

ASSESSING GENERAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY



[Assessing General Language Proficiency: 5' 22"]

There are differences in how the term general language proficiency (GLP) is understood, and different interpretations of GLP will affect how language tests are made. There are at least three possible approaches to understanding and defining general language proficiency, with their corresponding implications for the tests and assessments they inform.

A. BEFORE YOU WATCH

These questions are meant to help you prepare for the video and relate it to your context. There are no "correct" answers for most of them

1. What features do you think are part of General Language Proficiency (GLP)? Continue the list with at least four additional features...

- Listening ability
- Grammar
- *Vocabulary*
- *Reading ability*
- *Writing ability*
- *Speaking ability*

2. Do you think that the interpretation of GLP affects the way a test is developed? How?

It may affect the structure of the test.

It may affect the validity of the test.

It may affect the usefulness of the test.

3. Can you name a test which illustrates what, in your opinion, is a good reflection of general language proficiency? Why do you think this is so?

B. WHILE YOU WATCH

4. Before you start making a test,

What do you need to do? *Define what is meant by GLP*

Why? *Because designing and developing the test will be affected by our understanding and perspective.*

General Language Proficiency (GLP): three different approaches

A. THE “ABILITIES IN REAL LIFE” (ARL) APPROACH

5. Complete:

The ARL approach sees GLP as the ability to *read, write, speak* and *listen* in real *situations*.

6. Which sections are normally included in a test illustrating this GLP approach? Tick as appropriate

Listening

Grammar

Speaking

Reading

Translation

Vocabulary

Writing

7. True (T) or False (F)?

In tests illustrating the “Abilities in Real Life” (ARL) approach, the questions...

a. ...are designed to find out what students know. *False*

b. ...assess how performances reflect real life. *True*

8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the “ARL” approach?

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Reflects real life</i> - <i>Offers useful student profile of GLP</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Long and complex</i> - <i>When test scores averaged, no information about how good, or poor, someone is at a particular skill</i>

B. THE “INTERACTIVE “ APPROACH

9. Complete:

The “interactive” approach considers that no skill can be *independent* to any other. For example, in a conversation, there may be three skills involved:

Listening, Reading, Speaking

With this approach, a test would consist of a series of tasks in which test takers must show that they are able to cope with situations where different skills interact with one another, for example. While this is much more like using language in real life, there are problems when making a test. The most critical of these is deciding if a poor performance on a listening and speaking task is due to poor listening ability or poor speaking ability.

10. What test task is given as an example of this approach?

Listening to a radio show and then talking about it.

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the “Interactive“ approach?

Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>Similar to language use in real life</i>	<i>Difficult to assess and report on ability in different skills</i>

C. THE “COMMON CORE” APPROACH

12. The “Common Core” approach includes everything that goes into *knowing* and using a language. The video mentions six main aspects:

- 1. grammar*
- 2. vocabulary*
- 3. getting information across appropriately*
- 4. communication interactively*
- 5. managing interaction*
- 6. assessing knowledge on how to use language*

13. Which are considered the best predictors of language ability?

Grammar Vocabulary

14. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the “Common core” approach?

Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>The tests give a rough idea about someone’s strengths and weakness.</i>	<i>It does not reflect how test takers can deal with real life situations.</i>

C. AFTER YOU WATCH

15. Match the GLP approaches described in the video to their definition

GLP approach	Definition
A. Abilities in real life	<i>2. Takes into consideration the ability to speak, write, read and listen in real life situations.</i>
B. Interactive	<i>3. Considers that no skill can be independent of any other.</i>
C. Core	<i>1. Includes everything that goes into knowing and using a language.</i>

16. Complete the following summary of the video about GLP and language testing and assessment with the words provided.

<p>information, limited, ability, detailed, approximation</p> <p>If you want a test to give you a <i>detailed</i> understanding of someone’s language proficiency, you need a lot of <i>information</i>. A short and <i>limited</i> test will only give you an <i>approximation</i> of a test taker’s <i>ability</i>.</p>
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To learn more about GLP, you can access Section 2.1 in Chapter 2 in The Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching Assessment, where the different elements of an “action oriented approach” to GLP are described and discussed (pp. 9–16):

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/Framework_EN.pdf