



## Adapting IELTS Assessment Modules for 8th and 11th Grade Learners in Uzbekistan

**Aziza Kadirova Ilhomovna**

The Graduate student in MA TESOL program Webster University, in Tashkent, and an English teacher of the 1<sup>st</sup> Specialized State School in Romitan district, Bukhara region

**Annotation:** This thesis investigates the importance and impact of adapting the modules of IELTS assessment to the level and specific needs of 8th-grade and 11th-grade students. It argues that a one-size-fits-all approach to IELTS preparation is not effective, as students at different educational stages have varying language proficiency, cognitive development, and learning goals. By tailoring assessment tasks, materials, and strategies to suit these differences, teachers can create more meaningful and accessible learning experiences. The study highlights that such adaptation not only improves students' understanding of test format and skills, but also increases motivation, confidence, and overall performance. Ultimately, the thesis emphasizes that aligning IELTS assessment practices with learners' abilities leads to more accurate evaluation and better learning outcomes.

### **Research focus and objectives:**

**Main Objective:** To demonstrate that a modified approach to IELTS preparation considering proficiency levels, cognitive development, and learning goals is more effective than a "one-size-fits-all" strategy.

**Key Keywords:** Classroom environment, cooperation, academic achievement, language proficiency, aptitude, authenticity, communicative competence, differentiation.

### **Introduction and Context**

The study focuses on two distinct groups of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners at a public school in Bukhara, Uzbekistan.

**Group 1 (8th Grade):** Consists of 16 students (ages 14-15) at an **A2 level** (CEFR). Despite eight years of formal schooling, proficiency remains basic due to a historical



emphasis on memorization.

**Group 2 (11th Grade):** Students aged 15-16, undergoing rapid cognitive and social development (adolescence). They face high-stakes pressure as they prepare for career paths and state-mandated language assessments.

The target group of learners consist of 16 8<sup>th</sup> -grade students studying at a public state school in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. The learners are between 14 and 15 years old and are in a A2 level as a Foreign Language (EFL) program. English classes are conducted three times a week according to school curriculum and State Education Standards. The lessons are focused on General English, with additional teacher-centered classrooms to support language development.

The learners are at an A2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. They have been studying English for about 8 years in formal classroom. Despite this long period of receiving ESL classes, their proficiency remains at a basic level, which means a prominence on memorization-based learning style. Communicative competence was addressed a little, since their textbooks have been changed into Cambridge press textbooks.

All learners share a common first language background of Uzbek, while a few students are also fluent in English, which occasionally influences classroom interaction. The classroom environment is generally cooperative, as some students participate wholeheartedly, although participation levels differ clearly. However, future career prospects and academic achievement is essential almost all of the students. A framework serves as a guiding basis for choosing appropriate constructs and content, depending on the specific context in which decisions need to be made (Fulcher, 2016, p. 31). The learners demonstrate stronger contribution while doing tasks on receptive skills such as reading and listening, compared with productive skills such as speaking and writing. Most students can understand classroom instructions and short dialogues, but they have some challenges when expressing ideas accurately in spoken English. Additionally, several learners rely heavily on only memorization, that limits their ability to use language authentically.

### Individual Learner profiles

To clarify variation among the group I had chosen to describe three following representatives:



The first student	The second student	The third student
<p>The first student Abdusattor, (Student A), demonstrates relatively strong receptive skills and is able to understand almost every classroom involvement that is relevant to the A2 level. He has had extra acquaintance with English through private tutoring, which has contributed to his higher confidence compared to his classmates. Sometimes has hesitation to speak fluently as he has got fear of making mistakes. He has high motivation, as he is interested in studying abroad in the future. This learner has strong potential for improvement, if practiced communicative approaches.</p>	<p>The second student, Husan, (Student B), usually represents as an average learner in class. He performs reliable effort in listening and writing tasks, but lacks of confidence while speaking. Although he understands grammatical structures such as “can/can’t” and “going to,” he usually confuses to use them in oral communication. Husan mostly benefits from prompt-based and structured speaking activities, such as guided dialogues, which could provide a supportive environment for practicing language without any fear of making mistakes.</p>	<p>The third student, Shakhrizoda, (Student C), is a lower-level learner, who always needs additional support. Her English proficiency is below than A2 level, particularly in reading and listening comprehension. She often struggles with following instructions and needs repetition and visual aids to understand tasks. She is also a kinesthetic learner, who responds better to practical and movement-based activities. I use simplified instructions, visual supports, and peer assistance, to meet her needs. She is often paired with more active classmate of her to alleviate learning process.</p>

It is always required to use differentiated tasks, as there are students who have diverse background of knowledge. And also, it would be beneficial to take the inclusive



teaching strategies into consideration all the time. I always intend to create a supportive classroom environment, to enhance the students' feel of stimulation when developing their skills in L2.

**My second group of learners** are 11<sup>th</sup> grade secondary school students, studying English as a foreign language at a public school, Bukhara, Uzbekistan. English is taught in our school as a mandatory school subject. Teachers' and textbooks' instructions are focused on developing reading, listening, writing and speaking skills as the school textbooks are from Cambridge Press. Most of the students have limited English speaking atmosphere outside of the class, so the school curriculum plays a vital role in their taking up the language. The classes are almost teacher-centered, however, there is always a growing shift towards learner-centered classrooms.

All members indicate individual characteristics. Initially they are all Uzbek, and they mostly communicate in their L1. Furthermore, the sentence structure of their native language is quite different from English, so it impacts on making some minor mistakes, while translating and speaking skills, though. Secondly, they are 15-16 years old, and they are at the pedestal of adolescents. It means that they are at the cognitive and social developing stage. Thirdly, they are all preparing for their future career, including taking exams based on their EFL, that are assessed by the State Education Standards and Language Assessment System, like IELTS or CEFR.

According to sociolinguistic factors there could be seen two subgroups within the group itself. The students who are from urban areas are in the first subgroup, that means they need superior access to extra resources as tutoring and guiding individually, or attending language centers to make a progress. They are more confident in speaking and have wider exposure to English through social media.

The learners who are from low-income families with lower socioeconomic backgrounds and rural areas, they are mostly rely on the school instruction. This means that they have fewer opportunities to practice English and communicative skills outside the classroom. Furthermore, they do not have English speaking atmosphere in their living areas. This leads to their less confidence in their speaking skills, and grasping while listening to the authentic material even during the lessons.

As an ESL instructor, I usually try to enhance the way of the design of my classroom



management, taking into consideration the sociolinguistic background of my learners. For example, I thoroughly choose methods and approaches paying attention to the differences of learners' exposure to grasping English and first-language influence. I would adopt a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach to create meaningful interaction among the students while arranging them into subgroups to manage the classwork, especially for learners who have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. Additionally, principles from SLA (Second Language Acquisition) such as the importance of input, and output, would inspire me to provide understandable input prospects for negotiation of meaning and structured output tasks. I would also incorporate TBLT (Task-Based Language Teaching) to safeguard that language to be learned through pragmatic communicative tasks, in order to make the lessons more relevant to learners' social contexts and needs.

Being aware of learners' social identities, attitudes, and their level of confidence would shape my classroom activities. I choose classroom materials paying attention to the differentiation methods. I would adapt resources to replicate students' sociocultural backgrounds, in order to make class activities more reliable and engaging. Drawing on Sociocultural Theory, I would emphasize collaborative learning and peer interaction to support language development towards learners' aptitude of individual development. I would probably differentiate my instruction of the activities to accommodate different proficiency levels of the learners, to align with modern TESOL practices. Integrating sociolinguistic awareness into teaching helps me to create more supportive language learning environment.

For my group of learners, I would encounter the authentic and reliable materials of the IELTS. To describe and measure the proficiency the IELTS examinations are widely used throughout the world, including Uzbekistan. It enhances the system that helps both teachers and students as most of the institutional establishments require IELTS certificate to compare those who apply for it internationally. The International English Language Testing System is a widely used large-scale assessment that evaluates the English proficiency of non-native speakers who plan to study or work in English-speaking environments (Peter Peltekov, 2021). The IELTS exam was founded in 1989, and owned by the British council and Cambridge Assessment English. It is an international testing system, and is used internationally nowadays to measure and assess the knowledge and skills of applying the language. At present it is admitted by more than 140 countries, that includes 10 thousand educational institutions (IELTS, 2020). For example, in the UK it is prioritized as a test for academic purposes.



Obviously, it could assess four skills including reading, listening, writing and speaking. It measures both academic and general training of English proficiency. It is organized both in two types such as paper-based and computer delivered. For speaking there is also zoom meeting online conducting session and with a human examiner is now available. The time that is arranged for the whole exam is 2 hours and 45 minutes, including listening- 30min, reading - 60 min, writing- 60min and 15 minutes for speaking exam. The students are often required to take high assessments such as IELTS, to master the language. In order to achieve high level language proficiency, it would be better to integrate the requirements and some samples of authentic materials and adapt into the curriculum. These external standards are important as they could dominate the possibility of the curriculum and the expectations for the learners' output. Teachers should alleviate the communicative needs of their learners with the standardized system of measurements. Teachers should always take into consideration that the learners' language progress should be transferrable across different academic context, especially while preparing students for these upcoming assessments. It is often required for access to international universities, getting jobs all over the world, so IELTS test has a important prioritize as a global assessing system. The International English Language Testing System has developed into a highly influential assessment system that affects the lives of millions of individuals around the world (Pearson, 2019). It is essential for ESL and EFL instructors to align their instructions with the demands of the IELTS examination, and prepare their learners to achieve high results while taking an exam. Regarding to the information given in the sites; IELTS is accepted by immigration authorities that require proof of English proficiency. There are lots of universities, colleges or academic institutions, which only trust IELTS to evaluate English language skills, and accept the participants providing the IELTS certificate.

To be more flexible for getting ready while preparing the language assessment test types such as IELTS for A2 level students, it is highly recommended to the instructors to adapt the authentic materials to the age and level of the students. The type of teacher-created assessment, that I designed for this group of learners is reading passage according to their level and post reading True/False and Not given activity. For



example, the teacher can design a daily integrated assessment that includes a short reading passage with post-reading task that include true false activities, a listening task based on a short-recorded dialogue. For the consolidation part of all lessons, it could be recommended that using such kind of materials could make the learners getting acquainted with the authentic materials. This type of preparing the learners to the assessment helps learners become familiar with the format and time management. The teachers should pay attention to the learners' needs in order to make the tasks suitable for them, though.

Importantly, this teacher-created type of assessments should also provide formative feedback opportunities. After completing the tasks, students would be able to engage in peer and teacher feedback. This could be the kind of effective language assessment, which is used to enhance learning rather than simply measure it.

Furthermore, integrating task-based activities into the classroom activities would help the learners to increase authenticity. For instance, students might complete the tasks where they could follow the instructions and then respond in individually. This reflects the idea that language ability should be assessed through meaningful use. A test is considered valid when it measures the ability or construct it is intended to assess. Therefore, the term valid is often used with the preposition for, since a test may be valid for certain purposes but not necessarily for others (Alderson, 1995, p. 89). It follows that the term valid when used to describe a test should usually be accompanied by the preposition for. Any test then may be valid for some purposes, but not for others (page 89). At the same time, if the tasks that were created by the instructors that are more suitable with the learners' needs and level, could obviously enhance learners' confidence, while taking the real language assessments.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

The methodological foundation of this research is built upon an integrated pedagogical approach that moves away from traditional rote memorization toward active, student-centered learning. Central to this framework is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes functional interaction and meaningful communication as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. To operationalize CLT, this study employs Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), ensuring that classroom activities are grounded in pragmatic, real-world tasks that resonate with the students' specific social and academic contexts.



Furthermore, the research is heavily informed by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, specifically the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). By utilizing collaborative learning and peer interaction, the instruction targets the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance. This is complemented by core Second Language Acquisition (SLA) principles, specifically Krashen's "Comprehensible Input" and Swain's "Output Hypothesis." By balancing high-quality input with structured opportunities for production, the methodology aims to build learner confidence while ensuring linguistic accuracy.

### **Adapting the IELTS Framework for Low-Level Learners**

While the IELTS is recognized as a global benchmark for English proficiency, its standard Academic and General Training modules often prove daunting for 8th-grade teenagers at an A2 proficiency level. To bridge this gap, this thesis proposes a series of strategic adaptations. Primarily, the use of Teacher-Created Assessments or "IELTS-lite" tasks—is essential. These involve modifying authentic IELTS materials, such as simplifying reading passages and adjusting True/False/Not Given tasks to align with A2-level vocabulary and syntax.

Moreover, the assessment philosophy shifts from summative to Formative Feedback. Rather than focusing solely on a numerical band score, which can be discouraging for developing learners, the focus is redirected toward descriptive feedback that provides actionable steps for improvement. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of Authenticity. By introducing simplified versions of authentic materials, students become familiarized with the rigorous test format and time management requirements of the 2-hour and 45-minute exam. This gradual exposure ensures that students are professionally prepared without being cognitively overwhelmed.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In conclusion, the findings of this thesis suggest that aligning IELTS assessment practices with the actual cognitive and linguistic abilities of learners is crucial for a valid evaluation of their "construct" or true language ability. The data indicates that when tasks are appropriately tailored, students experience a significant reduction in foreign language anxiety and a corresponding increase in self-confidence, leading to a more cooperative and productive classroom environment.



Based on these findings, it is highly recommended that English instructors in Uzbekistan adopt more sociolinguistic aware approach to test preparation. Specifically, teachers must remain mindful of the "opportunity gap" between urban students—who often benefit from private tutoring and digital resources—and rural or low-income students who rely exclusively on school instruction. To ensure equitable learning outcomes, curriculum developers and educators should prioritize differentiated instruction and the localized adaptation of international standards. Ultimately, the goal is to create a supportive pathway that allows all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, to achieve global linguistic standards.

### References:

1. Alderson et al. (1995) *Language test construction and evaluation*
2. [Council of Europe. \(2020\). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.](#)
3. <https://ielts.org/>
4. Fulcher, G. (2016). Standards and frameworks. In D. Tsagari & J. Banerjee (Eds.), *Handbook of second language assessment* (pp. 29–44). Berlin: De Gruyter.
5. Figueras, N. (2012). *The impact of the CEFR*. *ELT Journal*, 66(4), 477–485.
6. Pearson, W. S. (2019). *Critical perspectives on the IELTS test*. *ELT Journal*, 73(2), 197–206.
7. Peltekov - 2021 - IELTS A critical review ELTL (Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics) e-ISSN: 2502-6062, p-ISSN: 2503-1848 2021, Vol. 6(2) [www.jeltl.org](http://www.jeltl.org) doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v6i2.581>