Assessment and Learning, 5 ECTS

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, the PhD candidate shall have achieved the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge – The candidate
- gains insight into the complex relations between assessment and learning in educating children and young adults according to the most relevant research conducted internationally and nationally
- understands and critically evaluates the mechanisms and research behind monitoring and assessing students' oral and written skills
- can critically evaluate how assessment and learning are dependent on and intertwined with issues of feedback and motivation

Skills – The candidate
- is able to critically evaluate the extent to which various forms of assessment are valid and reliable
- is able to discuss complex theoretical and methodological issues in their own thesis in light of the course content

General competence – The candidate

- can critically discuss and evaluate complex issues related to assessment and learning at a level required in the international research field

Course content

There has been a growing body of research on the relations between assessment and learning the past twenty years. This course will provide an introduction to five areas of assessment and learning concerning children and young adults in education.

1. National and international research on assessment and learning (around 90 pages)

Formative assessment or assessment *for* learning are used interchangeably, meaning simply assessment that has as its aim to promote learning, both the here-and-now and learning to learn. Research on student assessment has attempted to define the concept of formative assessment. It was particularly the Assessment Reform Group's work (Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2009; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003) that effectively put formative assessment on the educational agenda after its decline by 1995 (Black & Wiliam, 2003). We will take a closer look at the most prominent national and international research on formative assessment, and discuss their implications for policy, research and practice.

Suggested reading

Black, P. & Wiliam, D. (2018). Classroom assessment and pedagogy. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2018.1441807
Stobart, G. (2012). Validity in formative assessment. In J. Gardner (Ed.), *Assessment and Learning* (pp. 232-242). London: SAGE Publications.
Torrance, H. (2012). Formative assessment at the crossroads: Conformative, deformative and transformative assessment. *Oxford Review of Education, 38*(3), 323-342.
Wiliam, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning? *Studies in Educational Evaluation, 37(*1), 3-14.

Young language learners and major age-related characteristics that researchers need to consider will be elaborated. Later discussions will be based on the specific considerations and concerns of language assessment with young children (3–7 years) and with children in middle childhood (8–12 years) along with key issues related to practices and consequences for classroom-based and large-scale assessments. Furthermore, issues such as the washback of assessment in teaching and learning as well as societal impacts, including ethical issues, related to assessing children will also be discussed. We will conclude with recommendations for much needed improvements in the areas of assessment development and assessment practices with young language learners that can operate at the *macro-* and at the *micro-level* of decision making and by suggesting topics for future research.

Suggested reading

Bailey L. Alison, M. Heritage and F. A. Butler (2014). *Developmental Considerations and Curricular Contexts in the Assessment of Young Language Learners* In: Anthony J. Kunnan (ed.). *The companion to language assessment*. Vol. 3. Chichester, UK: Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360.wbcla079

Butler G. Y. (2016) Assessing young learners. In Tsagari, D. and J. Banerjee (eds.) *Handbook of Second Language Assessment* (pp. 359-376). Berlin: DeGruyter Mouton.

2. **Assessment and oral skills** (around 60 pages)

Vygotsky (1962) gave the acquisition of language a crucial place in his model of cognitive development; it is through speech and action with others that we learn to reason. Research supports the view that language has evolved as an integrated component of human cognition, rather than as a separate and distinct capacity (Mercer, 2008, 2013; Pinker, 2007).

Talk is crucial for stimulating children's cognitive development; it is both a cognitive and social tool for learning and social engagement (Whitebread, Mercer, Howe, & Tolmie, 2013). Language development is affected by the quality of experience, and for many children only some skills may have been modelled and encouraged in their out of school experience. For all students to develop a full repertoire of oral skills, oracy must be given the same kind of attention in school that has traditionally been given to literacy, and it must be taught, practiced and assessed.

In this socio-cultural perspective, we explore how research related to different oral practices (dialogic and monologic) discuss ways of monitoring and assessing oral skills. Different oral skill assessment practices, from across the world, will be examined from the perspective of both students' and teachers' actions. We will discuss valid, reliable (and practical) ways for teachers to monitor and assess students' spoken language skills, and explore how oral skill assessment may have impact on the realization of inclusive and adapted education.

Suggested reading

Mercer, N., Warwick, P., & Ahmed, A. (2017). An oracy assessment toolkit: Linking research and development in the assessment of students' spoken language skills at age 11-12. *Learning and Instruction*, *48*, 51-60.

Oliver, R., Haig, Y., & Rochecouste, J. (2005). Communicative competence in oral language assessment. *Language and Education, 19*(3), 212-222.

Wegerif, R., Fujita, T., Doney, J., Linares, J. P., Richards, A., & Van Rhyn, C. (2017). Developing and trialing a measure of group thinking. *Learning and Instruction, 48*, 40-50.

https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/grunnleggende-ferdigheter/muntlige-ferdigheter/

'The assessment of listening is one of the least understood, least developed and yet one of the most important areas of language testing and assessment' (Alderson & Bachman, 2001: x, in Buck, 2001). Listening has frequently been described as 'active', 'automatic', 'implicit', 'temporal' (e.g., Vandergrift, 2011), 'dynamic' (e.g., Vandergrift & Goh, 2009), and 'invisible' (e.g., Lynch 2009).

Due to its receptive and covert nature, we cannot directly observe listening comprehension. However, if our aim is to assess someone's listening ability, getting a better grasp of this skill a good understanding of the skill we are interested in measuring, i.e. the construct underlying our assessment instrument is a challenge we have to face. In other words, insights into the nature of listening are key to the construct validity of a test and need to form the basis of any listening assessment. Recently, listening has received increasing research interest but there is still a long way to go before we have full insight into this very important skill and its assessment.

The seminar focuses on the unique challenges the listening mode presents to teachers and test developers and will provide potential answers to the question 'What is listening?' The second part will focus on the assessment of listening ability, e.g. ways in which listening ability can be evaluated, and task- and listener-related factors that have an impact on listening task difficulty will be discussed. Also research reviews of a number of practical issues in listening assessment will be highlighted. In addition, challenges for listening assessment practice and research will be considered. The seminar will examine issues of test consequences and washback in listening assessment, and conclude with an examination of future directions in the area.

A more practical side to the seminar will be the design and use of tasks for assessing listening skills that will demonstrate and engage participants in a variety of assessment techniques and suggest how they can decide whether they fit the needs of older and younger learners. The seminar will employ and adapt material from published books, teacher-made tasks or participants' own listening assessments to use in the classroom.

Suggested reading
Brunfaut, T. (2016) Assessment of Listening. In Tsagari, D. and J. Banerjee (eds.) *Handbook of Second Language Assessment*, pp. 97-112. Berlin: DeGruyter Mouton.

Cheng, Hsiao-fang. (2004). A comparison of multiple-choice and open-ended response formats for the assessment of listening proficiency in English. *Foreign Language Annals* 37(4): 544–553.

Harding, Luke. (2012). Accent, listening assessment and the potential for a shared-L1 advantage: A DIF perspective. *Language Testing* 29(2): 163–180.

3. Assessment and written skills (around 60 pages)

The reading process is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is frequently shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. Reading is equally demanding and complex in both first and second language and even more challenging when it comes to assessing it. The goal of reading assessments is to provide feedback on the skills, processes, and knowledge resources that represent reading abilities. Reading assessments are used for many purposes. However, any appropriate use

of reading assessments begins from an understanding of the reading construct, an awareness of the development of reading abilities, and an effort to reflect the construct in assessment tasks.

We will first define the construct of reading. Then we will present a framework that categorizes many uses and purposes for reading assessment, including standardized reading proficiency assessment, classroom reading assessment, assessment for learning, assessment of curricular effectiveness, and assessment for research purposes. For each category in the assessment framework, we will outline and describe a number of major assessment techniques. In this seminar, participants will also learn what efficient readers do while they are interpreting written texts, e.g. how to take into account L2 learners' purposes for reading texts as well as their level of proficiency by familiarizing participants with scale descriptors for reading. Then, we will explore some innovative techniques for reading assessment and discuss challenges and issues for reading assessment. Finally, the seminar will close with a brief discussion of possible next steps in research exploring the interface between reading assessment and written discourse analysis.

Suggested reading

Grabe, William. 2009. Teaching and Testing Reading. In Long, M. L. and C. J. Doughty (eds.). *The Handbook of Language Teaching*, pp. 441–462. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Grabe, W. and J. Xiangying (2014) Assessing Reading. In: Anthony J. Kunnan (ed.). *The companion to language assessment*. Vol. 1. Chichester, UK: Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118411360.wbcla060

MacMillan M. F. (2016) Assessing reading. In Tsagari, D. and J. Banerjee (eds.) *Handbook of Second Language Assessment*, pp. 113-130. Berlin: DeGruyter Mouton.

Writing is a multifaceted and complex skill, both in first (L1) and second or foreign language (L2) contexts. The ability to write is essential to personal and social advancement, as well as to a nation's economic success. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that research into, and professional concern about, writing instruction have increased tremendously in recent years (e.g., Hinkel, 2011; MacArthur, Graham & Fitzgerald, 2008; Weigle, 2013). In tandem with these developments, writing assessment is characterized by a mix of theories, concepts, and approaches drawn from two major fields of inquiry: applied linguistics and psychometrics (Bachman, 1990, 2000; McNamara, 2011). These fields are inextricably linked with one another when it comes to developing, analyzing, and evaluating writing assessment procedures on a scientifically sound basis.

We will first provide a brief historical review of the field of writing assessment. We will then introduce the notion of language frameworks, examine the contemporary issues at work in writing assessment including feedback; assessment literacy; writing placement with a particular

focus on directed self-placement and discuss the construction and use of writing tasks, rating scales and the critical role of raters and machine scoring. The seminar will also address some challenges in writing assessment and will conclude with possible future directions.

As this will be a hands-on seminar, participants will learn about how they assess writing as part of their teaching and will experiment with a variety of writing tests/assessment that fit the needs of their learners

Suggested reading

Deane, P. (2013). On the relation between automated essay scoring and modern views of the writing construct. *Assessing Writing* 18(1): 7–24.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002). The scope of writing assessment. *Assessing Writing* 8(1): 5–16.

Eckes, T., Müller-Karabil, A. and S. Zimmermann (2016) Assessment of Writing. In Tsagari, D. and J. Banerjee (eds.) *Handbook of Second Language Assessment*, pp. 147-164. Berlin: DeGruyter Mouton.

4. Assessment and feedback (around 50 pages)

Several studies indicate that teachers' use of whole-class teaching is more concerned with talk for teaching, than talk for learning, and that pupils' prior knowledge is minimally emphasized in classroom talk (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Gamlem & Munthe, 2014; Mehan, 1979). The role of talk in shaping and developing pupil learning and understanding, requires interaction patterns which reduce the teacher's role as orchestrator or controller of classroom talk, and instead repositions the teacher as an enabler of talk for thinking (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Perrenoud, 1998).

Teachers who investigate and build on pupils' experiences, understanding and thinking can better support pupils' development of understanding and engagement, by functioning as scaffolds for pupils (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Further, researchers express the need for clear learning intentions that can direct pupils towards enhanced learning, facilitating higher order thinking, providing feedback that expands learning, and emphasizing depth of pupils' understanding (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Gamlem & Munthe, 2014; Gamlem & Smith, 2013).

Feedback can preclude or impede students' learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Gamlem & Smith, 2013). For feedback to enhance learning it should be an integral part of the teaching and learning process and be understandable to the receiver. To reach this goal, teachers will need to provide embedded feedback in learning activities and take advantage of the 'moments of contingencies' elicited for building students' learning. Further, students' active participation in seeking and using feedback will be important for their self-regulation processes.

Suggested reading

Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81–112.

Gamlem, S. M. & Smith, K. (2013). Students` perceptions of classroom feedback. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice, 20*(2), 150–169 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2012.749212.

5. Assessment and motivation (around 50 pages)

The notion that assessment drives learning is well known to educators and to researchers (Snyder, 1971), however, the type of learning driven by summative assessment such as tests is often superficial and short term learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2006), activated to a large extent by extrinsic instrumental motivation. The question is, how can teachers use assessment to develop motivation for deeper, long-term learning, not measured only by grades and achievements, but also in students' beliefs in their own ability to learn (Bandura, 1977, 1997; Pajares & Usher, 2008)? How can learners develop skills and strategies for lifelong learning when leaving school (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002; Zimmerman, 2002)?

The approach taken in this seminar is that assessment is not a separate part of teaching and learning, but it is integrated in these activities, in other words, assessment is learning (Hayward, 2015). Accordingly, assessment is a pedagogical tool available to teachers to enhance learning by strengthening students' motivation for learning (Smith, 2015). In the seminar, we will discuss the integration of assessment and motivation theories in the effort to promote learning.

Suggested reading

Boud, D.J. and Falchikov, N. (2006) 'Aligning assessment with long-term learning', *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education,* 31(4): 399–413.

Louise Hayward (2015) Assessment is learning: the preposition vanishes, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 22*:1, 27-43, DOI:10.1080/0969594X.2014.984656

Pajares, F. & Usher, E. L. (2008). Sources of self-efficacy in school: Critical review of the literature and future directions. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(4), 751-796.

Smith, K. (2015). Assessment for learning-a pedagogical tool. In D. Wise, L. Hayward & J. Pandya (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment*, Chap. 46; London: Sage.

Learning activities

Three full days (18 hours) of lectures, presentations, discussions, group/pair and individual work. The students have to contribute actively to the discussions.

Assessment

Participation (at least 80% attendance) and approved paper (equivalent to grade A/B): 5 credits.

An essay of 7-10 pages (excluding references and appendices) written in English, and related to one or more of the five areas of assessment in the course plan, should be submitted after the course. The research question for the paper must be approved by course instructors and a draft of 4-5 pages must be submitted before the final version. The students will receive feedback on the draft from a course instructor.

The minimal requirement for pass is that the essay would receive at least the grade B (very good) on a scale from A (excellent) to F (fail). The essay will be assessed by an internal and an external examiner.

A joint PhD module

The course is organized by the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) and Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), and offered in collaboration with Volda University College (HVO) and Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

Course instructors

Professor Tony Burner (course leader), USN/OsloMet
Professor Dina Tsagari, OsloMet
Professor Kari Smith, NTNU/NAFOL
Professor Siv Måseidvåg Gamlem, HVO
Associate Professor Sigrun Svenkerud, USN