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CURRENT ISSUES IN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT AND LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT RESEARCH AND ITS IMPLICATION

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Abstract. Language is an abstract phenomenon, making its assessment inherently complex. This complexity is amplified by the increasing global demands for high proficiency in language abilities and the accountability pressures placed on language educators. This paper explores the multifaceted challenges in the field of language assessment in the 21st century, highlighting issues such as the need for effective classroom assessments, the training of language teachers, and the reliability and validity of teacher-based assessments. Additionally, it addresses emerging challenges due to globalization and the accountability of educational institutions in preparing students for multilingual workplaces.

Key words: assessment, research, current issues, globalization, challenges.

Introduction. Language, by its very nature, is an abstract phenomenon, and this abstraction contributes to the complexities associated with its assessment. As the field of language assessment evolves, it faces both longstanding challenges and new ones emerging from the educational, economic, and social contexts of the 21st century. The increasing demands for high language proficiency among students and professionals, coupled with the need for accountability in language education, necessitate a thorough examination of current assessment practices. This paper aims to highlight the ongoing and emerging challenges in language assessment, emphasizing the importance of developing effective assessment tools and training educators to meet these demands.

Language is a highly abstract phenomenon, and this inherent abstraction adds to its complexity, especially when it comes to assessment. The more abstract a concept is, the more challenging it becomes to measure. This is evident in the broad field of language assessment, where several persistent issues have been identified. While many challenges have been addressed through extensive research, new challenges continue to emerge as the field advances. These challenges span educational, economic, and social contexts, making the field vibrant and exciting for those dedicated to it.

Numerous studies have addressed various issues in language assessment, yet gaps remain.

Such as, the ability of language is of which nature? How can we be assured of the interpretations of those who are taking tests? To what degree we can assure the validity of assessment held for the specific purpose?

Some new challenge has also aroused I this vast field of language assessment form increased universal demand for those people who possess a very good levels in language ability. These demands come from two primary sources: students learning in a language that is not their first and the globalization of workplaces requiring bilingual or multilingual employees.

There is also one emerging demand in this field which is accountability of the language teachers in language teaching along with the increasing demand from the high-level users of language. Government, from local schools to school districts to state and nation, needs such educational institutions and such teachers which should make themselves accountable for the levels of language ability attained by learners of languages, about the resources which are given to them of the money, time, space and human as well. And that government should demand from universities, colleges and schools to produce such employees whose language ability is polished and sufficient for them to perform their duties in bilingual or multilingual workplaces. Such demands of accountability will bolster

the normal interest of teachers and schools and will provide the students with such instructions which will be in accordance and beneficial for boosting the learning of their students. In all such situations, the tools for collecting information that will inform us about decisions both accountability decisions and instructional decisions are language assessments.

The increasing number of the language learners in schools is creating great challenges in high stake accountability assessment as well as for classroom language assessment. The challenge in classroom language assessment is that how we will practically use or apply the knowledge that we have learned. For that firstly, we will have to develop such kind of assessments which will fulfill the purposes of instruction and learning. Secondly, we will have to train all the teachers who are teaching in language learning classrooms. While the challenge for accountability assessments is that how we will apply the knowledge which as a language tester we have? For this we will have to form such kind of assessment which will not only assess the achievements of students in the language of instructions but also in several other areas such as science and math but the language of assessment should be different from the native language of test taker. Additionally, language tests are increasingly used to determine political asylum eligibility for immigrants, adding another layer of complexity.

According to the review of related literature recent challenges in language assessment include:

- 1) The importance and function of assessment in language classrooms,
- 2) The training of language teachers, and
- 3) Issues in teacher-based assessments.

Classroom assessment. Estimating the number of students studying different languages globally reveals a figure nearing 1–2 billion (Graddol, 1997, 2006). Teachers spend significant time on assessments, with ESL teachers dedicating 25% and school teachers 40% of their time to this task. Classroom language assessment engages testers with assessing young learners and understanding the role of assessment in language classrooms.

Those who tests language are highly becoming engaged with the two aspects of classroom language assessment one is the assessment of language learners who are young and another is to find the function and importance of assessment in classrooms of language. Two special issue in the assessment of young language learner can be found in two different journals *Language Testing*, edited by Rea-Dickins, and in a special issue of the journal *Language Assessment Quarterly* edited by Brindley (2007).

We can discuss the function and role of assessment in classroom through two perspectives one is formative and other is summative assessment. Formative assessment is assessment within the process of learning and summative assessment held at the end of learning process. Large number of researchers in the field of language testing the tension between measures in summative assessment at one side and teacher-based classroom assessment on another hand. They have also presented their arguments on the high emphasis on the teacher-based classroom assessment (e.g., Brindley, 1998; Leung, 2004; Leung & Mohan, 2004; Leung & Rea-Dickins, 2007).

Vygotsky's concept of "dynamic assessment" is also relevant, suggesting that formative assessments can be enhanced through dynamic principles (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004, 2011). Lantolf and Poehner (2004) also gave their suggestion that formative assessment can be modified and reconceptualized within the dynamic assessment's principles.

Training of language classroom teachers in language assessment. Research on teachers' beliefs about assessment and their practices is extensive, but studies on teacher training in language assessment are limited. Building teacher capacity in language assessment is crucial. Brown and Bailey (2008) highlight the need for more research on teacher training programs in language assessment.

Existing literature addresses two areas: determining teachers' knowledge about language assessment and evaluating training programs for teachers. Given the high demand for proficient teachers and the need for effective training programs, more research is necessary to address these challenges.

Along with the high demand of teachers who are proficient in assessment and also the huge need to train teachers in the field of language assessment it also needs something extra in area of educational measurement not just to find about the knowledge of teachers about assessment but also to launch such programs which will train teachers about language assessment. Almost all the articles in the field conclude that very less is known so far and there is need of more research in it and addressing these issues will really be a great challenge for researchers.

Issues in Teacher-Based Assessment. Teacher-based assessments face several issues. Rea-Dickins (2007) points out that evaluation criteria are central to debates about teacher-based assessment. Researchers like Leung (2004a, 2004b) and Teasdale and Leung (2000) argue for reinterpreting validity and reliability in classroom assessments, while others like Clapham (2000) emphasize traditional test criteria.

Reliability and validity are problematic in alternative assessment methodologies. Tasks given to students are often not cross-checked, marking criteria may not be useful, and raters are rarely trained to give consistent marks. These issues highlight the complexity of measuring teachers' knowledge and the need for comprehensive training.

Conclusions. The field of language assessment is marked by its abstract nature and the complexities associated with measuring language abilities. As global demands for language proficiency increase and accountability pressures on educational institutions grow, the challenges in language assessment become more pronounced. Addressing these challenges requires developing effective assessment tools, training educators, and ensuring the reliability and validity of teacher-based assessments. Continued research and innovation in this field are essential to meet the evolving needs of language learners and educators in the 21st century.

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