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## Test Translation for ELLs: Basic Concepts and Methods

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**Thank you**

NCELA is operated under contract ED-04-CO-0094/0002 from the US Department of Education to The George Washington University. Our mission is to provide technical assistance information to state education agencies, local education agencies, and others regarding the education of English language learners.

*Welcome*

- Welcome to the webinar on “Test Translation for ELLs: Basic Concepts and Methods.” Today’s webinar is hosted by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, NCELA, located at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development at The George Washington University, funded through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition.
- NCELA's mission is to provide technical assistance information to state and local educational agencies on issues pertaining to English language learners.
- My name is Kathia Flemens, Ph.D., a Research Associate at NCELA and your Webinar facilitator.

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National Clearinghouse for  
English Language Acquisition and  
Language Instruction Educational Programs

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**Today our presenters are:**

Dr. Charles Stansfield, President of Second Language Testing Inc. (SLTI) and  
Ms. Paula Diamanti, Bilingual Content Specialist and Translation Coordinator, SLTI

# Test Translation for ELLs: Basic Concepts and Methods



**DR. CHARLES W. STANSFIELD**  
**MS. PAULA DIAMANTI**

**Second Language Testing, Inc.**

## Some initial considerations



- All students in grades 3-8 and 1 high school grade must be assessed annually to demonstrate what every student knows and can do (ESEA, 2001)
- For ELLs, tests written in English become (to some extent) tests of language proficiency
- By offering versions of the test in the students' native language, states can more accurately assess ELLs' knowledge of a content area (Stansfield & Bowles, 2006).

# ESEA 2001 (Title I) requires



- Section 1111 (b) (3) (C) (ix) (III) “the inclusion of limited English proficient students, who shall be assessed... to the extent practicable ... in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic content areas, until such students have achieved English language proficiency.”

# Assessment in the Native Language



- Considered appropriate for ELLs to demonstrate KSAs in content areas
- Many states use written NL assessments in at least one language other than English
- Some states that have recently used or are currently using NL assessments are:
  - NY (Haitian Creole, Korean, Traditional Chinese, Spanish, Russian)
  - MN (Hmong, Somali, Spanish, Vietnamese)
  - OR (Russian, Spanish)
  - WI (Hmong, Spanish)
  - MI (Spanish, Arabic)
  - NJ, NM, TX, DE, OH, KS, CO, NE, PA, RI, UT, WA (Spanish)

# When is a NLA appropriate?



- **Best suited for students who**
  - Are literate in their native language
  - Have received formal education in their country of origin
  - Have been educated bilingually in the US
- **States can use home language and academic background surveys to determine the students' level of literacy and educational background**



# Methods for producing a written NLA



- Translation
- Adaptation
- Parallel Development

# Translation



- **Tests are originally created in English**
- **The test content is translated into a non-English language**
  - Translation is faithful and natural
  - Minor adjustments or adaptations may be required
  - Adaptations include person names, rephrasing sentences, etc.
- **The English and the translated version of the test**
  - Differ only in the language of the content
  - Include the same content
  - Measure the same knowledge, skills and abilities

# Pros & cons of translated tests



## Pros

- Less expensive than a completely new test
- Less expensive than use of interpreters
- Ensures standardized delivery
- Test content and construct do not change
- No need to conduct a separate field-testing

## Cons

- Requires additional time
- Involves some additional cost

# Translation Verification Study



- **Collects qualitative information on preservation of construct**
- **Carried out by bilingual content experts**
- **Designed to evaluate comparable content validity across two languages**
- **Done after test has been administered**
- **Results in a final report on content validity across versions in different languages**

# Adaptation



- May involve some degree of modification
- Involves some substantial changes (e.g. tests of grammar in different languages), where some items
  - require some modification, or
  - must be replaced with new items that address the new content domain.
- Changes affect the ability to compare scores across languages
- May be necessary to demonstrate the equivalence of the constructs measured by the two instruments

# Pros & cons of adapted tests



## Pros

- Can produce a more valid test in certain situations
- Both versions can be based on the same content standards

## Cons

- Adapted test must be treated like a new test
- Necessary to field test new or significant revised items
- More difficult to show score comparability

# Parallel Development



- When a native language version of a test is developed concurrently with the English language version
- Test content and specifications are similar (based on the same content standards)
- Items are developed separately in each language
- Items are completely different across languages
- Tests should have similar validities
- Other terms used: concurrent or simultaneous development

## Pros and Cons of tests developed in a parallel manner



### Pros

- Some perceive greater validity and credibility
- Tests are not translated
- Test consists of items developed in the NL
- Both versions are aligned to the same content standards

### Cons

- Lengthiest and most costly method
- Necessary to treat NL version like a new test (field test it, set new cut scores, etc.)
- Large scale field testing required



# Cost considerations



- An assessment in the native language is cost effective to produce when it can be provided to a large enough number of ELLs with the same language background
- Investment of resources, time and money
  - Cost of translating/developing
  - Cost of printing and scoring
  - Cost of producing ancillary materials (DFA, parent guide, score report) in the other language
- However, costs of tests in non-English languages are partly offset since the number of tests or test program-related documents printed or scored in English is reduced

# Comparison of the 3 methods



<b>EN to NLA comparison</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Parallel Development</b>
Content Standards	Same	Same	Same
Content and/or Construct	Same	Somewhat different	Different
Comparable scores	Yes	Maybe	No
Reliability & validity	Least # of steps to demonstrate	Some additional steps to demonstrate	Most # of steps to demonstrate
Time & resources	Least	More	Most
Cost	Least expensive	More expensive	Most expensive

# Methods best suited for most commonly assessed content areas in SBAs



<b>Content Area</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Parallel Development</b>
Mathematics	√		√
Science	√		√
Reading		√	√
Writing (GR)		√	√
Social Studies	√		√
Language Arts		√	√

# Final considerations



- **Effects of providing NL assessments on the test development process**
  - Additional expense
  - Additional time (several weeks to months) and resources are needed beyond what is normally needed to develop and print the English language version
  - Steps need to be taken in order to corroborate that the same content and construct are being measured in both English and native language versions
    - ✦ For translation, a qualitative translation verification review can be conducted to make sure the English and the non-English items are comparable
    - ✦ For adaptation and parallel development, the test developer needs to go through the same steps to create the non-English version as the English version (in tandem)

# Final considerations



- **Printed assessments in non-English languages**
  - Provide access to test content
  - May better fit the student than an English version
  - Are an additional accommodation for major language groups
  - Are not appropriate for all ELL populations

# QUESTIONS



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**Thank you**

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**Thank you**