

Assessment

CHAPTER ONE BASIC ASSESSMENT CONCEPTS

Assessment is a topic of concern to language Teacher. Although teachers are primarily concerned with teaching rather than assessing they must periodically measure their students' performance. This chapter introduces the students to the basic assessment concepts as raised by the following questions:

Why do we assess?

How do we assess?

What do we assess?

When do we assess?

1.1 WHAT IS ASSESSMENT?

The title 'assessment' has been chosen instead of testing for its wider view. For a language teacher 'assessment' includes any means of checking what students can do with the language. It also includes what they cannot do, but proper assessment gives due weight to the positive side of their achievement.

Assessment may be carried out before, during or after a course, or it may not even be connected with a course. Assessment may be of individual students or it may be to check the capability of a whole class. This means that assessment is concerned with teaching as well as learning.

1.2 WHY DO WE ASSESS?

There is no universally good way of assessing. What and how you assess should obviously depend on your purpose. We can distinguish at least seven important purposes of assessment which indicate seven different emphases in measuring student and potential. There is, however, some overlap among them. A single test may have more than one purpose but the more multi-purpose it is the less satisfactory it is likely to be.

1. Placement - to place or classify students on a suitable course.

2. Diagnosis to specify the student's particular Strengths and weaknesses

3. Selection - to select as fairly as possible the best Candidates for a limited number of places or jobs or for higher education.

4. Evaluation - to evaluate the effectiveness of the syllabus as well as the method of teaching so as to make adjustments when needed.

5. Progress - to assess what the students have learned of the specific syllabus and what progress they have made.

6. Prediction - to discover potential abilities and 'aptitudes and to predict probable future successes whether in school or outside.

7. Accreditation - to provide evidence that the student has undergone a course of training or study and is qualified to practice his profession.

TYPES OF TESTS

Consequently, these different purposes of assessment can be realized by four major type language tests:

(1) Achievement/Attainment Tests

These tests can be further subdivided into class progress tests and achievement tests.

Class progress tests

The progress test is designed to measure the extent to which the students have mastered the material taught in the classroom. It is based on the language programme which the class has been following. Its aim is to stimulate learning and to reinforce what has been taught. The progress test enables the teacher to become more familiar with the work of each of his students and with the progress of the class in general.

Achievement tests

Achievement tests, though similar to progress tests in some ways, are far more formal tests and are intended to measure achievement on a larger scale. Most annual school examinations, and all public examinations which are intended to show mastery of a particular syllabus are of this type.

(2) Proficiency tests

The proficiency tests also measure what testees have learnt but they are in no way related to any syllabus or teaching programme. These tests are concerned simply with measuring the student's control of the language in the light of what he will be expected to do with it in his future performance of a particular task. In other words, language tests of this type aim to assess global ability. Typically, proficiency tests are used in the placing of individuals in learning groups appropriate to their level of knowledge- beginner, intermediate, advanced, There are several internationally organized proficiency tests in English. Among the best known are the TOEFL and the ELTS:

(3) Aptitude tests:

A language aptitude test (or prognostic test) is designed measure the student's probable performance in a foreign language which he has not started to learn. Aptitude tests generally seek to predict the student probable strengths and weaknesses in learning foreign languages. By measuring his performance in an artificial language. Language learning aptitude consists of many factors including: intelligence, motivation, age, memory, etc.

(4) Diagnostic tests

Although the term, diagnostic tests' is widely used few tests are constructed solely as diagnostic tests. Achievements and proficiency tests are frequently used for diagnostic purposes. The aim is to find out the strong and weak points of the class as a whole and individual student so that appropriate; remedial action can be taken.

1:3 HOW DO WE ASSESS?

The question about how to assess answered either in terms of describing the variety of testing techniques or the consideration of a series of conflicting modes of assessment ,We may identify some of the major ones as follows:

Formal vs Informal

Formative vs Summative

Continuous vs Terminal

Internal vs External

Coursework vs Examination

Although the distinction made are sometimes too fine and there is often considered overlap between the modes, this contrasting presentation is significant for the construction of assessment.

Formal and informal assessment

- **Formal assessment** is standardized, large-scale tests which are prepared by professional testing institutions in the selection, thousands of students for the purpose of selection or placement and evaluation of students.
- **Informal assessment** is often used diagnostically by the teacher to obtain reliable insights about the students' ability and state of development.

Formative and summative assessment

- **Formative assessment:** helps to show which aspects the student has mastered and where remedial work is necessary. The tests are to be given during the course of instruction.
- **The Summative assessment:** on the other hand is usually given at the end of the course to measure the sum total of the material covered.

Continuous VS terminal assessment:

- **Continuous assessment** means continuous updating of judgments about students' performance in relation to specific subject.
- **Terminal assessment** means assessment that takes place at the end of the course.

The two modes could be put together to form some final assessment.

Internal vs External assessment

Internal assessment is usually carried out by the teacher of the subject once a month or a year to check students' progress.

External assessment is usually constructed by a team of specialists or an organization outside the school and applied on thousands of students for the purpose of selection or placement.

Coursework vs Examination

- Examinations are either school examination constructed by the teacher or teachers of the subject in a given school, or ministry examinations constructed and administrated by the ministry of education.
- Coursework is work completed by the students under the supervision of their teachers. For example assignment, field work

1.4 WHAT DO WE ASSESS?

Clearly the answer to this question is language. When analyzing the language being tested we have to consider the whole system of language skills and components. Indeed language skills are so complex and so related to each others that it may seem impossible to separate them for the purpose of any kind of assessment. Four major skills in communicating through language are often broadly defined as listening; speaking reading and writing. Ways of assessing performance in these skills may take the form of tests

1. Listening comprehension

including, phoneme discrimination , stress and intonation as well as recorded texts followed by questions of varying techniques.

2. Speaking ability – in the form of an interview, picture-description or roleplaying.

3. Reading comprehension - in which questions are given to test students' ability to understand text by applying certain cognitive skills as scanning, skimming, and drawing conclusions.

4. A Writing ability - usually in the form of letters, instructions, accounts of past events, ...etc.

The linguistic components of the forgoing skills are: grammar, vocabulary and phonology. These elements may be isolated for teaching and testing

purposes as in the following examples:

Test of phonology

Which vowel sound is different?

A. go. *B. got. C. close. D. smoke

Test of grammar

You would get better soon if you ---- a doctor.

A. see. *B. saw. C. are seeing D. had seen

Test of vocabulary

To ...- someone means to save him from danger.

A. praise. B. injure. *C. rescue. D. murder

1.5 WHEN DO WE ASSESS?

It is important to determine when to assess, as it is important to determine how and what to assess. The three terms 'terminal, periodic and 'continuous' assessments are often used. Assessment can be introduced at different stages of a course of study.

1. **Terminal of final** simply means assessment that takes place at the end of a predetermined period or unit, as, for example, a school year or a course of study. It ought therefore, to concern itself with the whole of what is being taught.
2. **Periodic assessment** measures levels achievement reached at predetermined intervals throughout the course.
3. **Continuous assessment** is given to have a continuous updating of judgement about a student's performance. A well-designed flexible programme of continuous assessment would be perfectly appropriate for a cyclical subject like English language, whereas it might be impracticable for a linear subject like Geography. Continuous assessment, thus, helps make assessment an integral part of the teaching/learning process.

CHAPTER TWO

APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

Modern theories about the nature of language seem to influence theories about language learning. Which in turn influence ways, and methods of teaching and testing. The direction of influence is usually from linguistic theory to learning theory to teaching methods and eventually to testing.

2.1 THE ESSAY-TRANSLATION APPROACH

This approach is referred to as the pre-scientific stage of language testing. No special skill in testing is required. There is a lack of concern for objectivity and for test reliability. The tests are mainly written exercises: translation, composition, and grammatical analysis and sometimes, an aural/oral component.

2.2 THE STRUCTURALIST APPROACH

This approach is mainly characterized by the view that testing can be objective, precise, reliable and scientific Spolsky (1975). Objective tests have been developed, the most widely used being the multiple-choice items. Statistical methods have been improved to measure the reliability and validity of tests Contrastive analysis is also used to identify Problems faced by second or foreign learners. The tests measure the learners' mastery of the separate elements of the language: phonology, vocabulary and grammar. The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are also tested separately. The best example of these tests is the TOEFL (Test of English Foreign Language).

Students have to complete or correct these sentences by selecting or

supplying the correct answers as in the following examples of structure and vocabulary:

1. I want ____ home now.

A. to go B. go

C. going D. Went

2. She needs to get up earlier so she's buying ____ clock

A. a time B. a bell

C. a watch D. an alarm

2.3 THE INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

This approach involves the testing of language in context and in concerned with meaning and the total communicative effect of discourse. Thus, it is the exact reverse of analytical assessment since it attempts to assess several elements and perhaps skills at the same time. Integrative tests are best characterized by the use of cloze testing which reflects the best feature of the two approaches: analytical and integrative. From a text, words are removed at regular intervals The examinee has to fill in the missing words. Thus, the task is holistic i.e., grammar and vocabulary and overall meaning are tested simultaneously-but the scoring is objective. Other types of integrative tests are dictation, oral interviews and composition writing, which will be dealt with later in this book.

The following is an example of a cloze test in which every seventh word has been deleted.

A friend of mine is called Edward Portman. He is a pleasant young man. He has got a job in ___(1) office of a large factory, not ___(2) from his home. He works there ___(3) days a week, Monday to Friday, from ___(4) o'clock to five-thirty. He lives ___(5) his parents and helps them with ___(6) money for food and accommodation. At ___(7) -ends he spends sometime repairing ___(8) small car, which he bought second ___(9).He has got few responsibilities. He ___(10) his job.

Answers:

1. an 2. far 3. five 4. nine 5. with

6. some 7. Week 8. His 9. hand 10. likes

2.4 THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

The approach is sometimes linked to the integrative approach as they both emphasize the importance of the meaning of utterance. However, the

communicative tests are concerned primarily with assessing real communication. The tests should indicate how well a student can function in the target language. Consequently the tasks should relate to real-life situations with emphasis on authentic materials. **Language 'use'** is often emphasized to the exclusion of language 'usage'. **Language Use** is concerned with how people use language for a multitude of different Purposes while **language usage** concerns the formal patterns of language.

Finally, communicative testing has introduced the concept of **criterion-referenced assessment** in preference to **norm-referenced assessment**. Criterion assessment rates students against certain standards, but norm-assessment compares each student with his classmate.

CHAPTER THREE

CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSESSMET

Assessment, if it is to adequately fulfill its purpose, should satisfy the requirements of three key. The test which is appropriate in terms of our objective is a valid test. If the evidence it provides is dependable, it is a reliable test. And, if it can do this with ease and economy, it is a practical test. We shell now examine the qualities of validity, reliability, and practicality in detail.

3.1 VALIDITY

Validity is the degree to which a test measure. What it is supposed to measure or can be used successfully for the purpose for which it is intended. Two questions must always be considered:

1. What precisely does the test measure?
2. How well does it do it ?

Types of validity

(a) Content Validity

Almost certainly the most important for the practicing teacher is the extent

to which a test adequately covers the syllabus to be tested. A valid test must be based upon a careful analysis of the subject or skill we are testing. It must also be constructed as to represent adequately each portion of this analysis. If, for example, a test is to measure students' mastery of English grammatical structures, the teacher has to study the unit and pick out the new structure points. He has then to plan how the students are to demonstrate mastery of these structures in behavioural terms. This is achieved by the use of a specification table of content and behaviour (i.e., recognition or production).

(b) Empirical Validity

If we are to check the effectiveness of a test and to determine how well the test measures, we should relate the test scores to some independent, outside criteria such as scores given at the end of the course or the teacher's judgment of his students or an external examination.

(c) Face Validity

This simply means the way the test looks to the examinees, supervisors or in general to the people concerned with the education of the students. Obviously face validity can never replace content validity or empirical validity; yet its importance should not be underestimated.

(d) Construct Validity

A test is said to possess construct validity if it is designed in accordance with a theory of language behaviour and learning. For example, if the course of study is based on the assumption that systematic language habits are best acquired by means of the structural approach then a test, which emphasizes the situational meaning of language, will have low construct validity.

3.2 RELIABILITY

Reliability means the stability of test scores. Presumably, if the same test is given twice to the same group of students, under the same conditions, it would give the same results. The requisites of a dependable test are the following:

(1) Multiple samples

The more samples of students' performance we take the more reliable will be our assessment of their knowledge and ability. Consequently, the test must be long enough to provide a generous sampling of the areas tested.

And it should also contain a wide variety of levels of difficulty.

(2) Standard Conditions

The reliability of the test scores can be assured only if all students take the examination under identical conditions. In a listening test, for example, all students must be able to hear the items clearly.

(3) Standard Tasks

All students must be given the same items or items of equal difficulty. In other words, the tests must be identical so as the format.

(4) Standard Scoring

All test must be scored in an identical manner. The scorer should give the same or nearly the same score repeatedly for the same test performance. Two or more scorers should give equivalent score for the same performance. Objective tests tend to be more reliable than free response tests like composition, where individual judgement must be made.

3.3 PRACTICALITY

A third characteristic of assessment is its practicality or usability. A test which is valid and reliable but difficult to administer or score or which is expensive may fail to gain acceptance.

Two parameters appear to be involved:

(1) Economy: The cost in time, money and personnel of administering a particular test .

(2) Ease: The degree of difficulty experienced in the administering and scoring of the test, for example, an oral test that demands the use of a tape recorder is not practical if it has to be administered to thousands of students.

CHAPTER FOUR TECHNIQUES OF ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT METHODS

There is a considerable range of techniques by which the students' abilities and performance can be tested. The process of choosing the appropriate one is governed by a number of considerations including:

- a. Subject matter
- b. Purpose
- c. Age
- d. Ability
- e. Time

Each technique has advantages and disadvantages, and there are both advantages and disadvantages in using a variety of techniques. This chapter is concerned with a description of the three major types of the techniques available for the language teacher:

Written assessment

Oral assessment

Aural assessment

There are of course other techniques like: Practical assessment and Coursework (including projects and fieldwork), but these techniques are more appropriate for subjects like Science, Geography and the like.

WRITTEN ASSESSMENT When describing written assessment we tend to use a wide range of terms which run from 'open' to 'closed' A question at **the open end** is likely to ask the student to supply material or it requires more writing than reading. Such questions are likely to be easier to set than to mark and to provide limited coverage) Questions at the **closed end** represent the opposite characteristics. The student selects from the given material and has more reading to do than writing. These questions are easier to mark than to set and permit a wide coverage. The same system of classification can be applied to oral questioning, except that listening replaces reading and speaking replaces writing.

TYPES OF WRITTEN QUESTIONS

1) Objective Items (or Closed response)

An objective item (item is the term more commonly used than question) is one which is asked in such a way that there is only one predetermined correct answer. This definition rules out any question which requires an answer to be supplied, however short, since judgement is needed in the marking of such answers. It is

necessary to emphasize that the only thing that is objective about an objective item or test is its marking everything else about it involves the taking of subjective judgement, for example, what to include and what to exclude in the option or test.

2) **Semi - objective Questions** Semi -objective items are designed to elicit answers which may be marked more or less objectively not so objectively as with multiple choice tests and not so objectively as with open – ended or essay questions. Semi-objective questions are fundamentally short questions that require more than just recognition as with objective items. Actually they are considered the most promising forms for measuring, misunderstanding, reasoning, creative thinking and problem solving.

3) **Subjective (or Free-response) Questions** The term free-response or sometimes open-ended implies two things: first, the student has to decide what to include and what to exclude in his answer and secondly, there is normally no precise limits in the questions themselves as to be the length or style of answer. Essay questions and composition are the most appropriate forms for assessing command of language. Marking these questions is subjective, since it is affected by the judgment of the tester.

OBJECTIVE ITEMS

Objective tests have the following common characteristics:

1. Each objective test item has a precisely defined problem that can be solved in a short time.
2. An objective test is usually highly reliable
3. An objective test usually has high content validity.
4. The test provides wide coverage of subject content.
5. It can be speedily and 'easily marked
6. Marking is not influenced by the marker's prejudices."
7. It has the advantage of being easy to examine statistically.

Objective tests include the following techniques:

- a. Multiple-choice
- b. True/false
- c. Matching
- d. Rearranging
- e. Supplying
- f. Labelling

MULTIPLE-CHOICE ITEMS

The multiple-choice test is generally recognized as the most widely applicable type of objective tests. It may be necessary to start with familiarizing the student with the terminology used, namely:

- (a) Discrete item: a single complete item.
- (b) Stems the initial part of the item which may be in the form of a question or incomplete statement.
- (c) Options: all the choices or answers (usually four or five).
- (d) Key: the correct answer.
- (e) Distractors: the incorrect choices.
- (f) Item Set: Five or more items based upon common material, for example a passage.

The following examples illustrate the component parts of a discrete item or a multiple-choice item.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MC

(a) Advantages

- (1) The multiple - choice test can be answered in a short time and the test can have a wide converge.
- (2) Large number of people can be tested in a short time.

- (3) It is easy to mark and the marking is objective.
- (4) It has content validity and high reliability.
- (5) They can be set for any level of difficulty.
- (6) It is usually free from ambiguity as it restricts the pupils' responses to a specific area.

(b) Disadvantages

- (1) Writing a technically sound item is not easy.
- (2) It takes a long time.
- (3) The test results can be distorted by pupils guessing the answers and cheating by copying others answers.
- (4) Only recognition and recall are expected from the testes.
- (5) It can have a negative influence on classwork and learning methods. Students may see no needs to practice writing and they may look for facts rather than seek a deeper understanding.
- (6) It has the difficulty of finding sufficient number of incorrect but plausible distractors.

TRUE / FALSE ITEMS

The true - false item consists of a declarative statement that the testee is asked to mark as true or false, right or wrong, correct or incorrect, yes or no, agree or disagree and the like. In each there are only two possible answers. The testee is asked to select one. True/ false items are used for measuring the ability to identify the correctness of statements of facts, definitions of items, statenients of principles and the like, for example:

- (a) Indicate by deleting the wrong alternative whether the following statements are true or false:

{e TRUE/ FALSE 1. The earth is a planet.

TRUE / FALSE 2. The earth revolves round the moon.

- (b) Another variant is as follows: Draw a circle round "T" if the statement is true and a circle round "F" if the statement is false.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages

- (1) True / false items are frequently easy to construct.
- (2) They can cover a wide sampling of the course material.
- (3) Scoring is easy.

Disadvantages

- (1) The learning outcomes are largely limited to the knowledge area.
- (2) The pupils' chances of guessing correctly are usually much greater than the theoretical level of 50 percent.

MATCHING ITEMS

This test format in its simplest form consists of two lists with instructions as how the matching is to be undertaken. The items in the first list of which a match is sought are called premises and those in the other list from which a selection is made are called responses. The pupil's task is to identify the pairs of items that are to be associated.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MATCHING

Advantages

- (1) The major advantage is that it is possible to measure a large amount of related factual material in a relatively short time, for example

Persons and Achievements

Dates and Historical events

Terms and Definitions

Authors and titles of books

Machines and Uses

Paris and Functions

Pictures and Words

- (2) Another advantage is ease of construction.

Disadvantages

- (1) Matching tests are restricted to the measurement of factual information.

- (2) Finding significant homogeneous material is sometimes difficult.

- (3) Its also reducing multiple choice test. Once you have matched the first ones there are fewer options left. Eventually you may find the answer to the difficult one is the only one left.

REARRANGEMENT

This test format demands the arrangement of a number of words to make a meaningful sentence or, to arrange a jumbled series of sentences of formulate a meaningful and coherent/ piece of writing. This type though easy to design can assess effectively the students' command of language syntactically and semantically. Consider the following example:

- (1) Put the words into an appropriate order to make up a complete and grammatically correct English sentence.

home, quickly, he, so, is, walking, as, time, reach, in.

Answer

He is walking quickly so as to reach home in time.

(2) Rewrite this short conversation in the right order.

'I've drunk it all.'

Yes, please, Sara.'

"Can I have some of your Pepsi, John? "

'Sorry, I've spent all my money'

'Do you want some money for Pepsi?'

SUPPLY TYPE

The testee is given a group of words following by a number of incomplete sentences. He is asked to supply the most appropriate words that can fill the blanks. For example :

Write the number of the sentence and the letter of the most suitable preposition that fills the blank.

A. on B. about C. with D. into E. across F.at

1. Are you angry me?

2. John is concerned -- Mary.

3. He ran -- the road.

4. Thieves broke the National Bank last night.

LABELLING

Labelling is another type of objective tests. The testee is required to label certain areas of a diagram or picture. This test format can be used to test vocabulary knowledge, particularly with beginners. The visual cue is accompanied by a written cue so as to focus students attention on the specific lexical unit to be supplied. For higher levels of language mastery, students may be asked to transcode the information got from a reading text to a table, graph and the like.

The diagram below shows a football field. Write the letter of the correct label next to the number of the spot.

A. goal area b. halfway line c. penalty spot D. goal e. full backs f. touch line

g. center spot h. forwards

(1)---(2) --- (3) - - (4) - - (5)---(6)----(7)---(8)---

SEMI -OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

Semi - objective questions combine some of the virtues of both objective, and subjective questions. The problems are short and highly structured,

nevertheless, they provide the examinee with the opportunity to compose his own answers.

Semi - objective questions fill the gap in assessment techniques between the free responses sought by essay writing and the limited responses needed by objective items. Semi - objective questions as used in language testing may require the examinee to complete a sentence or to compose one or more of his according to very specific directions, for example:

(1) Fill the blank space with a word derived from the word between brackets.

To be-- it is generally necessary to be well educated. (success)

(2) Define the term validity?

The latter question clearly asks for a short reply, whereas the former is quite simple and direct.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF SEMI-OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS

Advantages

(1) The questions are quick and easy to write.

(2) They are less time consuming to construct than multiple choice.

(3) They require much less scoring time than would a composition.

(4) They embrace a greater subject area than a composition question.

(5) They demand a certain amount of coherence in the answer

(6) They require more than just recognition and recall.

(7) The opportunity for guessing the correct answer is much less than that of a multiple choice item.

(8) The relatively high objectivity of marking makes this test reliable.

Disadvantages

As with all forms of test techniques, the semi objective questions do have some disadvantages.

(1) They take longer to score than objective tests.

(2) Quite frequently there are a number of possible right answers, some of which might not have been considered by the tester when preparing the test.

(3) They are not suitable for certain answers such as answers to questions on literary appreciation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING SEMI- OBJECTIVE ITEMS (1)

Select material that is brief and meaningful. (2) Design test items that require analysis and interpretation of the material. (3) Write a marking scheme.

TECHNIQUES USED

Techniques used in semi-objective questions include::

- (1) Transformation
- (2) Completion
- (3) Cloze Test
- (4) Short-answer Questions

TRANSFORMATION ITEMS

The transformation items are extremely useful for testing the student's ability to construct and produce sentences. A wide range of grammatical areas can be covered in this test format, for example: Rewrite each of the following sentences beginning each new sentence with the words given. Make the necessary changes without changing the meaning.

1. Where is the station car-park? Mrs. Smith asked.

Mrs. Smith asked-----

2. I last saw him when I was a student. I have not-----

COMPLETION ITEMS

Carefully constructed completion items are a useful means of testing the student's ability to produce correctly grammatical and meaningful sentences. Thus, a semantic task or structural one can be covered in this test. Completion items are considered preferable to multiple-choice items in certain test situations, since they measure production rather than recognition and are easier

to construct than items with distractors as follows:

Write a word derived from the word between brackets.

1. Be----- when you cross the road. (care)
2. His arrival was -----unexpected. (complete)

Complete the following:

1. Even if I had stood on a chair----.
2. He worked so hard that-----.

CLOZE TESTS

Although cloze completion items, they should not be confused with simple blank-filling tests. A text is chosen first, then the tester deletes every nth word.

The blanks are of uniform length. The interval at which words are deleted is usually between every fifth and every tenth word.

The cloze test, which was originally intended to measure reading difficulty in the first language, has recently been greatly used in foreign language testing. The principle is based on the Gestalt theory of 'closure' (closing gaps in patterns subconsciously). The cloze test measures the student's ability to decode interrupted messages by making the most acceptable

substitutions from all the contextual clues available. The length of the text is generally one or two paragraphs with around twenty blanks.

There are two methods of scoring a cloze test. One mark may be awarded for each acceptable answer or one mark may be awarded for each exact answer. Both methods are reliable. No student should be penalized for mis-spelling unless a word is so badly spelt that it cannot be understood. In addition, no deletions should be made in the first few sentences so that the testees have a chance to become familiar with the subject of the text.

Various modified cloze tests have been proposed. In the standard cloze test every nth word is deleted. In the modified type selected words are deleted, for example function words.

The following is an example of a cloze test.

. . Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Every year a huge amount of money is wasted on cigarettes. And every year

thousands of people die of lung cancer. At the same time governments try to

discourage people from smoking by prohibiting smoking in public places like

cinemas and theaters, and making 'no smoking' compartments on all trains, buses

and airplanes. It is awful sitting next to someone blowing smoke all over you, if

you don't smoke yourself.

Personally, I believe that there is a simple solution to this problem.

Cigarettes

should be banned and the manufacture and sale of cigarettes should be forbidden

by law. The only people who would suffer from such a law would be the cigarette

companies, but we all know that they contribute nothing to society.

. Yours Sincerely,

R.D. Brown

Fill each of the blanks in the passage with one word.

Every year a huge amount of money is wasted on cigarettes. And every year thousands of people die of lung cancer. At the same time governments to discourage people from----by prohibiting smoking in public----like cinemas and theaters, and making 'no smoking' compartments on- trains, buses and airplanes.It is----sitting next to someone blowing----- all over you, if you----

smoke yourself.

Personally, I believe----- there is a simple solution---- this problem.

Cigarettes should

be----and the manufacture and sale----cigarettes should be forbidden -----
law. The only

people who----- suffer from such a law----- be the cigarette companies, but--
---- all know

that they contribute-----to society.

Complete the following article by choosing the letter next to the word that
best

fits each space.

The coastal village of Breedon today welcomed home Frank Philips at the
end of

his two-year voyage (1)----the world . Mr. Philips, who is 75, was born in the
village and was a (2)----at the school for 50 years .When he retired he(3)---
his

house to buy a boat and see the world. Now he has returned to the village
(4)---

he has so many friends.

When asked what he was going to do (5)--- Frank replied that he wanted to
write

a book about his travels. He had kept a diary(6)----the voyage and (7) ---over
600

hundred photographs of the (8)----places he had visited. Frank hopes the
book

will (9) ---- People of all ages to take up the sport of (10)---- all

1.*a.around. b.through c.In d. along

2.a.student. b.pupil c.officer *d. teacher

3.*a.sold. . b.managed c.bought d. owned

4. a. which b.what *c.where d. who

5. a. then *b.next c.recently d.last

6. a. before b. after *c.during d. in

7. a. seen *b. taken c.drawn d. shown

8.*a. exciting b. terrible c.funny d. usual

9. a. invite *b.encourage c.inform d. offer

10.*a. sailing b.travelling c.photography d. writing

4.22 SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS

Short-answer questions are set in the form of several sub-questions. They
may be related to the same topic. This type of questions could be based on
a common set of data that may be in the form of written material, tables,

charts, graphs, or pictures. The testee may be asked to identify relationships in the data, to recognize valid conclusions, to appraise assumptions or inferences, and the like. This technique then, measures higher mental processes such as reasoning, creative thinking, problem solving and valid conclusions that were limited in the past entirely to composition questions.

4.23 COMPOSITION QUESTIONS

Composition questions have three main characteristics:

- (1) The student must decide on the material which he will include in his answer.
- (2) Limits are not set upon the length or the style, of the response, although this can be predetermined to an extent by demands made in the question.
- (3) Little or no guidance is provided for the testee although the question itself should be specific and unambiguous.

4.24 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Advantages

1. The question is relatively easy to set.
2. It is a good measure of power of expression.
3. Composition questions in general have a desirable influence on students' study habits.
4. They are often regarded as a device for improving writing skills.

Disadvantages

1. The unreliability of scoring since marking is subjective, as different examiners will score this question differently.
2. The amount of time required for scoring the answer.
3. The limited sampling they provide. A single question does not provide an acceptable measure of the testee's ability.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSTRUCTING COMPOSITION QUESTIONS

1. Restrict the use of these free response questions to these learning outcomes that can not be satisfactorily measured by objective items
2. Clarify the question to make it as specific as possible and present the pupils with a definite task.
3. Indicate the time limit for each question keeping in mind the slower pupils' writing speed.

4. Avoid the use of many optional questions as that may influence the validity of the test results.
5. Use a scoring scheme and prepare an outline of the expected answer in advance. Expect to modify this in the light of students' responses.
6. Evaluate all answers to each question at one time.
7. Set two written tasks of differing types in stead of one.

TECHNIQUES OF TESTING COMPOSITION

Composition questions can be conveniently classified into two kinds: guided (or restricted) composition questions and free (or extended) composition questions. Examples on both types are found in Chapter 8.

Chapter six Vocabulary Test

It is considered important to test knowledge of individual vocabulary items for three main reasons

First: they represent one of the principle components of language.

Second; the testing of individual vocabulary items enables the tester to include a large number of items in the limited time available for any test.

Third: the testing of individual items allows for greater objectivity in marking which provides a balance for the more subjective assessment in marking pieces of connected writing.

A distinction should be made between the active and passive vocabulary. Active vocabulary is tested as a part of integrated skills in the connected writing or speaking questions. While passive vocabulary is tested in the comprehension questions.

The vocabulary items are usually drawn directly from the textbook used in class.

Techniques for testing vocabulary items

1. Multiple choice concerns completion, antonym, synonym.

2. Matching items
3. Word set
4. Gap filling

CHAPTER SEVEN

TESTING READING COMPREHENSION

7.1. In most courses of higher study as well as in the initial stages, the amount of input information presented far exceeds any type of output required from the student. It follows from this in the written mode the receptive skill of reading is probably of students than the productive one of writing. reading is given greater importance for it is given further weighting in the format used for testing individual grammatical items, vocabulary items and in the questions that act as a transition between the two types of skills.

Ideally, of course, the input procedure is not entirely a passive one and students need to be able to process the information in a number of ways. The Processing involves various important cognitive skills exemplified in the following list:

- An ability to comprehend the whole despite lack of or incomplete comprehension of some parts.
- An ability to give close attention and follow step by step detail.
- An ability to skim and reject the irrelevant.
- An ability to scan to obtain specifically required information.
- An ability to use language cues to help in comprehension.
- An ability to draw correct conclusions.
- An ability to see the relationship of parts to the whole.
- An ability to transcode information, ie .. translate it from one medium to another.

Such skills are very closely related and several of them will be involved at any one time in any reading task. The comprehension test aims to sample

a competence in these skills. The usual procedure for testing comprehension is to give the student short texts of varying styles and content, each following by a series of items.

7.2 CHOICE OF THE TEXT

1. The text has to be kept brief; yet there should be sufficient content to yield five or six comprehension items.
2. The text should not deal with information that is universally known otherwise, the testees may be able to answer the questions correctly without referring to the text.
3. Texts that deal with series of events or including two or more people or objects are more suitable to testing purposes.
4. The text should not be loaded with extremely difficult lexical items or complex syntactical structures. Such texts have to be adapted to suit the testees' level.

7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR ITEM WRITING

1. Answering the questions should involve interpretation of the text, not merely word matching between the words in the items and the text.
2. The questions should be kept grammatically and lexically as simple as possible since we are concerned with the interpretation of the text, not with questions that are asked about it.

TECHNIQUES FOR ASSESSING READING COMPREHENSION

7.4 A wide range of techniques are available for assessing - reading comprehension including:

1. Multiple - choice items
2. True / false items
3. Matching items
4. Rearrangement
5. Cloze test
6. Short - answer questions
7. Completion
8. Transcoding

CHAPTER EIGHT

TESTING WRITING SKILLS

8.1 Testing the writing skills includes two main areas:

1. The mechanics of writing (i.e., cursive handwriting, spelling and punctuation).
2. Composition writing.

8.2 Cursive handwriting tests assess control of the alphabet or characters of the target language. The learner's ability to produce cursive handwriting is assessed according to the following features:

1. Proper spacing
2. Correct size of the letters.
3. Proper alignment, i.e., writing on a base line.
4. Legibility-ease of reading because of writing carefully and clearly.
5. Cleanliness.

8.3 SPELLING

Dictation

Dictation is still an essential method of testing mastery of writing skill.

Dictation provides a measure of overall language proficiency. The two types of dictations are:

A-Partial dictation where the student is given a printed passage with some words or Phrases deleted. As the passage is read, the students fill in the blanks. This type is preferable because it takes less time to administer and the teacher tests the chosen words.

B- Full dictation requires the students to write out the whole passage. This type is somewhat longer to administer and score but it provides a more valid measure of overall language ability. Dictations, which are given primarily to test mastery of the writing skill, are usually based on prepared selection chosen from the students textbooks or readers. Dictations used to evaluate general proficiency are taken from texts that are unfamiliar to the students.

Giving the dictation

An effective techniques of administering dictation ia as follows:

- The whole passage is read at normal speed. Students listen but not write.
- The passage is read a phrase at a time with pausing during which the students write down what they hear.
- The teacher repeats each phrase twice, giving the punctuation marks.
- The passage is read again at normal speed.
- The students are given a few minutes for final revision.
- The teacher should never repeat a particular word or phrase at student's request.

Scoring the dictation

The most common scoring system is the following:

1. point off for each incorrect or omitted word.
2. 1/2 Point off for each recognizable word with a spelling error.

Generally, a recurring word consistently misspelled counts as only one error.

8.4 COMPLETION

Completion is another format for testing spelling The students are asked to supply the missing letters of words, for example.

Ask, asking, run___ ing

Play, played, find ___d.

Bag bags, tooth___ th

8.5 PUNCTUATION

A wide range of punctuation marks can be covered by surplying the

students with a passage with no punctuation and ask them to put in the punctuation marks and capital letters.

Write out the following sentences, putting in all the punctuation marks and capital letters:

1. he asked me where are you going

2. my uncle writes that henry has just finished a book called farewell to arms

3. zekis sister is mr ahmeds secretary

8.6 COMPOSITION WRITING

Composition questions, which require continuous writing, attempt to discover competence in the production of written English. Composition is a task that involves the learner in writing grammatically correct sentences and linking these sentences to form a continuous piece of writing which expresses the writer's thoughts (on a certain topic for a certain purpose).

TECHNIQUES FOR TESTING COMPOSITION

8.7 A) GUIDED COMPOSITION

There are several ways of guiding the students written work. Examples of guided composition include the following:

8.8 PARALLEL PASSAGES

The student is given a short text and then he is required to write a similar test, using the words provided, for example:

Read the following paragraph and then write a similar paragraph based on the information given:

Frank is a cashier who works in a bank. His working hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. He earns £20 a week. At weekends he plays golf or goes . In his spare time he is studying economics, and in ten or twelve years he hopes to become a bank manager.

Joyce-secretary-office-9.15a.m.-5.30 p.m.-£ 12 tennis-swimming
drawing and painting-dress-designer

8.9 Completion

The student may be given a sage with blanks to be filled with words from

the list provided.

1. Complete the following passage by choosing appropriate words to replace the numbers from the list given below:

The boy (1) the wall to (2) the oranges. He (3) four and (4) them in his pockets. As he was (5) down again he slipped and (6). The fruit in his pockets squashed. He did not (7) himself, but he could not (8) the oranges either. He (9) home and (10) his trousers.

1. climbed, jumped, leapt
2. discover, reach, inspect
3. seized, picked, gave
4. hid, put, laid
5. jumping, slipping falling
6. fell, went, left
7. wound, hurt, cut
8. use, eat, taste
9. wandered, ran, lost
10. cleaned, changed, sewed

B) The following completion type is also useful in controlling writing once students are familiar with the particular task to be performed.

Complete the following composition with the help of the key words and phrases provided

John and Mary with their two young children, went for a picnic on a lonely beach. The

They locked their car and left it on the nearest road the children have a lovely time, swimming and building castles. At sunset, when they wanted to go home, John could not find the key of his car....

Walked three miles in dark to bus-stop, children very tired; waited for an hour for bus got home at midnight; next morning John telephoned garage to go and collect his car.

C) Another type is to give the first and the last sentences, and to ask them to compose four to five sentences to complete the passage. Complete the following paragraph, for which you have only the first and the last sentences:

Mr. and Mrs. James were sitting in their living room reading, just before going to bed

_____ Mr James

thanked the two policemen and went in, but neither he nor Mrs. James could sleep well that night

D) Incomplete sentences or several questions can be a good help to students.

Write a short story about a day that turned badly. Begin with this sentence:

When I woke up, the sun was shining and thought it was going to be a glorious day. Use these phrases for the beginning of some sentences:

I telephoned Jill _____

As soon as _____

When I went into the garage _____

The tire _____

Two hours later _____

She was still waiting _____

Just then it began to rain _____

It was still raining _____

Questions may replace these incomplete sentences:

1. What did you decide to do?
2. Who did you telephone?
3. When you went into the garage what did you find?
4. How long did it take to change the tire?
5. Was Jill still waiting or had she left?
6. Where did you go then?
7. What happened then which spoiled your day?

E) Writing tasks may take the form of form filling.

Fill in this form giving details about your-self.

INTERNATIONAL. SCHOOL.

Academy Road

Reading

OX5 21L

Application for course

Family name _____ Mr/Mrs/Miss First name _____

Dale of Birth _____

Address in your country _____

How long have you been learning English? _____

What is your level of English? _____

What is your reasons for learning English? _____

What do you think are your main problems in English? _____

8.10 Passage Transposition

In passage transposition, students have to change a written passage for example, to change a passage from the present continuous to the past, or from the singular to the plural, or from the passive to active etc. In the passage below, students are asked to write the text in the first person instead of third person. W

8.11 Problem Solving

This type is considered a modern technique of assessing students writing ability through problem solving task.

Below are four descriptions of four books (as found in a catalogue).

Imagine you want to buy two

One of the books for a thirteen year-old boy who is learning English and who is interested in most sports and enjoys watching adventure and Science fiction films on television.

Using the information given continue in about 30 words each of the four paragraphs, below, giving your reasons.

The Kraken Wakes.

John Wyndham

An exciting story of a world threatened by unknown form of life in the Oceans.

The Energy Crisis

Based on a BBC television series, an analysis of our sources of energy and the future nuclear power.

Girl Against The Jungle.

Monica Vincent a plane crashes in the Andes; only a teenage girl survives, but can she survive the fearful dangers of the Amazon jungle?

Pele, King of Football

Noel Machine Pele the world Famous footballer, few people know about his early life as a poor boy in Brazil.

My first choice for him would be _____

Telegram: @IQPDF

My second choice would be _____

I don't think I would buy him _____

And I am sure he wouldn't enjoy _____

8.12 Pictures

Composition writing may be based on picture or a series of pictures. Pictures can provide. The teste with the basic material for his composition as well as stimulating his imagination and encouraging him to progress in his writing. Consider this example:

Look at the series of pictures on the following page and write the story.

At intermediate level, the examiner may set a number of questions based on the pictures, for example:

1. Where was the lady?
2. 2.-What did the lady forget to take with her when she left?
3. 3 Who saw her handbag?
4. What did he do?
5. How did the lady thank him?

8.13. Letter Writing

Writing personal letters or postcards is another technique of writing.

Much care must be taken with the layout as well as the content:

Write a postcard to your friend. Say what you have seen and what you have done during your stay in Mosul.

Whenever possible, students should be provided with a realistic and meaningful basis for writing. The following example is about making arrangements for a party .

Telegram: @IQPDF

Read Ban's invitation and then write a suitable reply.

Dear Ann,

Would you like to come to my birthday party on Thursday evening at about six o'clock? I would be very pleased if you could.

With love

Ban

Dear Ban,

_____.

Ann

B) FREE COMPOSITION

8.14. Free composition is used with advanced the choice of composition topics is important.. The testee should have no trouble in handling the task because the testee's efforts during the test should be directed towards how to express themselves rather than what to write about. The following are some examples:

1. An accident you have witnessed.
2. Finding a lost wallet
3. The telephone - a curse or a blessing
4. Explain how to make a special dish.

MARKING THE COMPOSITION

8.15. The chief objections to composition questions is on grounds of

unreliability. Two markers may differ greatly in respect of spread of

marks. Nevertheless, composition. Is still widely used as a means of measuring the writing skills.

The two principal marking schemes are known by the terms 'general impression' and analytic. The first is exactly as it sounds-the marker reads the composition and awards it a mark without picking out any special features for consideration. When following the analytical scheme, the

marker uses a pre-determined marking scheme by listing a number of sub-scales, and specifies the weight to be given to each .

The Impression Method

This method implies an overall global judgment of the work as a whole.

It is simpler than the analytical marking. The teacher may adopt the following procedure:

Set a scale of five categories: very good, good, moderate, poor, and very poor. These five categories could be assigned grades (A, B, C, D, E).

The teacher then reads all the papers and pass a general judgment on them assigning them to the appropriate piles. Now, every paper within each category will have to be re-read in order to establish the final mark.

The Analytical Method

This method is ideally suited to the classroom situation. It depends on a marking scheme which has been carefully drawn by the marker or body of markers. It consists an attempt to separate the various features of composition for scoring composition for purposes. The following is one example of such an analytical scheme.

Mechanics refers to punctuation and spelling fluency to style and ease of communication and Relevance to the content in relation to the task demanded of the testee. A 5-point scale has been used.

There is, however, a new method devised and used by a well-known examining body in Britain as shown in the table below.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is meant by mechanical skills?
2. What are the main techniques used in testing composition
3. What are the criteria used for- handwriting evaluation?
4. What is dictation? What are the types of dictation? What are the differences between full and partial dictation concerning the tester and the lesteer?

Chapter nine **Oral assessment**

Assessing the students' command of the spoken language is one of the most important aspects of an overall evaluation of their language performance. This is because oral communication is generally related highly in language learning.

Speaking is a complex skill requiring the simultaneous use of a number of different abilities. It is necessary to distinguish between acquiring control of elements of language (pronunciation, vocabulary and grammatical patterns) via speaking on one hand. And communicating one's idea via speaking on the other hand. Oral assessment, therefore, should cover not only accurate language but also fluency (e.g. ease and speed of the flow of speech) together with comprehension of what is being said.

General Characteristics of oral assessment

1. The test is very time-consuming
2. They are integrative tests.
3. They are on the subjectively scored.
4. They are serious doubts about their reliability.

5. They are considered valid tests.

Suggestions for conducting oral assessment tests

Oral assessment is based upon personal interaction between examiner and examinee at a particular place and time. When arranging the oral interaction, the examiner has to establish a friendly, encouraging atmosphere. The students must be put at ease. The questions must be asked in a friendly way.

Phases of oral assessment

- **Warm up** – to make acquaintance of each student and encouraging him to perform well by starting asking him some social questions about his health, studies and the like.
- **Main task** – to present some task to the students and assess his oral ability to comprehend and respond in English.
- **Round up** – to tie up an end by encouraging the student to contribute his own individual views on the topics discussed and giving him the feeling that the interview was a pleasant experience for both him and the examiner.

Methods of oral assessment tests

Tests can be divided into three categories

1. Direct speaking tests: including the procedures in which the examinee is asked to engage in face to face communicative exchange with the examiner.
2. Indirect test –which do not acquire any active speech production on the examinee's part.
3. Semi- direct tests- which although elicit active speech by the examinee, do this by means of pictures, printed materials or tape recordings.

Techniques for assessing oral skills

1. Dialogue

2. General conversation
3. Interview
4. Picture based questions
5. Reading aloud
6. Pronunciation (sound discrimination and sound production)

The latter two techniques might be together, since the reading test evaluates correct pronunciation of single words as well as handling stress, intonation and rhythm.