicative competence. Moreover, asking the respondents to do this in a language which, for the vast majority, was not their mother tongue, further increased the level of abstraction. In light of this, the students' contribution to the survey can be seen as even more impressive. Not only did they do what they were asked to do, but they did it very thoroughly and often quite eloquently. Also, they did not seem to mind at all being asked to express their opinions – although one student did not really think it would make much of a difference:

*This ENLTA/student questionaire doesen't like me either because probably it's
never read by someone other than me so basicly it wastes our lesson time and
don't do any good for me an my classmates.*

However, some of his peers demonstrated a much more positive outlook (although, in the first comment below, the questionnaire – probably not ironically – was mistaken for something obviously more frequent!)

Thank you for this test!

Thank you for taking time to lisem one my toughts.

Good luck with the reasearch!

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

As previously mentioned, the teachers of the students taking part in the survey were also asked to fill in a questionnaire, partly linked to the student questionnaire. Altogether, 62 forms were sent in, ranging from two to ten per country. The responses were usually individual, but in some cases groups of teachers submitted a joint response. The vast majority of the respondents were teachers of English, some of them very young, teaching their first year, others with decades of experience.

Common areas of testing and assessment

The teacher questionnaire was mainly intended to elicit teachers' reflections on the "whys, whats and hows" of their own testing and assessment practices. However, the Likert scales in the student form, focusing on the content and frequency of testing and assessment, were included to enable comparisons. Basically the same categories were used, but the terminology was somewhat different. Hence, what in the student questionnaire was referred to as "speaking on my own" was labelled *oral production*. Similarly, "talking with others" was referred to as *oral interaction*. Finally, what the students encountered as "writing texts" was divided into two categories in the teacher questionnaire: *written production* and *written interaction*. The rest of the categories were identical to those used in the student questionnaire. Consequently, the terminology used in the teacher questionnaire was more similar to that of the *Common European Framework of Reference*, whereas comprehensibility was prioritized in the student form, which meant rephrasing some of the categories.

The responses to the teacher questionnaire generated the following results:

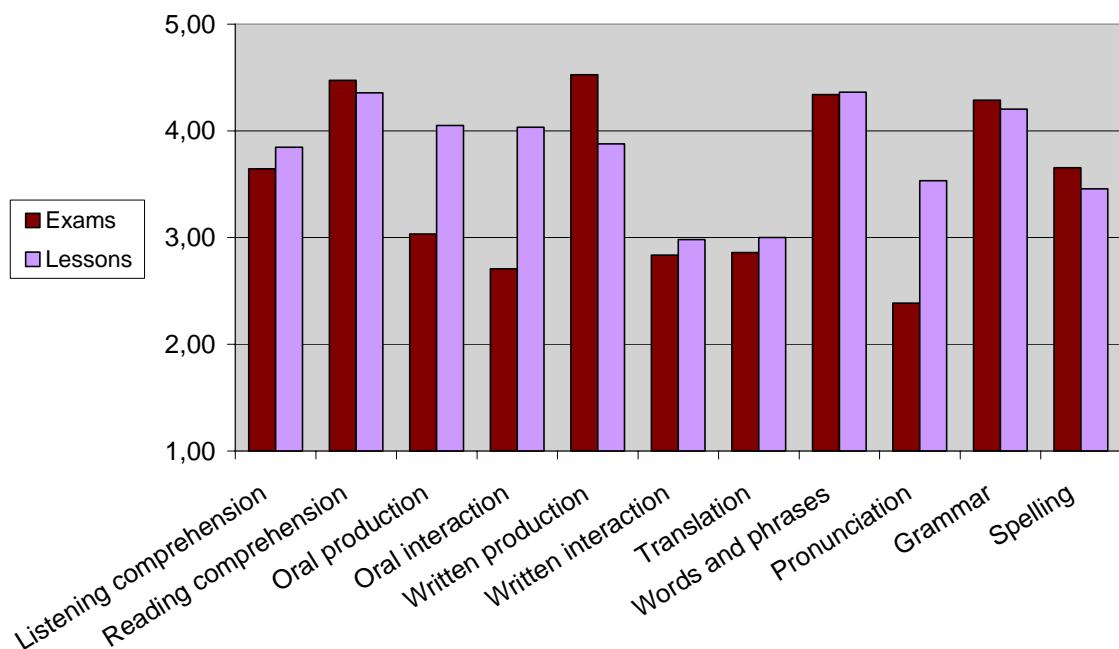


Figure 7. Teachers' perceptions of the frequency of testing and assessment within different areas

The teachers' views on the frequency of testing and assessment of the different areas resemble, to a great extent, those of the students. There is a difference in mean values, in that the teachers' responses indicate that certain target areas of assessment are more common, but the overall picture is the same: *written production*, *reading comprehension*, *words and phrases*, and *grammar* seem to dominate in more formal testing situations. These

target areas are frequent in classroom assessment as well, but here there is also a distinct focus on oral proficiency. To further clarify the relationship between the responses given by the teachers and their students, the rank orders of the different answers for tests/exams and classroom assessment are presented in the following two tables (mean values and standard deviations based on the five-point Likert scale given within brackets):

Table 1. Teachers' and students' views on target areas in tests and exams (rank orders)

Teacher questionnaire (tests)	[m / std]	Student questionnaire (tests)	[m / std]
Written production	[4.53 / 0.70]	Grammar	[4.00 / 1.05]
Reading comprehension	[4.47 / 0.80]	Writing texts	[3.92 / 1.05]
Words and phrases	[4.34 / 0.80]	Reading comprehension	[3.89 / 1.01]
Grammar	[4.29 / 0.98]	Words and phrases	[3.82 / 1.03]
Spelling	[3.66 / 1.18]	Spelling	[3.52 / 1.30]
Listening comprehension	[3.64 / 1.46]	Listening comprehension	[3.33 / 1.33]
Oral production	[3.03 / 1.52]	Translation	[3.25 / 1.24]
Translation	[2.86 / 1.27]	Speaking on my own	[3.02 / 1.36]
Written interaction	[2.84 / 1.32]	Pronunciation	[2.87 / 1.33]
Oral interaction	[2.71 / 1.50]	Talking with others	[2.64 / 1.37]
Pronunciation	[2.39 / 1.45]		

In spite of a different ranking of the four areas, where grammar is ranked higher by the students, there seems to be agreement among teachers and students concerning the “top group” of target areas in formal tests and exams, viz. Reading comprehension, Writing/written production, Words and phrases, and Grammar. For both groups, there is a considerable gap between these areas and the following. True, the teachers consider them even more predominant, but it is quite clear that the students also see them as having a more prominent position in tests and exams than all the other things mentioned.

It is also quite clear that there is agreement on the relative infrequency of oral tasks of different kinds in formal tests and exams. Finally, it should be noted that the students seem to consider translation somewhat more frequent than reported by teachers.

When comparing teachers' and students' answers concerning “assessment during lessons”, the following picture emerges:

Table 2. Teachers' and students' views on target areas in assessment during lessons (rank orders)

Teacher questionnaire (lessons) [m / std]	Student questionnaire (lessons) [m / std]
Words and phrases [4.36 / 0.81]	Grammar [3.89 / 1.01]
Reading comprehension [4.36 / 0.71]	Words and phrases [3.88 / 0.99]
Grammar [4.20 / 0.81]	Reading comprehension [3.75 / 0.99]
Oral production [4.05 / 1.02]	Writing [3.63 / 1.06]
Oral interaction [4.03 / 0.89]	Talking [3.55 / 1.14]
Written production [3.88 / 0.98]	Translation [3.51 / 1.11]
Listening comprehension [3.85 / 1.17]	Speaking on my own [3.49 / 1.19]
Pronunciation [3.53 / 1.06]	Spelling [3.46 / 1.19]
Spelling [3.46 / 1.12]	Pronunciation [3.45 / 1.13]
Translation [3.00 / 1.07]	Listening comprehension [3.30 / 1.17]
Written interaction [2.98 / 1.06]	

In this case, there is hardly what could be characterized as a clear top group of assessment targets. However, Reading comprehension, Words and phrases and Grammar are frequently mentioned, both by teachers and students, as areas often assessed. A difference of opinion concerns the frequency of assessment of spoken production and interaction: teachers claim that this is done quite often, whereas their students are a bit more hesitant. Obviously, this can be interpreted in two ways, either that the students disagree, or that they simply do not know when, or even that they are being assessed when speaking in the foreign language. Further, the same difference concerning translation can be noted as in the case of formal tests and exams: whereas teachers seem to tone it down to a certain extent, the students regard it as something that is assessed quite often. Finally, the teachers' responses show that assessment of written interaction does not seem to be very frequent, neither in test and exams, nor during lessons.

Something else?

Only in ten out of the 62 questionnaires had teachers added *something else* to the list of areas of testing and assessment. These additions could be related to the same categories as were identified in the students' responses to the same question, namely *language*, *method of working*, and *personal attitude/behaviour* (see p. 10). *Culture* was mentioned by three teachers, *project work* by two, *effort* and *activity in class* and *homework* by another three. The remaining two concerned *presentations* and *external exam requirements*.

Teachers' comments

The teacher questionnaire was intended to have a reasonably open approach, thus giving respondents the opportunity to express, in a narrative form, as many personal reflections as possible on the whys, whats and hows of language testing and assessment. Apart from the Likert scales, there were only a few examples of possible issues to comment on: aspects of language more or less complicated to assess, students' reactions to different types of assessment methods, and possible influence from national tests or examinations. Some brief

background information was also asked for. Generally, the responses were very informative, both concerning contextual descriptions and professional reflections. All comments were written in English, with an average length of 227 words (ranging between 34 and 878).

The teachers in the survey describe very different professional contexts, nationally as well as locally and personally. Some of them work in special language schools in big cities, others in rural comprehensive schools; students' ages vary considerably, as do their reported motivation and ability; in some cases the influence from national exams is very strong, with positive as well as negative effects, whereas in others, schools and teachers seem quite independent, and free to define and develop their own teaching and assessment practices. The following short account, including a number of verbatim comments by teachers, is intended to illustrate the considerable variety of opinions expressed within these varied contexts.

Formal versus continuous assessment

It is quite obvious that, in their comments, the teachers often make a clear distinction between more formalized testing, and regular, continuous assessment. Differences in content as well as in methods of assessment are reported and sometimes commented upon. The following comment expresses what a number of the teachers report, namely that assessment of productive and interactive skills in general, and oral proficiency in particular, is most frequently done in the classroom, rather than in formal testing situations:

Oral skills are mainly assessed during lessons when students feel more relaxed to produce better result.

Others, however, report that continuous assessment is to a larger extent focused on what seems to be more easily checked:

Assessment during lessons concentrates much more on details (words, phrases, recently revised grammar structures) whereas formal exams seem to be more general, testing overall abilities.

Also, quite a number of teachers emphasize that the continuous assessment going on is varied, flexible and individualized, in some cases involving approaches less common in traditional testing. Further, students are sometimes described as taking part somewhat more actively than in traditional testing situations. The following comments may serve as an illustration to this:

When I'm planning my tests or assessing pupils during lessons, I'm just trying to get a fair answer to the question "How well would this pupil do in a real-life situation?" So, there are many ways to the same result, or grade. Assessment during lessons is very important because it covers all the aspects of language, including oral production.

My students are used to having their work assessed in many different ways. Each period has its theme, and they set up their own work plans for each period. These plans will eventually become a part of their English Portfolios.

I evaluate the work without marking it because it is important for the pupils to correct mistakes, knowing that this is part of the process of learning English.

My students want to be assessed and we often decide together how to do it. During a lesson they often give me ideas about how to assess them.

Areas relatively easy to assess

Fairly consistently in the teachers' comments, certain aspects of language and language use are described as somewhat easier to assess than others. Hardly surprisingly, also in view of

the responses to the Likert scale statements, this often concerns “elements” rather than skills, and language produced in written rather than oral form. Different reasons are given, in which aspects of standardization and “objectivity” are assigned one role, students’ familiarity with content and format another. The following quotations may serve as an illustration:

I think the easiest to assess is something concrete and punctual, that is for example grammar. More abstract aspects of language are more subjective when it comes to evaluation.

In everyday testing I use different types of tests. Some of them are achievement tests to get the feedback on students' progress (usually language structures, vocabulary, etc). Assessing these tests is quite easy and usually not problematic.

Grammar, reading and writing are quite easy to assess and the students feel quite comfortable with these types of tests, because they are used to them, both in English and in other subjects.

A number of teachers describe how they assess things like vocabulary and grammar on a regular basis. This seems to be a habit well known to the students, and said to be reasonably accepted, sometimes even appreciated. One teacher, in a very friendly way, describes this regular, apparently quite informal, assessment as a way of keeping students “on their toes and get them to study on a day to day basis”. In some cases, these check-ups are marked by the pupils themselves, thus probably having a less dramatic, regular feedback function. On the whole, this type of continuous assessment is often described as having a motivating, as well as a remedial purpose.

Areas more complicated to assess

A few teachers in the survey do not express any difficulties at all in assessing the full range of their students’ language proficiency. However, the majority seem to feel that there are indeed areas more complicated than others. For example, issues related to culture and intercultural communicative competence, as well as to listening, are mentioned, but most often comments relate to productive and interactive skills, speaking in particular. Actually, analyses of the topics in the teachers’ reports show that the assessment of oral proficiency is clearly the single issue most frequently focused upon.

At a general level, difficulties in assessing oral production and interaction seem to fall into three categories, concerned with the “what”, the “how” and the “whom”, i.e. with the construct as such, the situation and the individual. The word “subjectivity” is sometimes used to describe the relative uncertainty that seems to surround the assessment of oral language proficiency. To some extent, scales are said to help, but nonetheless, evaluating spoken language, focusing on relevant factors, is often described as relatively complicated. Also, there are obviously more practical problems to be solved, for example concerning large groups, lack of time, etc. Moreover, some teachers discuss their students’ attitude to being assessed when speaking the language, using words like *shy* and *nervous* to describe a situation that to some students can be quite stressful. The following comments may serve as illustrations:

I think the biggest problem is assessing oral production. There are so many things you should be concentrated on and sometimes you are easily misled by fluency even though all the other categories aren't well done.

To assess students' performances you need a standardized scale. The most complicated language use to assess is speaking (even if you have a scale), as it is difficult to interact with the student and provide evaluation of his/her performance at the same time.

For me the most difficult is testing oral production/interaction. First of all because you have to make immediate decisions about marking (no time to analyse) and secondly it's very time-consuming if you want to test the whole class. Generally it seems much more subjective.

In my opinion, the hardest or most complicated part in language skills to assess is the oral skills. Any formal testing of larger groups would require a lot of time and is therefore difficult to organize within the given language lessons. Students seem to find any type of assessment concerning their oral skills more stressful than other types of test.

In the teachers' reports, there are also comments focusing on a general lack of familiarity with oral assessment – something having potentially negative effects on teachers as well as students:

The [x] school system doesn't have an oral test "tradition" which is a drawback in my opinion, therefore some shy, but competent pupils do not always show their abilities.

Finally, however, it needs to be pointed out that a number of teachers give a totally different picture, namely that their students actually enjoy speaking the language, and sometimes even prefer oral tests to other types of assessment:

I can't say which their favourite is, but I'm sure some of them will actually enjoy the oral test, because they don't mind speaking English.

The pupils' reactions to these types of testing vary, but most of them prefer to be tested in pairs or small groups, and the majority prefers oral testing to written testing.

Students' and teachers' reactions to assessment and testing

On the whole, in their reports, the teachers give very interesting – convergent as well as divergent – information about their students', as well as their own feelings about, and reactions to, assessment. On the one hand, there are descriptions of worried students, stressful testing situations, and overwhelming exam pressure – on the other, there are reports about assessment providing fair feedback and opportunities to improve, and also about students familiar with, and apparently quite actively involved in the current practices. Also, it seems reasonably clear that the first category reflects a somewhat more limited view on the value of testing and assessment, focusing mainly on the summative function, whereas the other way of reasoning implies a wider definition of pedagogical potential, for formative as well as for summative purposes. Obviously, these differences are partly due to external, political factors, like the presence or absence of exams in general, but there also seems to be great variability in traditions and practices, for example when it comes to defining the functions and forms of testing and assessment. It needs to be emphasized, however, that this is not a case of total dichotomy; quite frequently, there are obvious features of both ways of reasoning, even in individual comments.

The following quotations may serve to illustrate some of the variability in the reports:

...although the curriculum doesn't really restrict us in choosing methods or materials, pressure from parents and the whole system of education makes us work towards examinations... Immediate needs for certificates often force real communicative abilities to be left unimproved.

To volunteer to speak up means you raise yourself above your peers and become an apple polisher in many classes. Testing speaking can freeze even the brave ones who are ready to speak under the critical scrutiny of their peers.

Speaking personally I don't like assessment, tests. My students are very communicative when different themes are introduced and discussed – but testing and assessment always make them feel a bit uneasy.

I think it's important to assess and test the pupils' skills in oral and written English. By doing this I get the chance to guide/help them to become better speakers/writers. The pupils are very aware of this and I know that they are eager to improve their skills.

My pupils like my tests because they know the task types and the criteria.

... I like using different types because pupils likes and also their abilities are different.

The students don't mind doing different types of testing. In their opinion it gives them much more experience to improve and develop their skills in studying foreign languages.

My students reactions to tests are surprisingly positive. They see them as opportunities to show what they can. I must add that this is my first job as a teacher so when reflecting over my assessment habits, there's really not much to reflect upon. However, I bare in mind what I learned during my education: mistakes are not to be seen as failures but as a part of the learning process.
[Teacher working with special-needs students]

Influence from national tests and examinations

One of the suggestions for comments in the teacher questionnaire concerned the possible influence on teachers' own practices by, for example, national tests or examinations. In the reports, there is a fair amount of agreement on the existence of such effects. True, one teacher considers the influence only marginal, since national tests occur very rarely, while another teacher points out that there is considerable resemblance between testing at the national and local levels. However, the large majority of the respondents feel that their own assessment practices are indeed influenced in different ways, and to varying degrees, by national assessment materials. This is especially clear in situations where new systems have been implemented recently, or are actually underway. A number of examples are given, roughly falling into three categories, viz. concerning influence on content, methods, and definition of levels. It seems quite clear that, to a certain extent, teachers adapt both the whats and the hows of their own assessment, and that national materials contribute to defining and grading different levels of proficiency. In connection with this, some teachers comment on national curricula, pointing out that the national tests used are closely linked to those documents, thus creating a link between assessment and teaching. One teacher even refers to the National Curriculum as "The bible of assessment"!

Consequently, there are comments about the influence of national assessment on teaching and learning, processes sometimes said to be affected by there being a national test ahead, which teachers feel they need to provide information about, and prepare their students for. This is sometimes criticized, but in other cases teachers emphasize that, of course, they want their students to be familiar with the type of test to come, and that, consequently, they adapt their teaching to that end. Also, it is pointed out that if the examination to come does not include a certain skill, this is likely to cause less attention being paid to that skill in the classrooms. Moreover, in certain cases, national exams are described as creating, or adding to, pressure and stress, both for individual students and for schools, which need to do well in comparison with others.

In conclusion, it seems quite obvious that national tests and exams are considered by teachers to have an impact, most of all on assessment practices, but sometimes on teaching and learning as well. Some teachers are critical of this, others are positive, but most teachers

seem fairly neutral. Also, not surprisingly, there seems to be a difference in attitude depending on the type of exam to come, especially concerning the degree to which that exam will affect students' future options. – Here are some comments to illustrate the issue of impact:

The national tests have made me change my way of assessing my students. I try to assess a “working” language as means of communication.

I think the national test gives quite a wide picture of the student's language skills, so it helps my assessment work.

External tests do have some influence on a teacher's assessment practice. For example, I have assessed my students' creative writing papers according to the principles used at the national exam. The same goes with speaking tasks my students have to take at the end of the term. I have told them about the aspects they are usually assessed and tried to acquaint my students with the scales used for assessment. At first students find it a bit confusing, but later on they start to use the same scales to analyse their own written work.

Of course my own assessment practices are influenced by national tests or exams. I find that quite natural, because I obviously want my pupils to be familiar with both the exams and how they are assessed before having them themselves.

What's more, I'm worried about motivation of those who would take new [x] exam on basic level as it's very easy to get 30% and consequently pass the exam. As for the written part (basic level) it's difficult to ‘fail’ it. A piece of writing might be full of mistakes and the student still has the chance of passing it.

... in the national examination students take before going to University there is no speaking test; I believe that this fact also influence the little relevance given to speaking activities along the Secondary Education.

I have also noticed that I spend less time on grammar tasks, less than I used to, maybe because of new form of final exams.

I often feel pressure from students to do exam practice work, as if doing mock tests would improve students' English.

We are influenced by [x] requirement and the necessity to obtain the best [x] results (league task). Our teaching is exam driven.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the external influence on teachers' assessment and teaching habits does not seem to derive from national tests or examinations alone. Occasionally, teachers also refer to course books, as well as to different international exams, which are said to have an impact on what goes on in the language classrooms.

Teachers' comments – concluding remarks

The teachers' contributions to the present survey are indeed substantial. They certainly add to the understanding of policy and practice in the field of language assessment, and of the relationship between the two. Contextual factors vary considerably, as do individual opinions on some of the points raised in the questionnaire. It is worth noting, however, that quite frequently teachers, like some of their students, do not distinguish very clearly between different pedagogical activities. On the contrary, there is sometimes a clearly holistic way of reasoning, in which aspects of learning, teaching and assessment come together. This is illustrated in the following comment by one of the teachers in the survey, apparently referring not only to continuous assessment, but to more formalized testing situations as well:

In short, I think the way we test and assess our students has a great influence on their learning.

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

The students and teachers in the survey were to some extent asked to comment on the same issues, and comparisons of their responses show that there is considerable similarity between their views. For example, both groups report that assessment of oral proficiency is much more common during lessons than in formalized testing situations, and there is also agreement on the most frequently assessed areas, namely Reading comprehension, Writing/Written production, Words and phrases, and Grammar. In the latter case, however, the rank ordering is different, in that students consider grammar prioritized in tests as well as in continuous assessment, whereas teachers point to other areas as even more focused on. Although the present survey is neither very large, nor necessarily representative, and with only modest differences in mean values, this definitely raises a number of interesting questions concerning, for example, definitions, feedback and possible connotations. First of all, do students and teachers define grammar in the same way, or is it possible that students view it as something more extended, covering what teachers may regard as accuracy in wide sense? Or, secondly, could this have something to do with the feedback that students are used to receiving on things they write or say – the balance in this between comments on language versus, for example, fluency and content? Or, thirdly, could it be that the word *grammar* is more “neutral”, or less loaded, to students than to teachers, who are usually well acquainted with curricula emphasizing skills rather than elements? – These interpretations are indeed tentative, but they may serve as examples of interesting issues brought up by the present study – issues related to the relationship between students’ and teachers’ perceptions and understanding of shared experiences.

In closing...

In the survey briefly reported here, students and their teachers in a number of countries willingly shared their knowledge, experiences and views on policy and practice within the area of language testing and assessment. In so doing, they have made a distinct contribution to one of the primary aims of EALTA, namely to increase public understanding of language testing and assessment. Equally worth emphasizing, however, is that they may in fact also have contributed to increased understanding among professionals in the field. To be sure, teachers’ expertise is frequently sought and utilized in different assessment projects, but the voices of the test-takers are rarely heard, despite the fact that they form by far the largest group of stakeholders. Hopefully, this report will have demonstrated that their reflections, too, are well worth listening to, at different levels of the educational system, with a view to improving both products and practices within the field of language testing and assessment.

EUROPEAN NETWORK OF LANGUAGE TESTING AND ASSESSMENT

ENLTA

Partner Institutions

Lancaster University; UK (*coordinating institution*)

Catholic University of Leuven; Belgium

New Bulgarian University, Sofia; Bulgaria

University of Tartu; Estonia

University of Jyväskylä; Finland

University of Dortmund; Germany

Csongrád County Educational and Cultural Public Utility Company; Hungary

Cito; The Netherlands

University of Bergen; Norway

Central Examining Board; Poland

Foreign Language Teacher Training College, Zabrze; Poland

University of Ljubljana; Slovenia

Generalitat de Catalunya; Spain

Göteborg University; Sweden

ENLTA / STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Country: _____ School: _____

Boy / Girl (*please circle*) **Age:** _____ years

Which language are you going to write about? _____

How long have you studied it? _____ years **Is it obligatory?** Yes / No (*please circle*)

Please tell us as much as possible about what YOU think about language tests and assessments!

What is a **GOOD** language test/assessment? – Why?

What is a **BAD** one? – Why?

Other comments?

Please turn over!

	Yes		No	
I like learning the language	5 4 3 2 1			
I think I do well in the language	5 4 3 2 1			
FORMAL TESTS / EXAMS				
In testing and assessment...	Yes		No	
I normally get the chance to show what I know/can do	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
I learn a lot	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
I often feel nervous	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
I think the most important things are assessed	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
I normally do well	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
— — — — — — —				
The following things are often tested/assessed	FORMAL TESTS / EXAMS		ASSESSMENT DURING LESSONS	
Listening comprehension	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Reading comprehension	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Speaking on my own (for example, making presentations)	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Talking with others (for example, discussing things)	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Writing texts	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Translation	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Words and phrases	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Pronunciation	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Grammar	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
Spelling	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	
<i>Something else?</i>	5 4 3 2 1		5 4 3 2 1	

Please circle one of the numbers 1-5.
5 = Yes, absolutely
1 = No, absolutely not

ENLTA / TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Country: _____ **School:** _____

Teacher of _____ (**language/s**)

Please give as much information as possible, for example about the following:

- Background/Context (e.g., curriculum, school, students)
 - Whether you find certain aspects of language/language use more, *or* less complicated to assess
 - Your students' reactions to different types of testing and assessment
 - Possible influence on your own assessment practices by, e.g., national tests or examinations

ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Please circle one of the numbers 1-5 (*5 = Yes, absolutely, 1 = No, absolutely not*)

<i>The following things are often tested/assessed</i>	FORMAL TESTS / EXAMS					ASSESSMENT DURING LESSONS				
Listening comprehension	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Reading comprehension	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Oral production	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Oral interaction	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Written production	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Written interaction	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Translation	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Words and phrases	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Pronunciation	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Grammar	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
Spelling	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Something else?</i>	5	4	3	2	1	5	4	3	2	1

COMMENTS *on the whys, whats, and hows...*
