

Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs Participating in the STAAR Program

Linguistic accommodations are language supports that decrease the language barrier ELLs experience when learning and demonstrating knowledge and skills in English. The Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) require all teachers to linguistically accommodate the instruction of ELLs in their classes commensurate with the students’ English language proficiency levels. Policies for STAAR linguistic accommodations support these ELPS requirements.

Overview of STAAR Assessments for ELLs

The chart below shows the ways in which the language needs of ELLs are addressed in the STAAR program.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| STAAR (3–8 and EOC) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ General statewide assessments ▪ Some linguistic accommodations permitted ▪ Taken by ELLs who do not qualify for another assessment below |
| STAAR Spanish | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Native language assessments; grades 3–5 only; same subjects as STAAR ▪ Taken by ELLs for whom a Spanish version of STAAR exists and most appropriately measures their academic progress ▪ Linguistic accommodations not permitted because students testing in native language |
| STAAR L* | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linguistically accommodated STAAR mathematics, science, and social studies assessments ▪ More substantial linguistic accommodations than for STAAR ▪ May be administered to ELLs who— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not most appropriately assessed with STAAR Spanish, AND • have not yet attained a TELPAS advanced high reading rating, AND • have been enrolled in U.S. schools for 3 years or less (5 years or less if a qualifying asylee or refugee) |
| STAAR Modified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessments for students receiving special education services, including those who are ELLs, who meet requirements for an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards ▪ More substantial and varied linguistic accommodations than for STAAR or STAAR L |
| STAAR Alternate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessments for students receiving special education services, including those who are ELLs, who meet requirements for an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards ▪ No specified list of allowable linguistic accommodations; classroom-based observational assessment design allows for any language or other communication method routinely used with the student |

*For STAAR L EOC assessments, eligibility can be carried over from spring to the July and December administrations.

Refer to the ELL Assessment Information webpage for more detailed information about STAAR assessment program participation requirements for ELLs.

Linguistic Accommodations During Instruction

Linguistically accommodating the instruction of ELLs involves communicating with them in ways they currently understand while sequencing and scaffolding instruction to foster the learning of grade-level English and academic content. Linguistically accommodated instruction is differentiated through use of instructional materials, techniques, and tools that meet the needs of ELLs.

As ELLs learn English, the types of linguistic accommodations that are most suitable change, and the need for particular accommodations lessen. It is important for teachers to stay attuned to the English language proficiency levels of their ELLs so that they can monitor and adjust the linguistic accommodations as the students learn more English. By doing this, teachers support the learning of both subject matter and English.

In the classroom, linguistic accommodations

- help ELLs understand the language of instruction, and
- accelerate the learning of both subject matter and English.

Linguistic Accommodations for the STAAR Program

Not all linguistic accommodations suitable for instruction are appropriate or allowable during statewide assessments. This stems from the differing purposes of instruction and statewide assessment. The goal of instruction and linguistic accommodations used in instruction is to foster and support learning. The purpose of STAAR is to measure the degree to which students have met state curriculum and performance standards. Linguistic accommodation policies for STAAR differ from instructional accommodations in the following ways.

- Linguistic accommodations permitted during STAAR reading and writing tests are limited. Accommodations on statewide assessments must not alter what is fundamentally assessed. STAAR linguistic accommodation policies for reading and writing differ from those of mathematics, science, and social studies because of the integral role language plays in the assessment of grade-level English language arts. Providing too much language assistance in an assessment of language arts may fundamentally alter the ability to measure how well the student reads and writes in English in accordance with the grade-level standards.
- The more substantial degree of linguistic accommodation provided through STAAR L is allowable only for a certain number of years because ELLs are expected to make strides in learning English each year. A student who proceeds from STAAR L to STAAR is expected to need limited linguistic accommodations.

More substantial and varied accommodations are made available for STAAR Modified than for STAAR or STAAR L. The differences take into account the unique learning needs of students with disabilities who qualify for STAAR Modified. In addition to having unique needs related to academic achievement, STAAR Modified students who are ELLs may have second language acquisition needs that differ from those of other ELLs and warrant native-language support and other linguistic accommodations for a longer period of time. Accordingly, STAAR Modified linguistic accommodations may be provided without time in U.S. schools limitations.

Not all linguistic accommodations suitable for instruction are appropriate or allowable during statewide assessments.

Decision-Making Authority

The language proficiency assessment committee (LPAC) makes and documents test participation decisions for ELLs as well as decisions about which accommodations to provide during state assessments. In the case of an ELL with a disability, the LPAC makes and documents decisions in conjunction with members of the student's admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee or Section 504 committee, as applicable.

- More information about decision-making and documentation procedures for ELLs is available from the ELL Assessments webpage.
- Detailed information about accommodations for students with disabilities can be found on the Accommodation Resources webpage.

Allowable Linguistic Accommodations

The linguistic accommodations allowable during STAAR, STAAR L, and STAAR Modified administrations are found in the chart below. Detailed information about each linguistic accommodation is found on the following pages.

Allowable Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs 2012–2013 STAAR 3–8 and EOC Assessments

| | STAAR (English) | STAAR L | STAAR Modified |
|---|--|--|--|
| Mathematics Science Social Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bilingual dictionary ▪ Extra time (same day) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bilingual dictionary ▪ Extra time (same day) (Clarification in English of word meaning and reading aloud of text are provided in the online interface for all students taking STAAR L)*** | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bilingual dictionary ▪ Extra time (same day) ▪ Clarification in English of word meaning ▪ Reading aloud of text ▪ Oral translation ▪ Bilingual glossary |
| Reading* Writing* | <p>Reading and Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dictionaries of various types** ▪ Extra time (same day) <p>Writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarification in English of word meaning in writing prompts <p>English I-III Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarification in English of word meaning in short answer questions | Not Applicable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dictionaries of various types** ▪ Extra time (same day) ▪ Reading aloud of eligible text ▪ Clarification in English of word meaning ▪ Oral translation |

*Unless otherwise indicated, “reading” and “writing” refer to the reading and writing components of the English I, English II, and English III assessments as well as the 3–8 assessments.

**The STAAR Dictionary Policy for reading and writing in grade 6 and above includes use of standard English, ESL (simplified English), and bilingual dictionaries for all students. For grades 3–5 reading and grade 4 writing, use of dictionaries is permitted as a linguistic accommodation for eligible ELLs.

***In addition to examining the eligibility criteria for STAAR L, LPACs should consider whether a student routinely needs and uses clarification in English of word meaning and/or reading aloud of text. Students who do not need either accommodation should take STAAR, not STAAR L.

When receiving linguistic accommodations, students may not be provided any direct or indirect assistance or reinforcement that identifies or aids in identifying a correct response to the test question.

Eligibility Criteria for Linguistic Accommodations

LPAC decisions regarding linguistic accommodations to be provided during a state assessment should be based on the student’s particular need for second language acquisition support¹ and whether the student uses the accommodation routinely in classroom instruction and testing. Providing unfamiliar linguistic accommodations may hinder rather than help the student.

¹ **Second language acquisition support** refers to the special language assistance that ELLs need as they learn English. In content-area classes, it refers to the assistance with the English language that ELLs need as they are taught mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts. It does **not** refer to the type of assistance that a student (whether an ELL or not) may need when having difficulty learning academic content or concepts.

Dictionaries as Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs Taking STAAR or STAAR L

The dictionaries included in the linguistic accommodation policy for ELLs taking STAAR and STAAR L are described below. **Reminder:** STAAR linguistic accommodation policies pertain to English-version tests only. See pages 8–9 for information about STAAR Modified.

| Dictionary | Allowed for— |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Bilingual dictionary (word/phrase translation dictionary)</p> <p>A bilingual dictionary is a specialized standard dictionary used to translate words (and sometimes common phrases) from one language to another. Bilingual dictionaries are typically bidirectional so that the user can look up words in either language to find translations.</p> <p><u>Examples of translated words — English to Spanish (useful when reading in English)</u></p> <p>evenly uniformemente; imparcialmente, equitativamente live broadcast emisión en directo photosynthesis fotosíntesis</p> <p><u>Examples of translated words — Spanish to English (useful when writing in English)</u></p> <p>cita appointment, meeting; date; quotation decepcionar disappoint débil weak</p> <p>Bilingual dictionaries often include pronunciation symbols, parts of speech, and in some instances clarifying information and examples for multiple-meaning words, phrasal verbs, and idiomatic or other expressions.</p> <p><u>Example — English to Spanish</u></p> <p>age [eɪʒ] noun (general) edad; old age vejez; (period) época; (fam: long time) we waited for ages esperamos una eternidad; verb envejecer</p> <p>The Spanish translation for the word “age” is a different word in each case.</p> <p><i>NOTE: Students who do not understand a translated word in their native language will not be helped by a bilingual dictionary. In addition, to use this type of dictionary effectively, an ELL needs a basic foundation of English, native language literacy, and the ability to use parts of speech and contextual information to narrow down the correct translation.</i></p> | <p>STAAR and STAAR L, all subjects and courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linguistic accommodation for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mathematics, science, and social studies (all grades) • grades 3–5 reading and grade 4 writing ▪ <i>Reminder: Allowed for grade 6 and up reading and writing as part of STAAR Dictionary Policy (not treated as a linguistic accommodation)</i> |
| <p>2. English/ESL dictionary (monolingual)</p> <p>Unlike bilingual dictionaries, English dictionaries enable students to look up definitions of English words. The definitions in standard English dictionaries are sometimes difficult for ELLs to understand. English dictionaries that define words in simpler English are termed ESL dictionaries for the Texas assessment program. In addition to using simpler English, ESL dictionaries sometimes include pictures to make word meaning clear.</p> | <p>STAAR reading and writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linguistic accommodation below grade 6 ▪ <i>Same reminder as above for grade 6 and up</i> |
| <p>3. Monolingual dictionary in languages other than English</p> <p>This is a single-language standard dictionary in a language other than English (e.g., a Vietnamese dictionary). While it is not included in the STAAR program dictionary policy for reading and writing, it is permitted as a linguistic accommodation in grade 3 and above. This type of dictionary would likely need to be used in combination with other dictionaries (which requires skill and experience). For example, a Spanish-English bilingual dictionary translates dichotomy as dicotomía. If a student doesn’t understand what dicotomía means, looking up the word in a monolingual Spanish rather than a monolingual English dictionary may make the definition easier to understand.</p> | <p>STAAR reading and writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linguistic accommodation in grade 3 and up |

4. Picture dictionary

A picture dictionary is designed to convey word meaning through drawings or photographs. Picture dictionaries (which may be monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual) include only words that can be pictured. Some picture dictionaries group words by topic rather than in alphabetic order, which makes it difficult to look up unfamiliar words encountered on a test. Picture dictionaries are beneficial instructional tools and are most useful in the earlier stages of learning English. Picture dictionaries are not included in the STAAR program dictionary policy for reading and writing assessments but are permitted as a linguistic accommodation.

NOTE: Because picture dictionaries contain a small body of English words compared to other types of dictionaries, they have limited usefulness as a stand-alone linguistic accommodation.

STAAR reading and writing

- Linguistic accommodation in grade 3 and up

Detailed information about the STAAR Dictionary Policy can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/staar>.

Allowable Paper and Electronic Dictionary Formats

Within the four categories above, a wide variety of dictionaries and dictionary formats are available. Keep the following in mind when determining what is allowable for the STAAR program:

- Paper and electronic dictionary formats (including hand-held electronic devices) are permitted. However, electronic dictionaries requiring access to the Internet are **not** permitted.
- For electronic bilingual and other dictionaries that are hand-held devices, the test administrator must ensure that any features that allow entering and saving text or uploading files have been cleared of their contents before and after the test administration. If a device has added capabilities (such as a calculator) that cannot be disabled, the test administrator must actively monitor the student to ensure that prohibited features are not accessed during the assessment.
- Subject-specific/topic-specific dictionaries (bilingual or otherwise) are **not** permitted (e.g., science dictionaries, academic language dictionaries, etc.).
- Bilingual dictionaries must be word/phrase translation dictionaries only. They must **not** be designed to define words or to illustrate or explain content terminology or concepts.
- Bilingual, ESL, and standard monolingual dictionaries that contain occasional pictures are acceptable as long as the pictures do not illustrate content terminology or concepts.
- Electronic devices that translate beyond the level of words and set phrases are not bilingual dictionaries and are **not** permitted.
- Only dictionaries made available by reputable dictionary publishing companies should be used (no dictionaries produced by school districts or service centers, no downloadable bilingual word lists with disclaimers about translation accuracy, etc.). A state list of approved dictionaries will not be issued.

Other Linguistic Accommodations for STAAR and STAAR L

| Linguistic Accommodation | Allowed for— |
|---|--|
| <p>Extra time (same day) This accommodation allows a student to have extra time within the regularly scheduled school day to complete the assessment. (Schools with both morning and afternoon test sessions should be aware that students using this accommodation must be in a morning session.) This accommodation is permitted for ELLs who need and are routinely provided extra time when completing assignments and assessments that require substantial comprehension or use of a substantial amount of English. Decisions to provide this accommodation should be based on second language acquisition factors related to the time the ELL needs to read meaningfully in English or write a meaningful response, as applicable. Linguistic accommodation researchers advise that the need for extra time also take into account how much additional time may be required for an ELL who relies on bilingual or other dictionaries to read (or write) meaningfully in English. Factors that are not ELL-specific (e.g., test anxiety, test-taking strategies, etc.) should not be considered in decisions to provide this accommodation. Note that additional decision criteria may apply if the ELL is a student with a disability.</p> | <p>STAAR and STAAR L (all subjects and courses)</p> |
| <p>Clarification in English of word meaning—mathematics, science, social studies This accommodation enables a student taking STAAR L to receive computer-provided clarification assistance by clicking on eligible words and phrases in the test questions. This accommodation is provided in the online interface for all students taking STAAR L.</p> | <p>STAAR L online assessments</p> |
| <p>Clarification in English of word meaning in writing prompts This accommodation enables a student to ask the test administrator to clarify word meaning on the writing prompt pages. The test administrator may provide clarification of words and phrases, with the exception of the reading excerpt in the English III analytical writing prompt, for which the meaning of only occasional single words may be clarified. Clarification may be provided on a per request basis only. To clarify meaning, the test administrator may use simpler English, pictures, and/or gestures. The test administrator is not permitted to reinforce or emphasize any part of the information on the prompt pages or assist in any way with the planning, organizing, or writing of the composition. Before providing clarification, the test administrator should ask whether the student has attempted to look up the words in the dictionary. Assistance may be provided to students who still require clarification after using a dictionary.</p> | <p>STAAR writing (all grades and courses)</p> |
| <p>Clarification in English of word meaning in short answer reading questions This accommodation enables a student to ask the test administrator to clarify the meaning of words/phrases in short answer questions on the reading test. Clarification may be provided only for requested words or phrases that are not language arts terms, not part of the selection title, and not quoted verbatim from the selection. The test administrator may provide clarification on a per request basis only. To clarify meaning, the test administrator may use simpler English, pictures, and/or gestures. The test administrator must not reinforce or emphasize any part of the information or assist in any way with the planning, organizing, or writing of the response. Before providing clarification, the test administrator should ask whether the student has attempted to look up the words in the dictionary. Assistance may be provided to students who still require clarification after using a dictionary.</p> | <p>STAAR English I, English II, and English III reading</p> |
| <p>Reading aloud of text—mathematics, science, social studies This accommodation enables a student taking STAAR L to click on words to hear them read aloud by the computer. This accommodation is provided in the online interface for all students taking STAAR L.</p> | <p>STAAR L online assessments</p> |

Optional Test Administration Procedures

The following are optional test administration procedures available to all students that may be particularly useful to ELLs. These are not considered accommodations and do **not** have to be predetermined and documented as such.

- Frequent/flexible breaks
- Clarification/translation of test administration directions
- Reading aloud the writing prompt
- Scratch paper

For detailed information, see the Optional Test Administration Procedures and Materials document and the STAAR Time Limits Policy and Procedures document on the Coordinator Manual Resources page at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/manuals/dccm>.

Paper Administrations of STAAR L

Beginning in spring 2013, STAAR L assessments in grades 3–8 and EOC will be administered online. In rare circumstances, a paper administration of a STAAR L test may be approved by TEA. Detailed information about this special request process will be available on the Coordinator Manual Resources webpage at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/manuals/dccm>. During a paper administration of STAAR L, the accommodations of clarification in English of word meaning and reading aloud of text are provided by the test administrator. These accommodations are described below. Policies regarding the use of a bilingual dictionary and extra time (same day) are the same as for students taking an online administration of STAAR L. See pages 4–6 of this guide for more information about these accommodations.

| Linguistic Accommodation | Allowed for— |
|---|--|
| <p>Clarification in English of word meaning—mathematics, science, social studies</p> <p>This accommodation enables a student taking a STAAR L paper administration to ask the test administrator to clarify the meaning of eligible words and phrases. The test administrator may provide assistance on a per request basis only. To clarify meaning, the test administrator may use simpler English, pictures, and/or gestures, but is not permitted to define, explain, or illustrate content terminology or concepts assessed. A <i>STAAR L English Clarification Guide</i>, which contains instructions and a secure list of the words in each test item that are not eligible for clarification, will be provided for test administrators to use with this accommodation.</p> | <p>STAAR L paper administrations ONLY</p> |
| <p>Reading aloud of text—mathematics, science, social studies</p> <p>This accommodation enables a student taking a STAAR L paper administration to ask the test administrator to read aloud words, phrases, or occasional sentences in a test item. The test administrator must keep voice inflection neutral at all times and must not emphasize any part of the test stem or answer choices. The test administrator may read aloud only text requested by the student. The test administrator may read aloud numbers, symbols, and abbreviations in the text requested by the student as long as doing so does not invalidate what the item is assessing.</p> <p>Grade 3 mathematics: As a standard test administration procedure, all grade 3 students are permitted to receive reading (decoding) assistance on this assessment. LPACs do not need to predetermine or document the need for this assistance.</p> | <p>STAAR L paper administrations ONLY</p> |

Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs Taking STAAR Modified

STAAR policies for the following linguistic accommodations are the same for STAAR Modified. Refer to the chart below for linguistic accommodation policies that are unique to STAAR Modified.

- Bilingual dictionary
- English dictionary (standard or ESL)
- Monolingual dictionary in languages other than English
- Picture dictionary
- Extra time

| Linguistic Accommodation Policies Unique to STAAR Modified – Grades 3–8 and EOC |
|---|
| <p>Clarification in English of meaning of words in test questions—all STAAR Modified assessments</p> <p>This accommodation provides the same type of clarification as for STAAR L and STAAR, with the following differences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is extended to the multiple-choice test questions for reading and writing assessments. ▪ Writing: The test administrator must be careful not to clarify word meaning in a way that cues answers to questions assessing spelling, mechanics, or grammar. For example, the test administrator is not permitted to clarify the meaning of tested words in questions assessing homonyms. ▪ An English clarification guide is not provided for STAAR Modified. |
| <p>Clarification in English of meaning of words in STAAR Modified reading and writing selections</p> <p>At the request of the student, the test administrator may clarify the meaning of occasional words and phrases the student does not understand in STAAR Modified reading and writing selections. The test administrator is not permitted to clarify the meaning of entire sentences or longer portions of text. To clarify meaning, the test administrator may use simpler English, pictures, and/or gestures. The test administrator must not provide assistance that aids the student in determining correct answers to test questions.</p> <p>Reading selections: The test administrator must not clarify the meaning of vocabulary, expressions, or other phrasing specifically assessed in a test question.</p> <p>Writing selections: The test administrator must not clarify meaning in a way that provides cues related to spelling, mechanics, or grammar. For example, if a student requests clarification of the meaning of the misspelled word sugest in an editing selection, the test administrator must not comment on the misspelling when clarifying the meaning.</p> |
| <p>Reading aloud of words in test questions—all STAAR Modified assessments</p> <p>This is the same as the read-aloud accommodation for STAAR L, with the following exceptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is extended to test questions for reading and writing assessments. ▪ Writing: Only single words (not phrases or sentences) in multiple-choice questions may be read aloud. In addition, the test administrator must be careful not to read aloud words that would aid students in determining answers to test questions. For example, words in answer choices that assess spelling must be pronounced correctly even if there is a difference in pronunciation between the misspelled and correctly spelled word. <p>NOTE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral administrations: <i>For reasons associated with their particular disabling condition, some students taking STAAR Modified tests may be eligible for an oral administration of test questions (exception: no oral administration of writing test questions). In such a case, oral administration guidelines should be followed.</i> • Writing prompts: <i>Keep in mind that test administrators may read aloud all information on the prompt page if the student requests this assistance or if it is documented in the IEP as required.</i> |
| <p>Reading aloud of words in STAAR Modified reading and writing selections</p> <p>Reading selections: At the request of the student, the test administrator may read aloud occasional words or phrases in a reading test selection. Sentences and longer portions of text must not be read aloud.</p> <p>Writing selections: At the request of the student, the test administrator may read aloud occasional single words. Reading aloud phrases or longer portions of text is not permitted. When reading a misspelled word aloud, correct pronunciation should be used.</p> <p>NOTE: Test administrators read aloud the title and prereading text above STAAR Modified reading and writing selections to all STAAR Modified students as part of standard test administration procedures.</p> |

Oral translation—all STAAR Modified assessments

At the request of a student, the test administrator may orally translate a word, term, phrase, or occasional sentence that the student does not understand. The test administrator is **not** permitted to define or explain content terminology, concepts, or skills assessed. The test administrator is permitted only to give the equivalent word or words in the other language. **Examples:** If a Spanish-speaking student requests assistance with the meaning of the word **sodium** in a question, the test administrator may say the equivalent term **sodio**. If the student asks what **row** means in a sentence in which the context refers to rowing a boat, the test administrator may say **remar**. In translating, the test administrator must not provide assistance that cues correct answers.

Bilingual glossary (word list)—STAAR Modified mathematics, science, and social studies assessments

Students may use a locally developed or other customized bilingual glossary to find the translation of words they have difficulty understanding in English. The glossary must **not** include definitions, explanations, examples, or pictures that will aid students in understanding the content terminology, concepts, or skills assessed. Only native-language equivalents are allowed. **Example:** It would be appropriate to translate **square inch** as **pulgada cuadrada** in Spanish in a bilingual glossary. It would **not** be appropriate to define what a square inch is or to include a picture of a square inch.