

## **AN EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN PAKISTAN**

**Dr. Muhammad Akram Ansari<sup>1</sup>**

**Allahdino Abro<sup>2</sup>**

**Ghulam Rasool Soomro<sup>3</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Effective teaching learning of English is directly connected with standardized assessment strategies. The appraisal of growth and development of English learning skills is not possible with proper assessment strategies. Considering the importance of assessment strategies in the effectiveness of teaching learning of English skills, a sample of twenty six teachers and five hundred thirty five students was randomly selected from access population delimited to higher secondary schools of Hyderabad. It was found that model was fit. The values of  $R$ ,  $R^2$ ,  $F$  and  $t$ -test were significant and assessment strategies were strongly correlated to the performance of students. However, students and teachers considered effective assessment strategies essential for the better performance of students but at the same time they showed their dissatisfaction with assessment strategies employed by teachers working in higher secondary school of Pakistan. There was no well-developed system of English assessment. The teachers neither set up and followed assessment schedule nor developed and adapted standardized tests, benchmark books/benchmark passages*

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

<sup>2</sup> Research Scholar, Iqra University, Karachi, [ada2000@live.com](mailto:ada2000@live.com)

<sup>3</sup> Research Scholar, Hamdard University, Karachi, [grsoomro@live.com](mailto:grsoomro@live.com)

*for the measurement of students' actual position and progress in English. There was no use of latest technology like audio- visual aids, computers, projectors and multimedia etc. for the assessment of students' performance. Audio-video recording and linguistic expert assistance was totally missing in most of the schools. The officers, parents and students were kept unaware of the progress of learners during the academic calendar. The study is rounded off with suggestions.*

**Keywords:** *Assessment Strategies, Performance of Students, Perceptions of Teacher and Students*

### **Introduction**

Assessment is an essential instrument used in different schools to ensure knowledge, experience, behavior, attitude, learning outcomes and progress of students. The term assessment refers the systematic procedure used to gather, discuss, sort, categorize and report the information obtained by using different sources regarding the knowledge, experiences, understanding and performance of learners during the academic calendar. In this process empirical data are used to enhance the teaching learning for the improvement of students' learning. In this regard Khan (2011) describes that assessment, being a continuous and permanent process, is crucial to check, appraise and measure students' learning performance. Effective assessment totally depends upon the commitment, skills and knowledge of the assessor. On the basic of assessment results, inferences and predictions can also be made regarding the future learning progress of students.

Assessment plays a fundamental role in teaching learning of English. All the learning skills of English mostly depend upon the effective contribution of assessment. Effective reading skill development is not possible in the absence of assessment. In this regard Mikre (2010) confirms that "assessment is indispensable component of curriculum practice" (p. 1010). The performance of schools (students, teachers and management) can be appraised through assessment. Similarly, Serafini (2010) describes that "primary goal of any assessment framework 'is' to improve student learning and willingness to engage in the learning experiences and to improve students' attitudes toward learning and

school” (p. 6). Adding to this Shepard (2000) narrates that “assessment ‘strategies are’ more effective in moving forward the teaching and learning process” (p. 6). Assessment results not only enable the students, teachers, officers and parents to know the performance of students in English but also describe that where students are standing and in which direction they are moving.

Assessment is the most important measurement tool of English teachers. With the help of assessment practice, the teachers know and understand the English learning potential, capabilities, attitude and behavior of students. In this regard Serafini (2010) explains that assessment helps the teachers in making their teaching more effective. The teachers, using assessment strategies, appraise the fact that if students are learning English according to set objectives of the organization or not. In this way, they point out the English learning gaps occurring in the teaching learning process from time to time and redirect the path of their teaching. Teachers set the grades and categories of students’ English learning considering their IQ. They teach the students keeping in mind their learning capabilities.

Assessment is equally important for students. Brown (2004) highlighting the importance of assessment for students describes that “assessment is probably the most important thing we can do to help our students learn” (p. 81). Assessment informs students about their IQ, potential and capabilities regarding English. It helps students also to know where they are standing and in which direction they are moving. With the help of assessment results, students can appraise whether their English learning is up to mark or not.

The assessment is of various forms including summative, formative, internal and external etc. Summative assessment takes at the end of academic year while formative assessment is held from time to time during the academic year. Similarly, internal assessment refers assessment within organization by internal experts, while external assessment is held in organization with the help of external experts.

Nevertheless, the assessment strategy used in Pakistan is mostly summative. It takes place once a year in the form of inspection. There is no other assessment system except the teachers, who are free to teach and assess. Different teachers use different assessment strategies. Consequently, a uniform system of formative

assessment system has not been implemented till yet. All the same, one thing is common in most of the assessment strategies that majority of teachers use old and out dated assessment strategies, which often produce disappointing results.

It is usually believed that most of the teachers working in Pakistan schools are not capable to develop and use latest assessment techniques. In this regard Christie and Khushk (as cited in Khan, 2011) describes that “modern assessment techniques are not being used to measure students’ achievements and hence dependency on traditional learning processes yields low quality of education in the country” (p. 59).

Although English has been given great importance but the assessment of learning skills especially reading skills of English has never been given proper emphasis. For the assessment of reading skills use of computer and other audio video aids is necessary but the teachers, either being incapable or having lack of access to latest technology, do not use A.V. aids for the assessment of reading skills. In this regard Mirza (as cited in Rehmani, 2003) points out that majority of Pakistani teachers have not been given any training regarding reading assessment. Consequently, they are neither capable to design standardized assessment tests nor they are in position to use standardized tests for the appraisal of reading skills. Without proper reading assessment, it is very difficult to predict the progress rate of learners. In this research study focus has been given on the current position of assessment strategies, their relationship with performance of learners and the problems faced by teachers and students regarding assessment strategies have also been pointed out.

### **Research questions**

- RQ1. To what extent are the assessment strategies correlated to the performance of students enrolled in higher secondary schools of Pakistan?
- RQ2. To what extent do the assessment strategies play the role to enhance the performance of higher secondary school students in English?
- RQ3. What is the difference in the perceptions of higher secondary school teachers and students regarding assessment strategies?

RQ3. What are the problems and issues of assessment strategies taking place in higher secondary schools of Pakistan and how can assessment practices be improved?

### **Hypothesis**

1. Ho1. There is no significant correlation between assessment strategies and performance of students in higher secondary schools of Pakistan.
2. Ho2. There is no significant role of assessment strategies in the enhancement of the performance of students in Pakistan.
3. Ho3. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and students regarding role of assessment strategies for the enhancement of performance of learners in Pakistan.

### **Review of literature**

Reading skill development mostly depends upon effective teaching and successful teaching learning is not possible with proper assessment. In this regard Veeravagu, Muthusamy, Marimuthu and Michael (2012) affirm that “assessment is an essential part of teaching process” (p.2). It is only assessment that enables teachers to appraise the I.Q of students. Different students have different I.Q level. The teachers have to teach each students according I.Q level of each students. Considering the diversity of talent and potential of students, most teachers use different teaching techniques. In doing so, teachers often seek the help of assessment.

It is only assessment that enables the teachers to find the point of departure – the point from where a teacher has to start his teaching. With the help of assessment teachers know current position of learners and the direction in which most of the students are moving. In this regard Allington (2001) asserts that teachers mostly ensure the reading level of students with the help of assessment. They can appraise the previous knowledge of learners and their capability to recall the vocabulary. Khan (2011) adds that assessment process is very useful to evaluate the reading performance of students. It is an essential tool of effective teaching which equips teachers with detailed description of students about what students had previously learnt and what they should be taught. If the teachers do not know the previous skill background of students, they will not be in position to make

their lesson plan. Moreover, teachers will not be in position to compare the progress of students.

However, despite of the great importance of assessment, it is usually believed that most of the teachers working in different schools of Pakistan are incapable to develop standardized assessment tests. They, even, are not able to adopt or use the modern and latest assessment techniques which are generally used at international level. Christie and Khushk (as cited in Khan, 2011) describe that “modern assessment techniques are not being used to measure students’ achievements and hence dependency on traditional learning processes yields low quality of education in the country” (p. 59). Due to lack of use of latest assessment strategies, the standard of teaching learning of English especially reading skill development is declining day by day. Most of the teachers have never been given any training in this regard. Nevertheless, Mirza (as cited in Rehmani, 2003) believes that there are only few teachers in Pakistan, who have been given training to design standardized tests but due to lower standard of training, the result still is unsatisfactory.

To sum up, quality education occurs if teaching and assessment go side by side in all the schools of Pakistan. Assessment can be made through tests, rating scale, ranking scale, check list, observation, examination, investigation, interview and questionnaire. Assessment helps the teachers to know the background knowledge, attitude, skills, experiences, interest and I.Q of students. On basis of reading assessment, the teachers mostly prepare and implement their lesson plans. They check and compare the reading skill growth and development of students from time to time through reading assessment.

### **Methodology**

The researcher has adopted survey design for this study because survey is being highly valued and widely used all over the world in different fields. DeMarraiss and Lapan (2004), Creswell (2008), Cohen and Lea (2005), Gray (2004), Fink (1995) and Neuman (2007) etc. have also appreciated the accuracy, consistency, validity and reliability of survey method more than other methods of research. To them, survey is cost effective method. Collection of data in this method consumes less time, money and energy. In survey method, researcher selects larger sample and larger sample represents the larger population with more accuracy. Survey

supports the research at one time or through multiple times and attitude, knowledge and behavior etc. can also be described, compared and explained in an efficient manner.

However, the study population comprises the teachers and students of Pakistan but this study is delimited to students and teachers of higher secondary schools of Hyderabad from which random strategically, a sample of 535 male and female students and 26 male and female teachers was selected. The collected data were categorized using SPSS-22. Regression, Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) and t-test was used to test the hypotheses.

### ***Findings***

***Table1: Item analysis***

Items		<i>SD</i> (%)	<i>D</i> (%)	<i>UD</i> (%)	<i>A</i> (%)	<i>SA</i> (%)	<i>sample size</i>
1. The assessment strategies employed by higher secondary school teachers play a significant role to enhance the performance of learners in English.	Students	21.5	45	3.4	15.5	14.6	535
	Teachers	50	15	3.8	7.7	23.1	26
2. The assessment strategies are essential for the measurement of the performance of learners in English.	Students	15	15.3	1.7	24.3	43.7	535
	Teachers	15.4	7.7	7.7	26.9	42.3	26
3. The teachers prepare and follow assessment schedule.	Students	32.5	38.1	1.1	16.8	11.4	535
	Teachers	42.3	15.4	7.7	3.8	30.8	26
4. The teachers use benchmark books or benchmark passages to assess students' English comprehension level.	Students	21.9	51.2	1.3	13.8	11.8	535
	Teachers	46.2	23.1	3.8	7.7	19.2	26
5. The teachers use different modern tests designed for the assessment of English.	Students	29.9	37.6	0.7	19.1	12.7	535
	Teachers	42.3	11.5	3.8	19.2	23.1	26

6. The teachers use computers or other audio visual aids for the assessment of English progress level.	Students	36.6	40.2	4.5	10.7	8	535
	Teachers	57.7	15.4	3.8	7.7	15.4	26
7. The teachers make audio recording of the reading comprehension of students and compare it from time to time to identify the improvement.	Students	31.6	46.7	3.7	10.3	7.7	535
	Teachers	69.2	15.4	3.8	3.8	7.7	26
8. The teachers call the experts from time to time to assess the fluency level of students.	Students	37.6	40.4	0.4	10.7	11	535
	Teachers	42.3	19.2	3.8	11.5	23.1	26
9. The teachers arrange English vocabulary assessment competitions among students of various schools.	Students	38.5	53.3	0.9	3.2	4.1	535
	Teachers	53.8	30.8	3.8	3.8	7.7	26
10. The teachers prepare and maintain assessment progress chart of students.	Students	41.3	36.1	3	15.1	4.5	535
	Teachers	42.3	26.9	3.8	7.7	19.2	26

### Testing of Hypotheses

Table2: Testing of hypothesis one

2k13/14

<b>Hypothesis one: There is no significant correlation between assessment strategies and performance of students in higher secondary schools of Pakistan.</b>									
SN	Model summary			ANNOVA			Coefficient		
		Teache rs	Stud ents		Teac hers	Student s		Teac hers	Students
1	<b>R</b>	.843	.917	<b>F</b>	59.02	2813.33	<b>t</b>	7.69	53.04
2	<b>R2</b>	.711	.841						
	<b>Sig</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

### Analysis

The table 2 shows the significant result for R, R<sup>2</sup>, F and t. The model is fit for the dependent and independent variables that rejects null hypothesis and accepts alternative hypothesis, giving the result that correlation between assessment strategies and the performance of learners in higher secondary schools of Pakistan is very strong. In the same way, the performance of students (dependent variable) can be predicted from assessment strategies (independent variable). Additionally, changes and improvement in performance of learners occurs if any change or improvement occurs in assessment strategies.

**Table 3: Testing of hypothesis two**

<b>Ho2. There is no significant role of assessment strategies in the enhancement of the performance of students in Pakistan.</b>								
	Students				Teachers			
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Frequency %	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Frequency %
SD	115	107.0	8.0	21.5	13	5.2	7.8	50.0
D	241	107.0	134.0	45.0	4	5.2	-1.2	15.4
UD	18	107.0	-89.0	3.4	1	5.2	-4.2	3.8
A	83	107.0	-24.0	15.5	2	5.2	-3.2	7.7
SA	78	107.0	-29.0	14.6	6	5.2	.8	23.1
Total	535			100	26			100
Chi-Square (x <sup>2</sup> )	255.682				17.462			
Sig	0.000				0.002			
<i>Decision Rule: Ho rejected if sig. level ≥ 0.05</i>								<i>df=4</i>
<i>Alpha=0.05</i>								

### Analysis:

The above table of Chi-Square (x<sup>2</sup>) shows that computed value of Chi-Square (x<sup>2</sup>) is significant at Alpha = 0.05 with df = 4, in both cases i.e. students and teachers. Hence Ho is rejected and it is concluded that the role of assessment strategies is ineffective to enhance the performance of learners in Pakistan.

**Table 4: Testing of hypothesis three**

<b><i>Ho3. There is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and students regarding role of assessment strategies for the enhancement of performance of students in Pakistan.</i></b>							
	Sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Std. Error Mean	
Assessment strategies	Teachers	26	2.31	1.530		.300	
	Students	535	2.65	1.383		.060	
			t-test for Equality of Means				
Assessment strategies			t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
	Equal variances assumed		1.221	559	.223	.341	.279
	Equal variances not assumed		1.114	27.023	.275	.341	.306

**Analysis**

The result of t-test makes it clear that t-test value is insignificant at  $df = 559$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Consequently the null hypothesis is upheld, making a conclusion that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of teachers and students regarding role of assessment strategies for the enhancement of performance of learners in Pakistan.

**Discussion**

The findings of the study clarify that assessment strategies and performance of students are strongly correlated. The significant F value makes model fit and high values of R and  $R^2$  of assessment strategies further illustrate that accurate prediction can be made regarding the performance of students (dependent variable) from assessment strategies (independent variable). Similarly, significant t-test value explains that changes in assessment strategies are correlated to changes in students' performance. However, the practical role of assessment strategies remained dismal. The students and teachers collectively showed their

dissatisfaction regarding the assessment strategies employed by teachers working in higher secondary schools of Pakistan.

The most of students and teachers (respondents) believed that effective assessment strategies are essential for the better performance of students. Nevertheless, the strategies employed by teachers are not so much useful regarding the performance, growth and development of learners. Furthermore, the teachers neither set up assessment schedule nor use benchmark books or benchmark passages for the measurement of growth of students. There is no trend of development and use of different standardized tests developed by local and international experts in different schools of Pakistan. Additionally, the teachers are not well equipped with IT skills. Consequently, they do not use latest technology like audio- visual aids, computers, projectors and multimedia etc. for the assessment of performance of students. There is no system of assessing English fluency, comprehension and vocabulary etc. of students by making video/audio recording. Furthermore, experts are not called in this regard to ensure the progress of students in terms of English comprehension and pronunciation. Like quiz and debate competitions, English learning competitions among students belonging to different schools, are not held to promote the learning skills of students. Additionally, there is no trend of preparing progress charts of students. The officers, parents and students remain unaware of the progress of students.

### **Conclusion**

The study illustrates that there is strong correlation between assessment strategies and students' performance, giving the impression that the role of assessment strategies in the enhancement of students' performance is essential. However, the poor performance of students suggest that role of assessment strategies is not praiseworthy. There is no proper use of assessment strategies in this regard.

### **Suggestions**

1. English assessment strategies should be changed and modified, considering rapid changes occurring at local, national and international level to uplift performance of students.
2. Modern and latest assessment strategies should frequently be used from time to time to ensure the proper measurement of the students' performance in English.

3. The assessment strategies schedule should be prepared at the beginning of academic year and strictly be followed throughout the year to keep the learners alert and active.
4. Standardized benchmark books/passages should be used from time to time regarding the performance level measurement of students.
5. The higher secondary school teachers should be given proper training from time to time regarding the preparation and use of standardized assessment tests.
6. The higher secondary school teachers should prepare or adapt and use standardized tests for the assessment of students.
7. Modern technology (audio visual aids) like computers, projectors, multimedia, audio-video or other devices should frequently be used for accurate assessment of students' performance.
8. The higher secondary school teachers should make audio recording of students' performance and ensure the progress by comparing the current performance with past performance of students.
9. The language scholars and experts should be called to assist the English teachers regarding the measurement of students' performance.
10. The district management of schools should organize the English performance competitions among the students belonging to different schools on semester basis.
11. The students' performance charts should be prepared and maintained on monthly basis and a copy of each student's performance should be given to officers, parents and students.

### References

- Allington, R. (2001). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs*. New York: Longman.
- Brown, S. (2004). Assessment for learning. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, pp. 81-89. Retrieved from <http://www2.glos.ac.uk/offload/tli/lets/lathe/issue1/articles/brown.pdf>

- Cohen, B. H. & Lea, R. B. (2005). *Essentials of Research Design and Methodology*. Canada: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Columbus, Ohio: Pearson education Ltd.
- DeMarraiss, K. & Lapan, S. D. (2004). *Foundations for research methods of enquiry in education and the social science*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum associates, publishers.
- Fink, A. (1995). *The Survey Handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gray, D. E. (2004). *Doing research in the real world*. New Delhi, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Khan, I. (2011). Reading assessment techniques among selected secondary school teachers in Pakistan: Current trends and practices. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications*, 2(4), 58-75.
- Mikre, F. (2010). The roles of assessment in curriculum practice and enhancement of learning. *Ethiop. J. Educ. & Sc.*, 5(2), pp. 101-114. Retrieved from <http://www.ju.edu.et/ejes/sites/default/files/Role%20of%20assessment.pdf>
- Neuman, W. L. (2007). *Basics of social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. USA, Pearson Education Inc.
- Rehmani, A. (2003). Impact of public examination system on teaching and learning in Pakistan. *International Biannual Newsletter ANTRIEP*, 8, 3-6.
- Serafini, F. (2010). *Classroom reading assessment: More efficient ways to view and evaluate your readers*. USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
- Shepard, L. A. (2000). The role of assessment in a learning culture. *Educational Researcher*, 29(7), pp. 4–14. Retrieved from <https://www.ied.edu.hk/obl/files/The%20role%20of%20assessment%20in%20a%20learning%20culture.pdf>
- Veeravagu, J., Muthusamy, C., Marimuthu, R. & Michael, A. S. (2012). Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Gauge Students' Reading Comprehension Performance. *Canadian Social Science*, 6(3), 205-2012