

# 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 the STAAR linguistic accommodations support these ELPS requirements.

## Overview of the STAAR Assessments for ELLs

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

<b>STAAR (3–8 and EOC)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ General state assessments</li> <li>▪ Some linguistic accommodations permitted</li> <li>▪ Taken by ELLs who do not qualify for another assessment below</li> </ul>
<b>STAAR Spanish</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Native language assessments; grades 3–5 only; same subjects as STAAR</li> <li>▪ Taken by ELLs for whom a Spanish version of STAAR exists and most appropriately measures their academic progress</li> <li>▪ Linguistic accommodations not permitted because students testing in their native language</li> </ul>
<b>STAAR L*</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linguistically accommodated STAAR mathematics, science, and social studies assessments</li> <li>▪ More substantial linguistic accommodations than for STAAR</li> <li>▪ May be administered to ELLs who—               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are not most appropriately assessed with STAAR Spanish, AND</li> <li>• have not yet attained a TELPAS advanced high reading rating, AND</li> <li>• have been enrolled in U.S. schools for 3 years or less (5 years or less if a qualifying asylee or refugee)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>STAAR A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessments for students with disabilities, including those who are ELLs, who meet eligibility requirements</li> <li>▪ Some linguistic accommodations permitted</li> </ul>
<b>STAAR Alternate 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessments for students receiving special education services, including those who are ELLs, who meet requirements for an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards</li> <li>▪ No specified list of allowable linguistic accommodations; assessment design allows for any language or other communication method routinely used with the student</li> </ul>

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

Refer to the ELL Assessments webpage for more detailed information about the 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 lessens. 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 state assessments. This stems from the differing purposes of instruction and state 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 the STAAR reading and writing assessments are limited. Accommodations on state assessments must not alter what is fundamentally assessed. The STAAR linguistic accommodation policies for reading and writing differ from those for 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 might 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.
- In addition to the linguistic accommodations allowed for STAAR, STAAR A allows for clarification in English of word meaning. This difference takes into account the unique learning needs of students with disabilities who qualify for STAAR A.

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## 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 decision should be made by the applicable group in conjunction with the student's LPAC. The decision is to be documented by the LPAC in the student's permanent record file and by the other applicable group.

- 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 A administrations are found in the chart below. Detailed information about each linguistic accommodation is found on the following pages.

**Allowable Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs  
2015 STAAR 3–8 and EOC Assessments**

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

\*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. If a student in grade 6 and above needs a dictionary as a linguistic accommodation that is not listed in the STAAR Dictionary Policy, the use of the other dictionaries listed on page 5 of this document are permitted as a linguistic accommodation in grades 3 and above. 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 support<sup>1</sup> and whether the student uses the accommodation routinely in classroom instruction and assessment. Providing unfamiliar linguistic accommodations might hinder rather than help the student.

### Dictionaries as Linguistic Accommodations for ELLs Taking STAAR, STAAR L, or STAAR A

The dictionaries included in the linguistic accommodation policy for ELLs taking STAAR, STAAR L, and STAAR A are described below. Reminder: The STAAR linguistic accommodation policies pertain to English-version assessments only.

Dictionary	Allowed for—
<p><b>1. Bilingual dictionary (word/phrase translation dictionary)</b>            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.  <u>Examples of translated words—English to Spanish (useful when reading in English)</u>  <b>evenly</b> uniformemente; imparcialmente, equitativamente  <b>live broadcast</b> emisión en directo  <b>photosynthesis</b> fotosíntesis  <u>Examples of translated words — Spanish to English (useful when writing in English)</u>  <b>cita</b> appointment, meeting; date; quotation  <b>decepcionar</b> disappoint  <b>débil</b> weak            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.  <u>Example — English to Spanish</u>  <b>age</b> [eɪʒ] <b>noun</b> (<i>general</i>) edad; <b>old age</b> vejez; (<i>period</i>) época; (<i>fam: long time</i>) <b>we waited for ages</b> esperamos una eternidad; <b>verb</b> envejecer            The Spanish translation for the word “age” is a different word in each case.  <b>NOTE:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>STAAR, STAAR L, and STAAR A all subjects and courses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linguistic accommodation for               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mathematics, science, and social studies (all grades)</li> <li>• grades 3–5 reading and grade 4 writing</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <i>Reminder: Allowed for grade 6 and up reading and writing as part of the STAAR Dictionary Policy (not treated as a linguistic accommodation)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2. English/ESL dictionary (monolingual)</b>            Unlike bilingual dictionaries, English dictionaries enable students to look up definitions of English words. The definitions in <b>standard English dictionaries</b> are sometimes difficult for ELLs to understand. English dictionaries that define words in simpler English are termed <b>ESL dictionaries</b> for the Texas assessment program. In addition to using simpler English, ESL dictionaries sometimes include pictures to make word meaning clear.</p>	<p><b>STAAR and STAAR A grades 3–8 reading and grades 4 and 7 writing</b>  <b>STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linguistic accommodation below grade 6</li> <li>▪ <i>Same reminder as above for grade 6 and up</i></li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> **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 ELL or not) might need when having difficulty learning academic content.

<p><b>3. Monolingual dictionary in languages other than English</b>  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.</p>	<p><b>STAAR and STAAR A grades 3–8 reading and grades 4 and 7 writing</b>  <b>STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linguistic accommodation in grade 3 and up</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Picture dictionary</b>  A picture dictionary is designed to convey word meaning through drawings or photographs. Picture dictionaries (which might 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 an assessment. Picture dictionaries are not included in the STAAR program dictionary policy for reading and writing assessments but are permitted as a linguistic accommodation.  <b>NOTE:</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>STAAR and STAAR A grades 3–8 reading and grades 4 and 7 writing</b>  <b>STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Linguistic accommodation in grade 3 and up</li> </ul>

Although thesauruses are not required, they are allowable on STAAR and STAAR A reading, writing, English I, and English II tests, either in combination with a dictionary or as a separate resource.

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.
- Districts are required to have procedures in place to prevent the use of cell phones and personal electronic devices during test administrations. Electronic devices can disrupt the testing environment and compromise the security and confidentiality of the test. When using technology-based accommodations (e.g., electronic dictionary), students are **NOT** permitted Internet access during testing.
- 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.
- Electronic devices that have Internet or photographic capabilities are **NOT** allowed.
- 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 list of state-approved dictionaries will not be issued.

## Other Linguistic Accommodations for STAAR, STAAR L, and STAAR A

Linguistic Accommodation	Allowed for—
<p><b>Extra time (same day)</b>            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. Factors that are not ELL-specific (e.g., test anxiety, test-taking strategies, etc.) should not be considered in decisions to provide this accommodation.</p>	<p><b>STAAR, STAAR L, and STAAR A all subjects and courses</b></p>
<p><b>Clarification in English of word meaning—mathematics, science, social studies</b>            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><b>STAAR L online assessments</b></p>
<p><b>Clarification in English of meaning of words in test questions—mathematics, reading, writing, science, social studies</b>            This accommodation provides the same type of clarification as for STAAR and STAAR L except in two ways. STAAR A is extended to the multiple-choice questions for reading and writing assessments and, for grades 4 and 7 writing and English I and II, 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.  <b>NOTE:</b> An English clarification guide is not provided for STAAR A.</p>	<p><b>STAAR A online assessments</b></p>
<p><b>Clarification in English of meaning of words in the STAAR A grades 3–8 reading, grades 4 and 7 writing, and English I and English II selections</b>            At the request of the student, the test administrator may clarify the meaning of occasional words and phrases the student does not understand in the STAAR A 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, or gestures. The test administrator must <b>NOT</b> provide assistance that aids the student in determining correct answers to test questions. For reading selections, the test administrator must <b>NOT</b> clarify the meaning of vocabulary, expressions, or other phrasing specifically assessed in a test question. For writing selections, the test administrator must <b>NOT</b> 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 <b>suggest</b> in an editing selection, the test administrator must not comment on the misspelling when clarifying the meaning.</p>	<p><b>STAAR A online grades 3–8 reading, 4 and 7 writing, and English I and English II</b></p>

<p><b>Clarification in English of word meaning in writing prompts</b></p> <p>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. 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 <b>NOT</b> 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.</p>	<p><b>STAAR and STAAR A grades 4 and 7 writing</b></p> <p><b>STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II</b></p>
<p><b>Clarification in English of word meaning in short answer reading questions</b></p> <p>This accommodation enables a student to ask the test administrator to clarify the meaning of words/phrases in short answer questions on the reading assessment. Clarification may be provided <b>only</b> for requested words or phrases that are <b>NOT</b> language arts terms, <b>NOT</b> part of the selection title, and <b>NOT</b> 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 <b>NOT</b> 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><b>STAAR and STAAR A English I and English II</b></p>
<p><b>Reading aloud of text</b></p> <p>For STAAR L mathematics, science, and social studies assessments, this accommodation enables a student to click on words to hear them read aloud by the computer. For STAAR A assessments, this accommodation enables a student to click on words, sentences, and entire pages to hear them read aloud by the computer.</p> <p>For both STAAR L and STAAR A, this accommodation is provided in the online interface for all students.</p>	<p><b>STAAR L and STAAR A online assessments</b></p>



## Paper Administrations of STAAR L

The STAAR L assessments in grades 3–8 and EOC are administered online. In rare circumstances, a paper administration of a STAAR L assessment 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. Refer to pages 4–6 of this guide for more information about these accommodations.

Linguistic Accommodation	Allowed for—
<p><b>Clarification in English of word meaning—mathematics, science, social studies</b></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 <b>NOT</b> 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><b>STAAR L paper administrations ONLY</b></p>
<p><b>Reading aloud of text—mathematics, science, social studies</b></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 <b>NOT</b> 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><b>Grade 3 mathematics:</b> 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><b>STAAR L paper administrations ONLY</b></p>