

Impact of using TOEIC as an exit requirement at a public university in Vietnam

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Presentation outline

- **Introduction**
 - Background
 - Methodology
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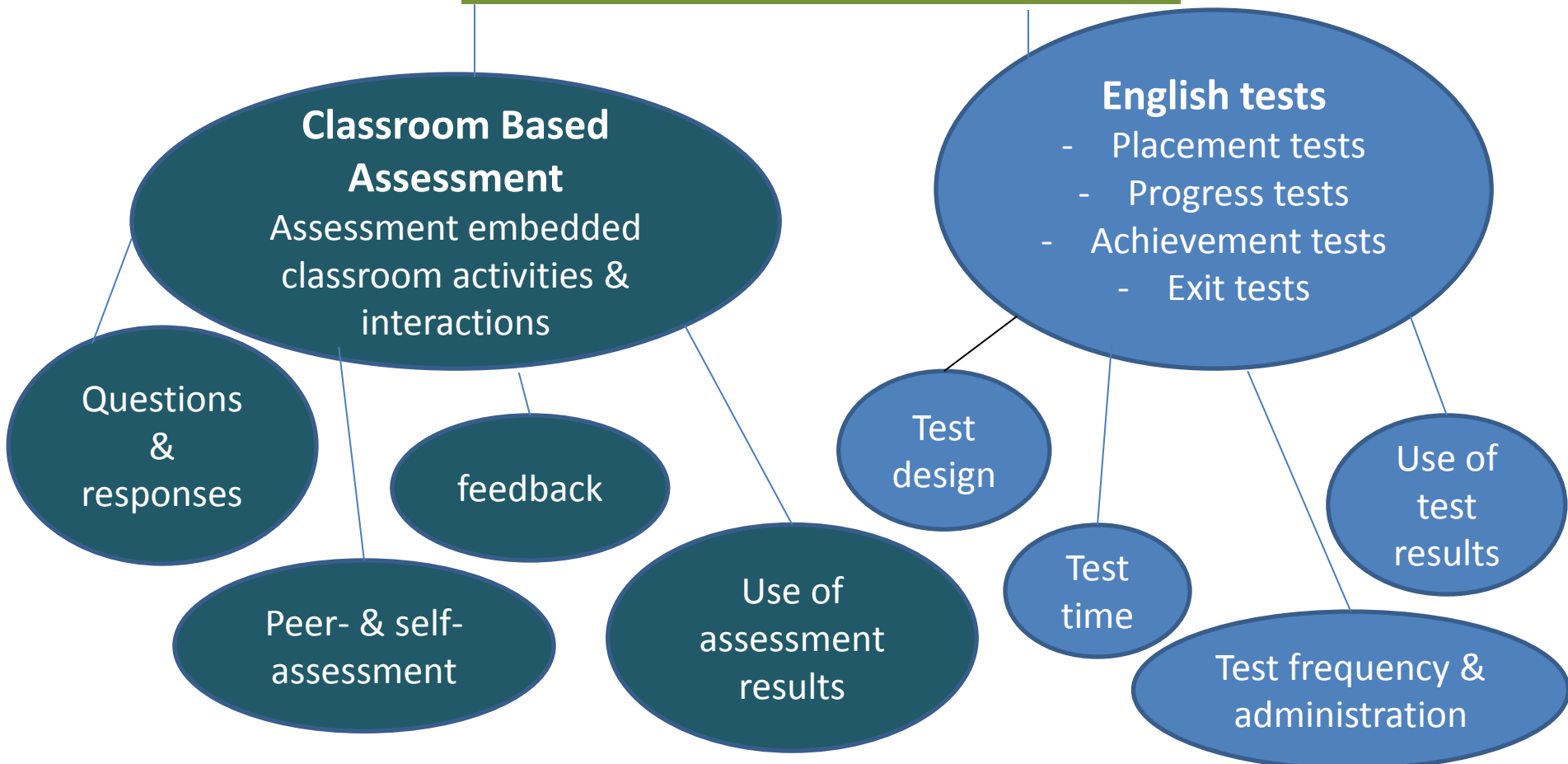
Background to the study

- TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication
- Social context:
 - TOEIC become a popular English proficiency test in Vietnam and in many Asian countries
 - Use of TOEIC certificate for job application in many business corporations such as Vietnam Airlines, LG Electronics Vietnam, Panasonic...
- Educational context: issuance of circular no 2961/BGDĐT- GDDH in 2010 for quality assurance and accreditation control of HE institutions: *HE institutions are required to publicize standards of their educational outcomes including graduates' foreign language proficiency*
- Many universities and colleges use TOEIC scores, ranging from 350 to 600, as a graduation requirement for students-->profound impact on EL education at the institutions.
- Little information about the impact of using TOEIC as an exit test on English language education at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Background to the study

This paper is drawn from a larger study on **current assessment practices** for improving the learning of English language at one public and one private university in Vietnam. (Tran, 2015)

assessment practices



Methodology

Research design		Description
Qualitative case study		Assessment practices at one public & one private university in Vietnam
Participants	6 EFL teachers	three from each university
	36 students	First year - Six from each participating class
	2 Executives	Faculty level (one from each university)
Data collection methods	Classroom observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video recording of interactions between teachers & students • Audio recordings of students' talks in pair/group activities
	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview with individual teachers • Semi-structured interview with individual Executive officers • Focus group interviews with students
	Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching syllabus, teaching and learning materials • Students' work with written feedback from teacher and peers

General research findings

- Enactment of Assessment for learning in current assessment practices at both universities via practices of questioning, feedback, pair/group work, use of summative tests.
- Pedagogical techniques employed by participating teachers which facilitate effective classroom interactions .
- Various factors influencing English language education
 - ***Sociocultural factors:*** teacher-centered education culture, examination-oriented teaching and learning, face-saving concerns...
 - ***Teachers' language assessment literacy:*** understanding of learning theories, of the potential of assessment for learning...
 - ***Institutional policies:*** administrative approach, working condition and compensation, assessment and testing of students' English language learning: [using TOEIC as an exit test exerted strong impact on the English language education at the public university.](#)

Research findings

Impact of using TOEIC scores as a graduation requirement on English language education at the public university



Impact on EL curriculum

- Two types of English language program

	TOEIC-oriented	Normal
Students of	Auditing and Accounting, Information Technology Business Management	other disciplines such as Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering
Course book	International Express series	New Headway series
Exit test	TOEIC	Institution self-developed tests

We reformed the EFL curriculum in response to the Ministerial requirement [to publicize the educational outcomes]. After three years piloting, we decided to offer the TOEIC-oriented program for students of such faculties [...], since it can facilitate students' learning of their major subjects and enable them to apply for jobs after graduating. For students majoring in technical disciplines, achieving 400 scores in the TOEIC is too difficult and they may not need a TOEIC certificate to apply for jobs...

Selection of teaching and learning material

We choose *International Express* series for TOEIC-oriented program since **the language situations** in these textbooks are all related to the working environment. Thus, it helps students develop **vocabulary** and **communicative abilities** which are related to working places.

Executive Officer

course books have been developed to include all the needed language knowledge and skills. **If we do all activities in the course book well, we can achieve our objectives**

T# 1

activities in this course book are **so boring**. There is not enough time to carry out more activities so it would be **better to teach the content in the course book thoroughly**

T#2

The course book is **quite practical** and the [language] situations are closely related to what the students have to deal with when they go working after graduation.

T#3

Design of internal English tests

Listening (20%)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Picture description (5qs) | Listen to four statements and choose the statement that best describes the picture |
| 2. Questions – Response (5qs) | Listen to a question and four different responses, choose the correct response to each question |
| 3. Short conversations (5qs) | Listen to a conversation and choose the correct answer to each question |
| 4. Individual talks (5qs) | Listen and decide whether the statement is True or False |

Vocabulary and grammar (20%)

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 20 questions | Choose the best words or phrases to complete each statement or questions |
|--------------|--|

Reading (20%)

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Reading passage | Read the passage and choose the best answer to each question or decide if the statements are True or False |
| 2. Notices | Look at the notices and choose the best answer to each question |
| 3. Gap-filling | Choose the best answer to complete the text |









Writing (20%)

Sentence building & jumbled sentences

Speaking (20%)

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. Individual work | Student introduce him/herself |
| 2. Pair work | Students ask and answer question using clues in a card |

Mismatch between learning tasks and test tasks

Listening (20%)	Knowledge/skills required	Learning experience
1. Picture description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening for specific words (verbs & reps) - Distinguishing similar sounds 	
2. Questions – Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listening question words & function words - Distinguishing similar sounds 	
3. Short conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Listen for main ideas and details - Listen for inference 	
4. Individual talks		
Vocabulary & grammar	Knowledge of word form & meaning (verbs and nouns); Parts of speech; and grammatical structures	
Reading		
1. Reading passage	Reading for main ideas & details	
2. Gap-filling	Knowledge of word form & meaning (verbs and nouns); Parts of speech; and grammatical structures	
3. Notices	Linguistic and social knowledge	

Views on the test design

Executive
Officer

The test questions take the same formats as those in TOEIC to help students **get familiar with the kind of English test** that they will have to take later for graduation [...] and to **give a better direction for teachers and students in their teaching and learning.**

The tests focus mainly on vocabulary, grammar and reading [...] the listening is too difficult

It's so funny to include picture description questions in the listening test. In the first semester, students learn nothing about describing pictures.

the mismatch between teaching learning and testing makes students feel that it is useless to study or they do not need to study.

T#2

T#3

Washback on classroom teaching and learning

- Teaching test taking strategies
- Teaching to the test
 - Fewer interactive and communicative activities near the end-of-semester test time
 - Focus on what are tested
- Little formative use of test results to gain understanding of students' learning to adjust teaching accordingly



Teaching test taking strategies

T# 1: To *describe a picture is to describe what we can see, not what we can infer from it...Among three details, you can hear two but the information about the position is wrong so the option can't be correct.[...] We need to eliminate the unlikely option. Knowing which option is unlikely is a success (4th Ob).*

T# 2: *...People will read four statements describing the pictures. ... If there is incorrect information in any of the sentence components, for example the nouns or the preposition, the option should not be selected(2nd Ob).*

T#3: *The formats of the listening tasks are quite new to you so you need more practice...For the question and response task you have to read the response first and guess what may be the questions for the responses... (2nd Ob)*



Teaching to the test

- T# 2: Now, *write down* the [language] structures in your note book to *memorise*... 'work for' some companies; 'give advice to somebody', 'arrive in' big places such as city, country, 'arrive at' small places such as station, school...(3rd Ob)

T#2

we want the teacher to give us *extra [grammar and vocabulary] exercises* to do in the class, just like the teacher of the other half of the class. The *formats of the exercises are similar to the ones we do in the tests* but the content is related to what we are learning in the class at that moment

I don't want to teach to the test since it does not help her students develop their English language ability *comprehensively*.

T# 2's students

Little formative use of test results

- Teachers indicated little intention to use of test results to gain understanding of students' learning to adjust teaching.

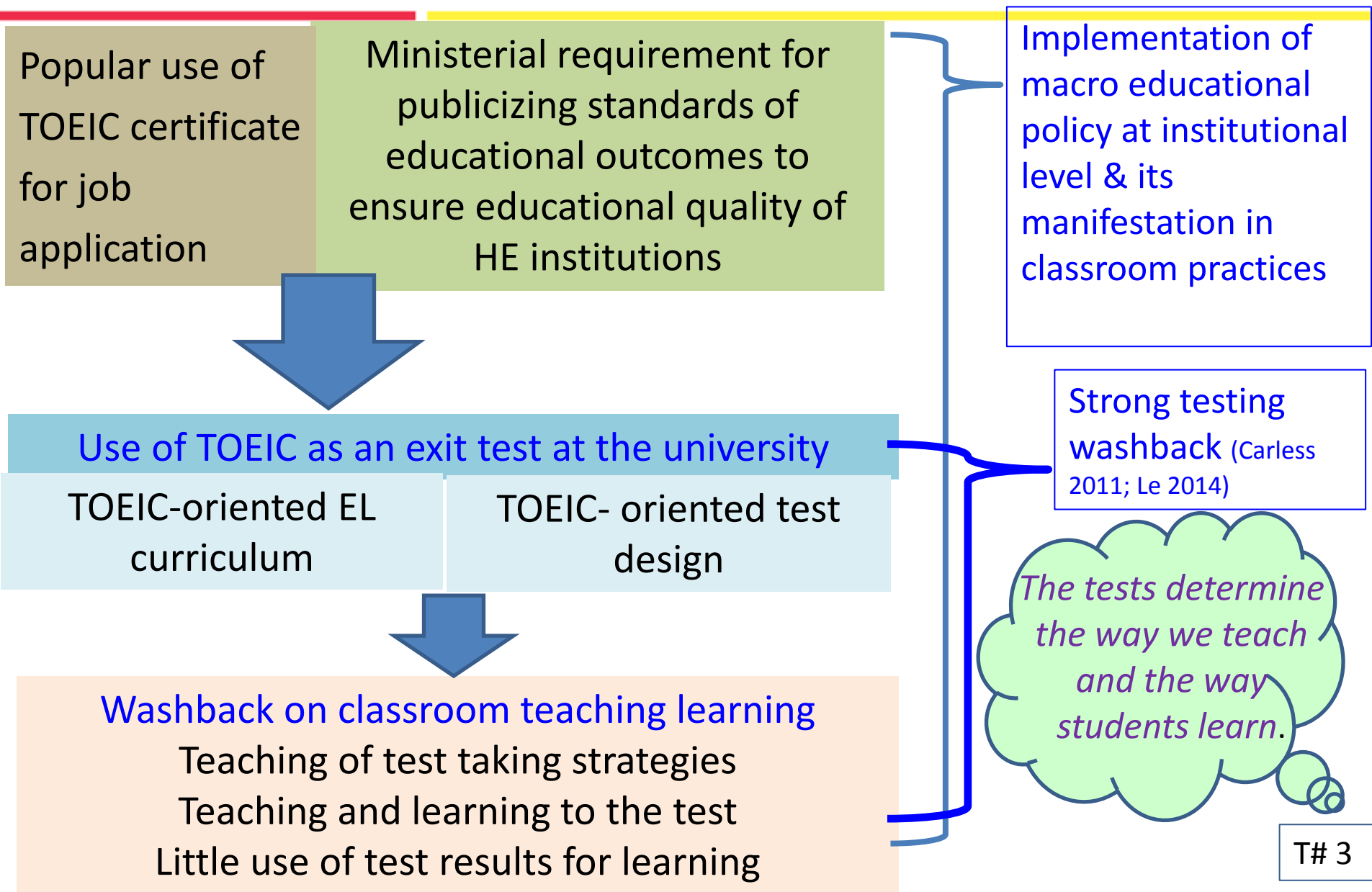
*...listening tests are often too difficult to reflect students' true ability... oral tests are delivered only at the end of semesters but each student just has one to two minutes to speak so **the results can't be accurate!**"*

T#2

*The progress tests sometimes **do not match with the learning I expected from students.** For example, I want to check certain things but those are not included in the tests.*

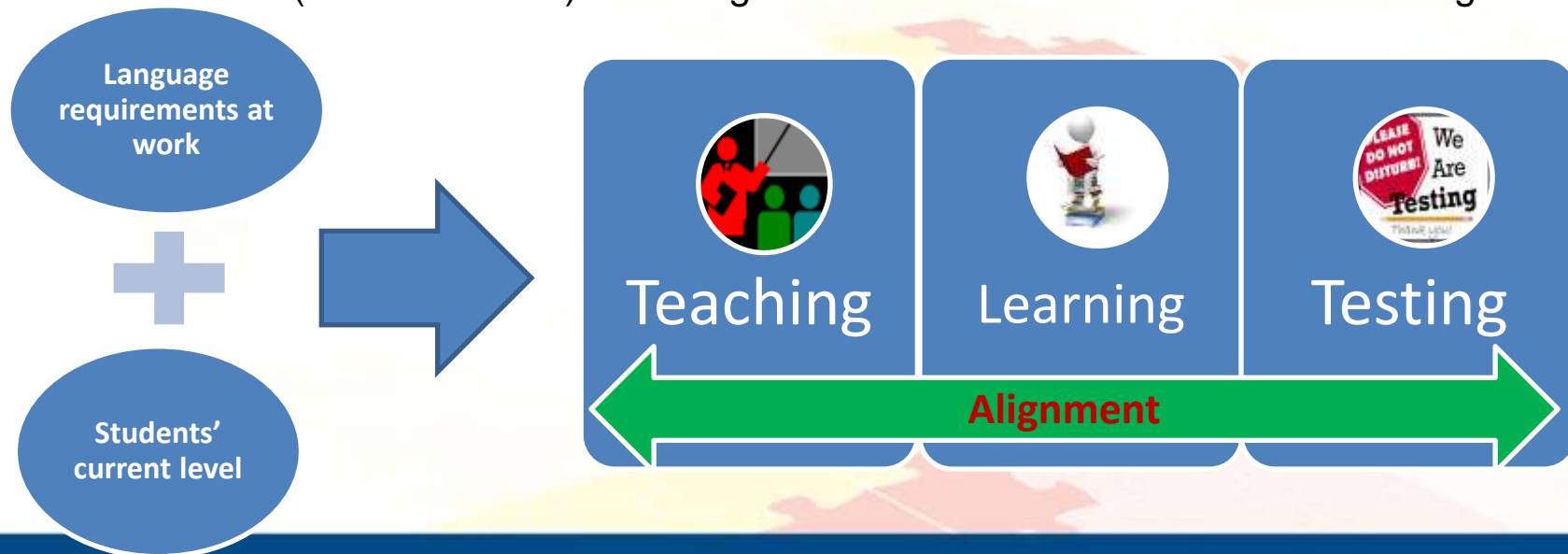
T# 3

Research findings

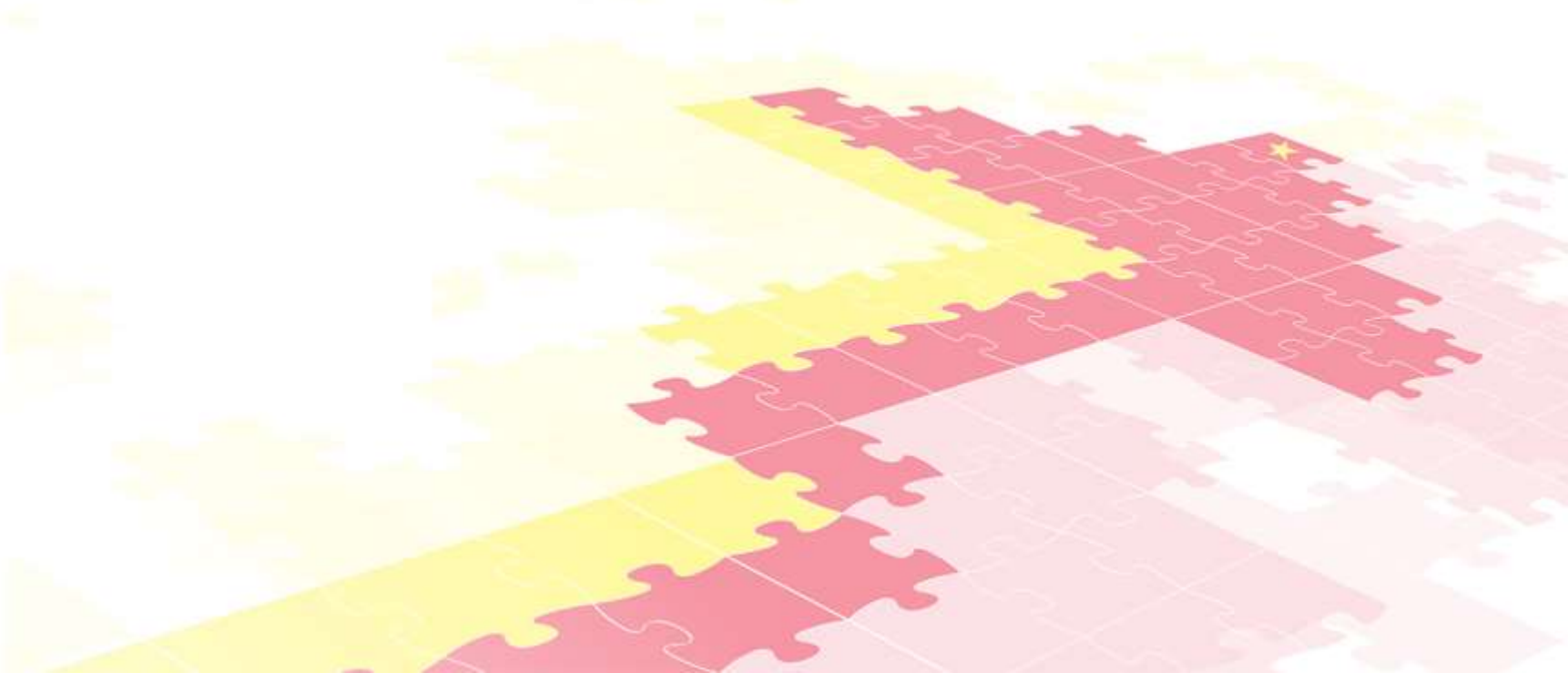


Implications

- **At macro level:** Recent attention to assessment as one important issue for improving language education quality is a right direction 📖📖🙄 Need for more attention, support and guidance on policy implementation
- **At meso level** (HE institutions):
 - More attention to washback effect of testing on teaching and learning.
 - Need to improve the alignment between teaching, learning and testing at educational institutions
 - Curriculum development be informed by language requirements at work and students' current language level (Nguyen, 2015; Vu, 2015).
- **At micro level** (EL classrooms): teaching to the test construct rather than teaching to the test



Thanks for your attention!



References

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