

EdTech in ELT: Utilizing Technology for the Assessment of English Language and Culture Skills

by [Christel Broady](#)

One of the most important aspects of language classrooms is to establish that learners actually master new skills and materials. Therefore, creating, administering, and analyzing assessments is an essential activity for English instructors. Recent professional publications seem to recommend the use of technology for assessments (see the [Appendix](#) for online-assessment resources). Many teachers, however, ask themselves several questions:

1. What are the benefits of electronic assessments?
2. How can assessments be done electronically?

In this article, these questions are addressed and practical tips are provided to language instructors in ESL and EFL contexts.

Is Electronic Assessment Useful? What Are the Advantages?

In the United States, electronic assessment tools are utilized in all grades, for annual state tests in most U.S. states, and often to measure teacher effectiveness. In addition, many standardized tests require computer-based components. In addition to assuring that learners acquire mastery in English skills, content, and culture, teachers also need to prepare students to acquire technological test-taking skills so that the achievement gap does not widen even further.

Worldwide, in order to be able to technologically navigate careers that will use technology, all students—ESL and EFL alike—must be trained in being productive users of technology in English classes. Technology skills expand when utilizing e-assessments because they happen under time pressure and grades are at stake; this offers students the opportunity to apply knowledge and skills in situations that count while mimicking real life pace.

How Can Electronic Assessment Be Done?

The following section offers multiple practical examples and resources for various assessment purposes. They range from learn checks to more intricate projects.

Image-Based Tests and Quizzes

This category is an amazing one for English teachers. Connecting images or concepts to words is, after all, at the heart of language instruction. There are platforms that allow teachers to put both words and pictures together and create assessments for learners. Here are two examples:

[Imagequiz](#): This platform is great for newcomer ESL students in science, math, social studies, computer science, and so many more areas. (See Figure 1.)

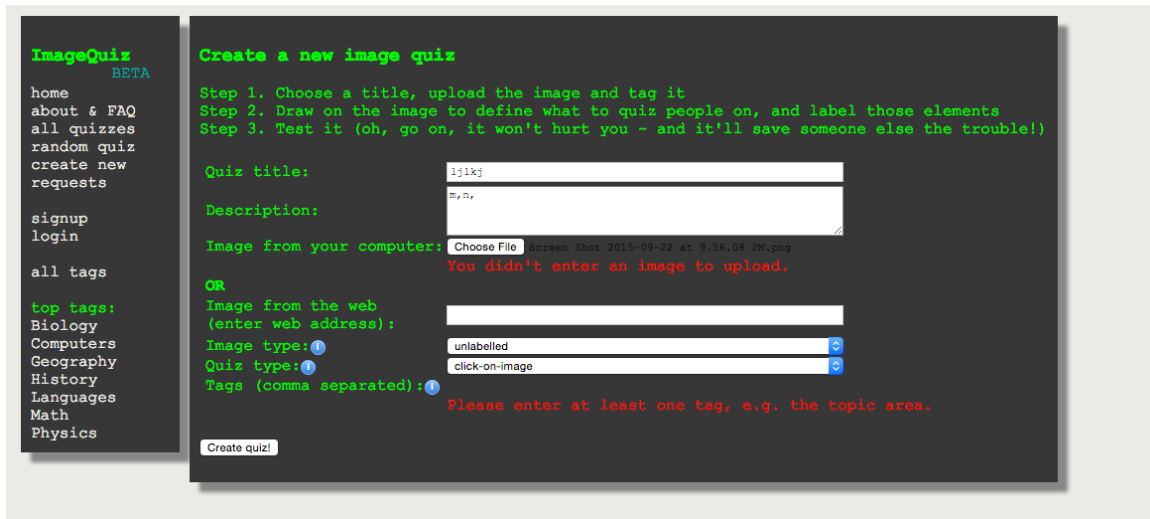


Figure 1. Imagequiz

[Google Form Assessments With Pictures](#): Learn in a simple step-by-step way to create your own picture-based assessments. It is very easy, even for beginners, but also useful for more advanced learners.

Paperless Worksheet Assessments

[Handouts App](#): This app for iPads and iPhones allows teachers to create assignments and/or worksheets, draw on them, annotate text, and more. On an e-dashboard, teachers can track assignments. Grades for early learners can be done electronically via stickers. Feedback for older students can be done in more complex ways.

Video Activities and Assessments

[Zaption](#): For those language teachers who like to flip the classroom and/or love the use of video, Zaption offers the opportunity to embed assessments into the experience of watching a video. When teachers prepare a video for student learning, they embed questions into strategic portions of the video. When students watch the videos, they cannot proceed until the questions are answered correctly.

In-Class Polls and Instant Feedback

In-class polls allow instant feedback during class. With paper and pencil assessments, by the time feedback is returned, the class has often moved on to new topics and the time to reteach concepts has passed. In-class polls allow teachers to take a real-time pulse of learning.

[Socrative](#) and [Plickers](#): These tools, used for games and other fun activities, allow for real-time formative assessment data with only the use of a smartphone. (See Figure 2.)



Figure 2. Plickers interface is simple, clean, and easy to use

[Kahoot!](#): This tool allows teachers more flexibility than Socrative. Teachers can embed video and other media. They can create learning activities as well as assessment games, and they can even let students create games.

[MasteryConnect](#): This is a class assessment tool mimicking bubble sheets. In addition to assessment, it could be useful in training students in the use of bubble sheets.

Metacognitive Processing of Language via Chats

Students can gain much deeper levels of learning by interacting actively with the learning process. One way of doing this is for students to construct learning with each other. This kind of learning is great for grammar concepts, to just name one example. Teachers can provide authentic text focusing on, for example, past tense, paying special attention to use of the regular verb ending of -ed. Then, students can discuss via text messaging boards, what this *means* and then jointly construct their own grammar rules. This type of activity is often described as a backchannel chat.

[Chatzy](#): Students or teachers can initiate chats, invite others, and store the conversations. Teachers can track individual contributions and learning.

[Today'sMeet](#): Today'sMeet offers some additional tools such as a pause button, allowing teachers to pause a conversation if it derails off topic, or the ability add new prompts to the chats.

[Google Docs](#): Teachers can open regular Google documents to track student comments and utilize backchannel learning.

Technology to Record, Grade, and Provide Feedback for Bubble Sheets

These tools help teachers prepare students for bubble-sheet high stakes tests. They make recording, grading, and providing feedback using smartphones easy for teachers. After students

have completed their bubble sheets, the teacher can take one photo of each sheet, and the program will take it from there to store, grade, and report results.

- [QuickKey](#)
- [ZipGrade](#)
- [GradeCam](#)

Using Blogging for Assessment

Blogs are incredibly powerful tools for the assessment of student work. In [WordPress](#), students can reblog each other's postings with the click of one button. A safer and private alternative Blogform for students is [Kidblog](#). Students can participate in formative English assessment by posting written, spoken, picture/photo, or video products on their individual or class blogs.

Following is a table (Table 1) with some sample blogging activities for receptive and productive English skills:

Table 1. Blog activities

	Example(s)
Listening	Students listen to a podcast and post a report on the blog.
Speaking	Students create a podcast and post it.
Reading	Students post a text with questions and then answer them on the blog.
Writing	Students write a report, summary, etc.
Culture	Students research a cultural phenomenon, provide links to the phenomenon in the target culture, and explain what this means in contrast to their own culture, all on the blog.
Study Skills	Students reflect on how to best approach and master learning a skill.

Creating, Administering, and Grading Tests and Quizzes Online

[Quibblo](#): Create and share assessments (including polls, surveys, open-ended questions, and scored quizzes) on social media or keep them private.

[ProProfs](#): This tool allows teachers to create assessments, grade them, and then award certificates.

[Testmoz](#): This free platform does not require registration, and it affords four question types, automatic grading, and detailed reports.

[ThatQuiz](#): ThatQuiz is a platform that offers already created assessments for student practice. It can be administered in many languages and for a variety of curriculum objectives including math and vocabulary. This is a great tool for ESL classrooms to drill skills. (See Figure 3.)

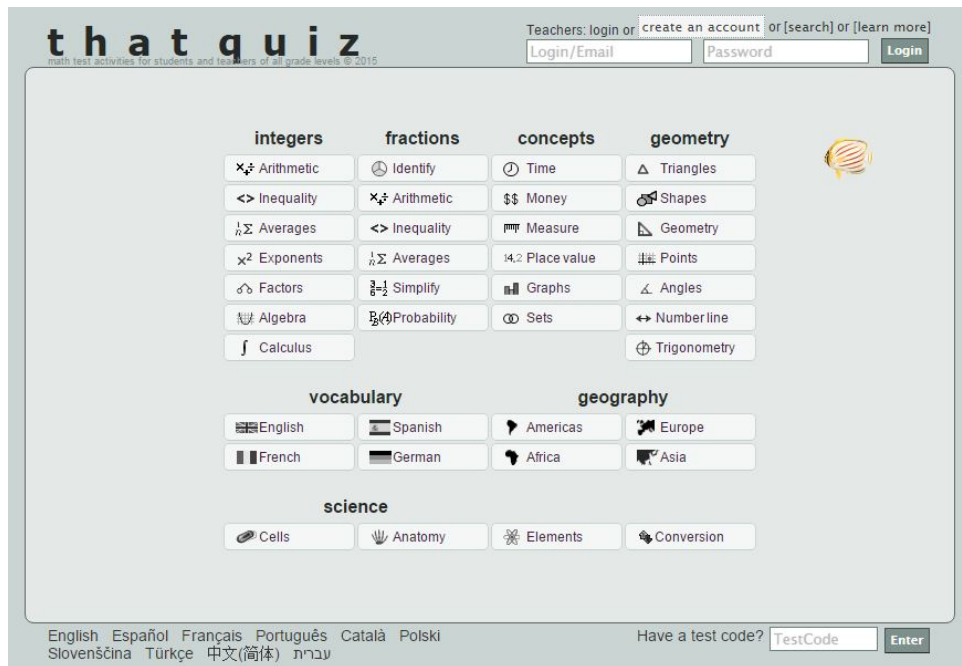


Figure 3. ThatQuiz

Collaborative Assessments

There are many benefits for allowing ESL students to conduct group assessments until they are ready to produce their own product. In the early stages of language formation, group members can guide and coach newcomers. [MagicalPad](#) is a nice tool for collaborative assessments.

Creating e-Assessment Rubrics

Good rubrics provide much needed guidance to learners on how to effectively navigate assessments. They establish benchmarks and set standards for various performance levels. Creating good rubrics is not easy, but there is help for teachers; [eMarking Assistant](#) provides rubrics guidance to teachers and interfaces with Microsoft Word.

Student-Generated Infographics as Learning Assessment

Today's learners are surrounded by infographics and diagrams on a daily basis on the Internet and in print media. Information represented in picture form is natural to them, and teachers can utilize this familiarity in their assessment practices. Student-generated visual representations provide excellent assessment of student learning because only students who truly understand a concept can convert it into an infographic. [Infogr.am](#) is one excellent online tool: It is super easy, interfaces with a variety of platforms, and is interactive and responsive. (See Figure 5.)



Figure 4. Infogr.am

Digital Exit Slips

Teachers should plan their lessons with the end in mind. In other words, they should plan and teach the lesson to assure measurable and observable skills at the end of the instructional time. However, in many cases, a valuable opportunity for learning feedback is missed when students leave classrooms without being assessed. One way of closing this gap is to administer quick digital exit slips using any social media outlet:

- Ask students to post on Twitter (a “hash tag” should be provided with the task) saying the most important concept they learned in class that day.
- Ask students to submit a quick video or audio recording via [Edmodo](#).
- Ask students to post a reply to teacher or peer questions in a [Google form](#).

Assessing With Gaming

Students love games. Moreover, games are excellent avenues to assess student knowledge and skills. Online gaming platforms are easy to use and fun to present to learners.

[Teacher Gaming Network](#): This platform offers multiple formats to teachers for games that can be created in minutes. They are great for in- or out-of-class, quick or in-depth assessments, and especially great for vocabulary and concepts.

[Jeopardy](#) (via SuperTeacherTools): Another great game is based on the popular U.S. TV game show “Jeopardy.” Both ESL and EFL learners can benefit from the cultural and assessment components. This platform allows the use of foreign symbols and letters, which is great for questions in students’ native languages. Also, it can be used on hand-held devices.

Conclusion

I hope the above listed tools make you curious and motivated to take your assessments into the cloud and connect more with your students’ life experiences. Try out one tool at a time and see if the assessment could make the process more effective and fun in your context. Clearly, all platforms require a learning curve. However, by using one tool at a time you will acquire

technical assessment literacy very quickly. For more readings and some animated assessment methodology videos, please see the Resources section below.

Until next time,

Christel Broady

Resources

- More on [handouts](#)
- More on [Socrative, Kahoot, Zaption, Plickers, Quick Key, Zip Grade & Grade Cam](#)
- More on [blogging](#)
- More on the [online tests and quizzes](#) listed above
- More on [digital exit slips](#)
- More on [online gradebooks](#)
- Animated [movies about assessment technology](#)

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Appendix: Online-Assessment Resources

Curtain, H. I., & Dahlberg, C. A. A. (2015). Languages and learners: Making the match. World language instruction in K–8 classrooms and beyond (5th ed., pp. 376–392). New York, NY: Pearson.

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