

Assessing Assessment:

The potential role of ICT in ESOL Initial Assessment tests

Research Questions:

- 1. Does IT-based Initial Assessment place students at the same level as Paper-based Initial Assessment?***
- 2. Is IT-based IA as or more efficient than Paper-based IA?***
- 3. Is the quality of the IA experience affected by the inclusion of IT?***

What is ESOL?

- **E**nglish for **S**peakers of **O**ther **L**anguages
- **Asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers**
- **5 levels – Entry 1,2,3 + Level 1,2**
- **Inclusion with Literacy and Numeracy in *Skills for Life***
- **National Curriculum since 2001**
- **Funded by LSC**
- **Standardised national tests**

Why use IA?

The IA process allows us to:

- **get to know learners and present the 'human face' of ESOL**
- **assess level of learners**
- **ensure appropriate learning programme and class placement**
- **begin writing ILPs**

Developing IA materials

Old materials

- **Piecemeal development**
- **Time consuming**
- **Not standardised (internally or externally)**

New materials

- **Developed as single unit**
- **Integrate 4 skills**
- **'Stream-lined'**
- **Standardised against external criteria**
- **Reflect 'ethos' of ESOL provision**

The Initial Assessment Process




1. Personal information interview: **teacher uses questions to assess approximate Speaking and Listening levels.**



2. Reading test **given at same level as estimated Speaking and Listening levels**



3. Writing test **given at same level as assessed Reading level.**

	<p>Yan Lin I came to the UK last year. I now live in Manchester. It is a big city. It is much bigger than my town in China and it often rains in Manchester. I like the rain! It rains a lot in my town in China too. There are lots of buses and trains in Manchester so it is very easy for me to travel round. I don't like buying my food in the shops here in Manchester. There are always many too people in the supermarket. I think everything is very expensive. The people in the streets are always in a hurry here. I don't think they have time to talk to each other. I don't speak English very well. I live with my husband. I want to speak to my neighbours. Sometimes I see my neighbours in the street and they talk to me in English. I don't always understand them. I think the best way to make friends in a new country is to learn to speak the language.</p>
	<p>Faduma I come from Somalia. I now live in Manchester. I came to the UK three years ago with my husband and our son. I really like it here. It is a very interesting city. I come from a small village in Somalia but it is very different from Manchester. The buildings here are much bigger than the ones in my village. There are a lot more cars here too. We live in a house. It isn't very big but we like it and we have very nice neighbours. I am a student at my local college. I am learning English and I enjoy the class. The teacher and the other students are very nice. There is only one thing I don't like about Manchester - the weather. It's very cold for me. I like it to be hot and sunny. I have got a job in a cafe. I have some good friends there. I think working with people is a very good way to meet people when you move to a new place.</p>
	<p>Mohamed I came to the UK 4 years ago and I now live in Manchester. Manchester is in the north of England. I really like it here. I lived in a very small place in my country - it was boring but it is more interesting here in Manchester. Life here was difficult for me at the beginning because I didn't speak any English and I didn't have many friends. After 2 months I joined an English class, which helped me a lot. My teacher tells me my English is excellent - I passed my fourth exam last week. I live in a small flat on my own and I'm very happy there. My parents live in a flat around the corner and I see them all the time. I play football every Sunday morning. I think playing football is a really good way to meet local people.</p>

Tick (✓) one box only

Question 1

Who came to Manchester this year?

- Yan Lin
- Fadumo
- Mohamed

Question 2

Who lives alone?

- Yan Lin
- Fadumo
- Mohamed

Question 3

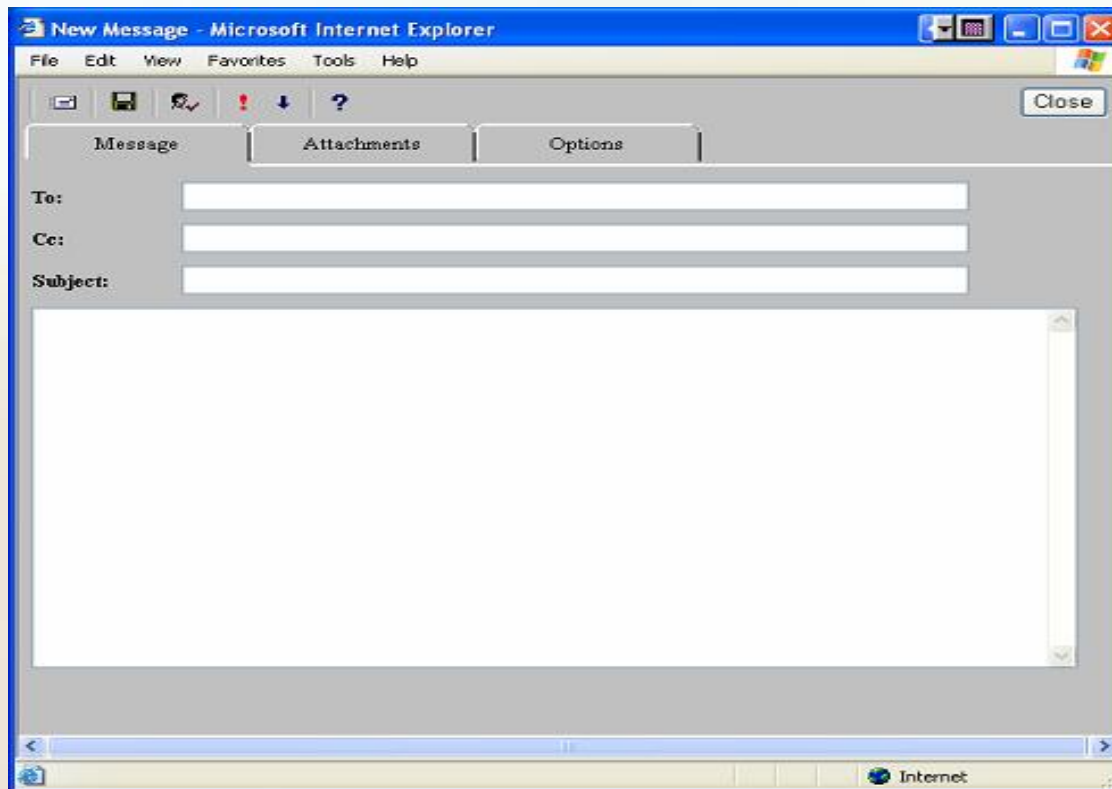
Who plays sport at the weekend?

- Yan Lin
- Fadumo
- Mohamed

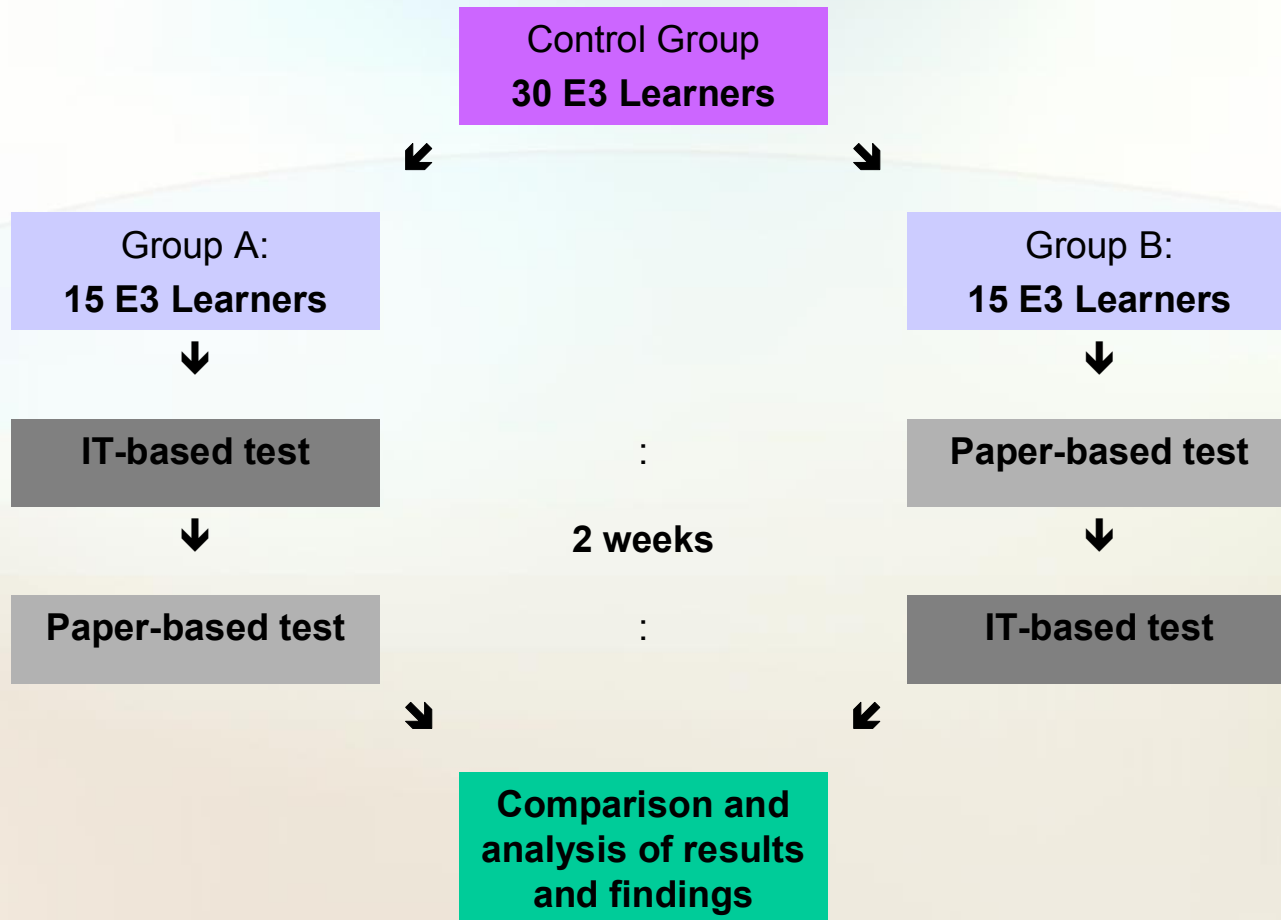
Your friend Maryam is thinking of moving to Bristol. Write her an email to tell her about your area. Write about:

- Your room, house or flat
- What is in your area
- What it is like
- The differences between here and your home town

Please write about 50 words.



Research Method



After each test, students completed a short questionnaire to provide qualitative feedback on their feelings about the experience

Interim findings

1. Does IT-based Initial Assessment place students at the same level as Paper-based IA?

- Notable difference between IT and PB reading scores
- Standard deviation was higher for both IT tests
- Shows tendency towards ‘spiky profiles’ in ESOL

	R (Pb)	W (Pb)	R (ITb)	W (ITb)
All sts	91.7%	62.2%	76.6%	63.8%
IT+PB sts	85%	64.1%	75.8%	66.7%

Interim findings

2. Is IT-based IA as or more efficient than PB-based IA?

Probably not...

- Several students took over an hour and a half to complete the IT-based IA
- IT-based IA is still staff intensive
- Only reading is entirely self-marking
- Marking writing is slower

Interim findings

3. *Is the quality of the IA experience affected by the inclusion of IT?*

How confident do you feel using computers?

	Writing	Reading
<i>Very confident</i>	27%	57%
<i>Okay</i>	67%	43%
<i>Unconfident</i>	7%	0%

Did you like doing this test on the computer?

	Reading	Writing
<i>Yes, very much</i>	33%	40%
<i>It was okay</i>	53%	47%
<i>No, not at all</i>	14%	13%

What happened next?

- **LSC indicated changes to future funding**
- **College tasked teachers to devise systems to deal with lack of funding**
- **New initial assessment designed and trialled to establish quality & feasibility**
- **System evaluated & feedback given to management**
- **Revised LSC funding announced in July**
- **Old system continued in use in line with revised funding for new intake in September**

Quality or lip service?

- 1. How can we maintain quality during change?**
- 2. Who maintains the quality?**
- 3. How much change becomes accepted and quality practice?**
- 4. Should 'instinctively good practice' require scrutiny and accountability?**

matt.davis@cityofbristol.ac.uk

carolyn.nye@cityofbristol.ac.uk