

**STUDENT  
ASSESSMENT  
FOR EDUCATORS**

# **SUPPORTING EQUITABLE ASSESSMENT FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

**MICHAEL T. MAKSIMCHUK AND  
LUIS JAVIER PENTÓN HERRERA**



“In this exceptional book, Maksimchuk and Pentón Herrera unapologetically focus on the importance of equitable assessments for multilingual learners of English (MLEs). What makes this book unique is that it develops our assessment literacy while providing us with theoretical understandings, as well as a multidimensional framework that considers the complex interdependent dimensions of multilingual student learning and evaluation.”

**Ofelia García**, *The Graduate Center,  
City University of New York*

“The authors capture what it truly means to understand and provide equitable assessments for multilingual learners of English (MLEs). The solid research base provided, along with the clear explanations, makes this a book that should be required for all assessment courses.”

**Gilda Martínez-Alba**, *Towson University*

“This book brings a fresh perspective to the assessment of multilingual learners of English in content classrooms, with keen attention to affective, social-moral, and technical dimensions of assessment design.”

**Deborah J. Short**, *Academic Language  
Research & Training, LLC*



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# Supporting Equitable Assessment for Multilingual Learners of English

*Supporting Equitable Assessment for Multilingual Learners of English* introduces the E5 model of equitable assessment, an original framework developed by the authors to guide fair and culturally responsive evaluation of multilingual learners of English. The model integrates five guiding principles: equity, equality, educational justice, equanimity, and empowerment, across three interrelated dimensions: affective, social-moral, and technical. Drawing on research, professional expertise, and lived classroom experience, the book examines the historical context of language assessment as well as its policies, the central role of emotional well-being, and the balance between content rigor and language accessibility. Each chapter combines conceptual foundations with practical tools, adaptable rubrics, and reflection prompts that enable educators to design assessments fostering student agency, cultural relevance, and academic mastery. The authors also address emerging opportunities and challenges, including the integration of technology, the impacts of global migration, and shifts in educational policy. By centering student voice and identity, this book provides educators, leaders, and policymakers with actionable strategies for building assessment systems that are academically rigorous, culturally grounded, and responsive to the evolving needs of today's students.

**Michael T. Maksimchuk** is an Assessment Consultant at Kent Intermediate School District, Michigan, USA.

**Luis Javier Pentón Herrera** is a Professor at VIZJA University, Poland.

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**Michael T. Maksimchuk and  
Luis Javier Pentón Herrera**

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Dedicated to Marcelo, Eden, Petrona,  
and Isidra, with deep gratitude for their  
generosity, patience, and support as we  
navigated the teaching, learning, and support  
of language learners together, and to my  
family – Anne & Peter – for their constant  
support and love.

**~Mike Maksimchuk**

I dedicate this book to my furbabies, my two  
doggies, Virgo and Maui, who stayed by  
my side through the writing of every page,  
from the first to the last. In particular, I  
dedicate this work to Virgo, my companion  
of 14 years, who crossed the rainbow bridge  
during this journey. Her love, loyalty, and  
light remain with me on every page.

**~Luis Javier Pentón Herrera**



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## About the Authors

**Mike Maksimchuk, Ed.D.**, is an Assessment Consultant at Kent Intermediate School District (ISD), Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he serves an educational community of 8,000+ teachers and over 117,000 students. His expertise centers on comprehensive assessment practices, encompassing formative and summative assessments, the strategic use of assessment data for instructional and curricular decision-making, and the development of assessment tools with appropriate depth of knowledge and difficulty levels. He is actively affiliated with several assessment-focused educational organizations, including the Michigan Assessment Consortium (MAC), the Michigan Assessment Literacy Facilitators Association (MALFA), and the Michigan Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (MI-ASCD). Prior to his current role, Dr. Maksimchuk taught engineering, physics, and chemistry for 14 years at the secondary level, 5 of which were also spent as the local union president, serving as a key advocate and representative for the teaching staff.

**Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, Ph.D.**, is an award-winning Spanish and English educator and a best-selling author. In 2024, he was selected as the 2024 TESOL Teacher of the Year, awarded by the TESOL International Association and National Geographic Learning. He is a Professor (Profesor uczelni, in Polish) at VIZJA University, Poland, and a Book Series Co-Editor of the *Cambridge Elements in Language and Power* (Cambridge University Press) and *Contemporary Perspectives on Learning Environments* book series (Emerald Publishing), as well as Co-Editor of *Tapestry: A Multimedia Journal for Teachers and English Learners*, and Associate Editor of *Language Teacher Education Research*. Further, he is a Fulbright Scholar and Specialist, and an English Language Specialist with the U.S. Department of State. Previously, he served as the 38th President of Maryland TESOL from 2018 to 2019, and earned the rank of Sergeant while serving in the United States Marine Corps (USMC). Two of his professional accolades include the “30 Up and Coming Emerging Leaders in TESOL,” awarded by TESOL International Association in 2016, and the J. Estill Alexander Future Leader in Literacy Award, awarded by the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers (ALER) in 2018 when his dissertation was chosen as ALER’s 2018 Outstanding Dissertation of the Year.

## Preface

Traditional assessment methods have faced criticism for their inability to fully capture the complexity and range of 21st-century skills (Erstad, 2009). These methods often operate under the assumption of a homogeneous student population, overlooking the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of multilingual learners of English (MLEs) (García & Kleifgen, 2018). This oversight can lead to significant inequities, as assessments that are not designed with MLEs in mind may fail to accurately reflect their knowledge and abilities, as shown below in Mike’s story about Eden. Thus, the need for equitable assessment practices is not only a matter of fairness but a fundamental requirement for ensuring that all students receive an education that recognizes and builds upon their unique strengths and experiences. Certainly, assessments are a pervasive and integral part of the educational landscape, serving as essential tools for measuring student progress, guiding instructional decisions, and shaping educational policies (Brookhart, 2013). At the same time, assessments play a pivotal role in shaping students’ learning experiences as well as guiding teachers’ instructional practices. It is safe to say that in most—if not all—formal schooling

settings, teaching and learning are inextricably linked with assessment practices.

In today's increasingly diverse classrooms, the urgency of addressing assessment equity has never been more pronounced. MLEs often face unique challenges—including language barriers and cultural biases—that standard assessments are ill-equipped to address. This misalignment can result in outcomes that may misrepresent MLEs' true potential (Coltrane, 2002; Osipova & Lao, 2022). To create truly inclusive learning environments, educators must rethink and redesign assessment practices to better support these learners. Equitable assessments provide a means to not only evaluate MLEs more accurately but also to empower them by acknowledging their linguistic and cultural assets, placing their humanity at the center. By focusing on assessment equity, educators can ensure that all students, regardless of language proficiency, have the opportunity to demonstrate their content knowledge and skills, ultimately leading to more just and effective educational outcomes (Gottlieb, 2016). Inspired by the need for transformative practices that embrace the diversity of our students, we bring this book as a guide to fostering equitable assessments that genuinely reflect and honor the unique strengths and areas of growth of multilingual learners. Throughout these chapters, we aim to empower educators to effectively support even those students with whom communication feels most challenging, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to succeed.

## **Our Book**

The primary goal of this book is to equip educators with theoretical and practical tools and strategies for conducting equitable assessments of MLEs. In the current educational landscape, assessments are often designed with a one-size-fits-all approach, which can overlook the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of MLEs. This book seeks to bridge that gap by offering concrete guidance on how to adapt and implement assessment practices that are not only

fair but also supportive of the diverse needs of these learners. Through a combination of theoretical insights, practical examples, and actionable strategies, we aim to empower our readers to create and use assessments that truly reflect the abilities and potentials of all students, regardless of their language proficiency.

To achieve this goal, we divide this book into five chapters, each addressing a critical aspect of equitable assessment for MLEs. [Chapter 1](#) provides a foundational overview of assessments and their relevance to MLEs, introducing key concepts such as assessment literacy and equitable assessment literacy. In [Chapter 2](#), we introduce readers to the E5 model of equitable assessment, delving into the principles of equitable assessment, and exploring how equity, equality, and justice intersect in the context of MLEs. [Chapter 3](#) examines the intersection of affective concerns and assessments, emphasizing the importance of supporting the social-emotional needs of MLEs and engaging their families in the learning process. In [Chapter 4](#), readers will find practical strategies for designing effective, equitable assessments that do not let language proficiency become a barrier to assessing content knowledge. Finally, [Chapter 5](#) looks to the future, considering the role of technology, policy, and advocacy in shaping more inclusive assessment practices. Together, these chapters provide a comprehensive guide for educators seeking to create more just and effective educational environments for all students.

## Who Are We?

Both of us, Mike Maksimchuk and Luis Javier Pentón Herrera, are educators and practitioners with extensive experience in K-12 education. Over the years, we have worked at various levels within the educational system, directly witnessing the challenges and opportunities that MLEs face in classrooms. Our experiences span different educational settings and roles, including teaching, curriculum development, and educational leadership, all of which have profoundly influenced our understanding of equitable assessment practices.

## Mike Maksimchuk

Growing up in a small town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, I was fortunate to experience much of my education in an environment where small class sizes allowed for immediate and individualized instruction. However, as I embarked on my teaching career, I quickly realized that this was not the reality for many educators and students across the country. The landscape of education has shifted dramatically since my own school days, where success often meant simply memorizing and parroting back information. Today's world demands much more from our students, and consequently, our approach to teaching and assessment must evolve to meet these new challenges.

As a classroom educator, I found myself grappling with the complexities of creating meaningful assessments. My colleagues and I spent countless hours crafting questions that aligned with standards and pushed students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills. Despite our best efforts, we saw some of our students struggling, and it took time for us to recognize that our assessments often contained implicit biases rooted in our own shared experiences—experiences that not all of our students shared.

This realization hit home when I encountered Eden, a curly-haired young man who rarely spoke in class. Eden is a caring, artistic, funny, inquisitive young man with a penchant for the daily news and pulling harmless fun pranks. He has a huge heart, and is very intentional in building relationships with his peers and teachers. Initially mistaking his silence for shyness, I soon discovered he was an immigrant student from Central America who didn't speak English. What began as a simple attempt to support Eden by pairing him with a bilingual classmate quickly evolved into a collaborative effort involving another teacher and a social worker. We uncovered that Eden's struggles extended beyond language barriers—he couldn't see the board clearly and needed glasses. This experience opened my eyes to the multifaceted challenges faced by multilingual learners and the importance of looking beyond surface-level assumptions.