

Title of Project:

Assessing ELL content knowledge
in the mainstream classroom

Researcher:

Beth Clark-Gareca
New York University
bc210@nyu.edu



Beth Clark-Gareca

Research Supervisor:

Dr. Lorena Llosa

Abstract:

In this time of unprecedented educational accountability, content tests are an increasingly important means by which to understand the academic achievement, placement, and tracking of English Language Learners (ELLs) in schools. Though ELL content assessment has been explored primarily through test accommodations on high-stakes tests, we do not as yet know how math and science assessments are conducted in the classroom context. By the same token, the classroom context has been studied extensively in relation to ELL language proficiency, but the inquiry into how ELLs take tests in the classroom context has ended there. The significance of this mixed-methods study is in its dual focus on the classroom context *and* on content assessments, thereby contributing to the nascent body of knowledge of classroom assessment practices for ELLs. Data collection takes place in two phases. Phase one involves local observations of routine assessments and follow-up interviews with 4th grade teachers and ELLs in ten classrooms. Interviews explore teacher and student beliefs about testing, test accommodations, and grading practices. Language and academic proficiency data function to further contextualize observation and interview data. Phase two involves an online survey of K-6 teacher report of assessment practices with ELLs across multiple school districts in Pennsylvania. By answering research questions relating to 1) teacher report of classroom based assessment practices, 2) teacher decision-making processes when assessing ELLs, and 3) ELLs' perceptions of their own test-taking experiences, this study will contribute to a broader understanding of how ELL content knowledge is assessed in the mainstream classroom.