

Improving Authenticity and Validity in Teaching and Assessment

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This presentation begins by addressing the importance of authenticity in language classes and materials, as well as in language assessments. A fundamental assumption of communicative language teaching (CLT) is that the goal of language learning is to learn to use the target language for communication. This requires paying attention to authenticity—in language classes, the level of similarity between language use tasks used in the classroom or on a test, and language use tasks that students will actually have to perform in real life. The presentation will further draw parallels between teaching and assessment in the areas of construct definitions and construct validity.

The presentation will discuss the implications of research and theory in instructed second language acquisition for teaching, and relate them to language assessments. Ways of integrating authenticity into assessments while also maintaining strong construct validity and clearly interpretable scores will be addressed, along with associated tradeoffs, and the implications of this for task formats will be considered. The presentation will conclude by discussing ways of improving assessment practices in EFL settings, including the areas of scoring procedures for performance assessments and the use of web-based testing to expand the range of possible task formats.