

# A Study on APSACS Karachi Zone ESL Teachers' Notion About Assessment and Its Numerous Employment in English Pedagogy

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## Abstract

Research work regarding to teacher's cognition, basically, bring into light teachers' perception, what they know and how they believe. To comprehend teachers' perceptual structure, it is indispensable as it interlinks to their directional practices in ESL teaching domain. With regards to assessment, teachers' cognition constitutes a vital and integral research field in two perspectives: understandability of ESL teachers' belief and practices and their needs in assessments region. This study delves the aim of assessment in ESL classes under four main regimes: (1) summative assessment, (2) formative assessment, (3) students' self-assessment, and (4) assessment to meliorate teachers' direction. It also delves to probe ESL teachers' notions about the assessments' employment in ESL pedagogy. It also demonstrates that how teachers' notions interconnect to their KG to HSSC level in teaching English. 35 Pakistani ESL teachers who work at APSACS Junior, Senior and College wings in Karachi Zone. To collect the data, 18-Likert scale questionnaire is employed. Outcomes of study bring out that the participants' belief on assessment is impregnable on assessments' employment regarding to formative purposes. On the secondary level, self-assessment procedures and techniques are given significance. From KG to HSSC level, participant teachers have no influence on participants' assessment predilections. Data collection tool is also a significant contribution to the literature; besides the vital findings it has produced.

**Keywords:** ESL, notion, assessment, assessment for directions

## 1. Introduction

Both inside and beyond the classroom, several scientific evidences suggest that most of the time, teacher build their understandability on a wide range of interacting factors. Thus, teacher cognition research, fundamentally emphasis on describing what teachers think, knows and believes. It is very significant to comprehend teachers' perceptual structure which is connected to their directional practices. So, with regards to assessment, teachers' cognition establishes a vital and integral research field in two perspectives: understandability of ESL teachers' belief and practices and their needs in assessment region. However, describing about the ESL teachers' notion with reference to role of assessment in their direction is one of the least studied topics, within this framework.

Together with objectives and especially materials-activities as well as methodology, Assessment is one of the major factors of directional cycle in any educational settings. Furthermore, for different educational settings, it imposes several underlying practices. So, teachers' cognition on assessment establishes an undeniable research field in two perspectives: understandability of ESL teachers' notions and practices as well as explicate their motive. Due to state above things, this study is conducted upon this necessity.

### 1.1 Literature Review

Although teacher conception on assessment is generally defined as the ideas and attitudes that teachers have

toward what assessment is and what it is for (Brown & Gao, 2015), different purposes that assessment serves might create confusion among teachers. In other words, teachers' perceived conception of assessment in language teaching and its purposes may be defined differently by different researchers (Biggs, 1998). Torrance and Pryor (2001) describe the purposes of assessment as "observation of process and products", "giving feedback and judgment" and "questioning" (p. 624). In another example, the aims of assessment are described as "selection", "increasing the teachers' effectiveness" and "increasing the students' benefits" (Heaton, 1975). Other common definition of these purposes is listed as (a) adjustment of the effectiveness of the learning process and teacher training, (b) to ensure accountability of the schools' performance, (c) to give information about the learning process of the students to those who are concerned such as parents or the students themselves, and (d) to adjust the standards of national education system (Al Alhareth & Al Dighrir, 2014).

This conceptual vagueness may be due to the fact that researchers and teachers bear different ideas on the purposes of assessment in education. These purposes should be explained carefully, as some of the concepts such as giving feedback, increasing effectiveness of student learning or teacher training and school accountability have several common components such as students, parents, teachers and administration. To this end, several explanations have been made by different researchers. One of these explanations is made by Earl and Katz (2006) as: AFL, AOL, and AAL. AFL denotes as Assessment for Learning, AOL as Assessment of Learning and AAL as Assessment as Learning.

However, this categorization has some overlapping elements. While purposes of AFL may mean both assessments to develop direction and assessment to monitor the learning process of the students (Gonzales & Aliponga, 2012), purposes of AAL may mean both giving feedback to students, which is also seen as an important function of formative assessment (Lewis, 2011) and to teachers applying self-assessment procedures to their students (Taras, Kirkman, & Steel, 2010). Besides, (Blackman-Sheppard, 2004) is a concept not only about students, but also about parents (Stiggins, 2002) and school administration (Blackman-Sheppard, 2004). Thus, such a classification seems to be superficial and needs to be further developed.

Therefore, this study employs a more function-based categorization of assessment in language teaching. Under the four domains of assessment, this study exhibits its purpose. These four domains are: formative, summative, students' self-assessment, and assessment to meliorate teachers' directions. On the behalf of focus group discussions with participant teachers, formative assessment in this study adverts to assessment conducted during directions (in-class) to collect information on students' language performance. Next, summative assessment refers to assessment conducted at the end of defined time period (3–4 chapters, a term, or a year) to account for student language proficiency. Subsequently, self-assessment of students corresponds to assessment conducted in order to allow/help students evaluate their own language achievement. Lastly, assessment to meliorate teachers' direction is a dimension in which teachers use assessment procedures to increase the effectiveness of their own teaching skills and classroom environment (Figure 1).

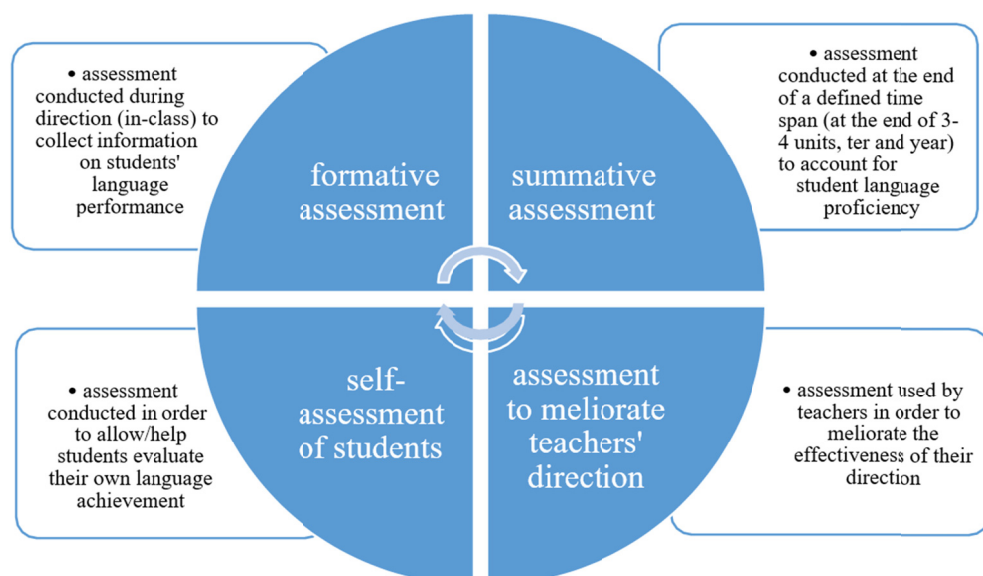


Figure 1. Employment of assessments in ESL Classes

## 1.2 Research Questions

This study addresses the stated below research questions:

- 1) What notions about the assessment's employment in English pedagogy are reported by Pakistani ESL teachers?
- 2) How do the reported notions about the assessment's employment by the participant thread to teaching experience?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

35 Pakistani APSACS teachers who at the KG to HSSC level in Karachi zone participated in the study. The participants became part of this research work from three dominant camp employment: Pannu Aqil, Sukkher, and Rahim yar khan. Including all participants, 23 (65%) were novice teachers (fresh graduate or less than 2 years teaching experience) and 12 (35%) had either two or more years of experience in ESL teaching.

With the informed consent, all of the 35 participants were given a printed version of the questionnaire after official permission being granted from the Regional Director of APSACS Karachi zone to conduct a questionnaire-based study.

9 (25.7%) male and 26 (74.8%) females were consisted in the sample group. All significant aspects i.e. teachers' occupational and academic background, questions aiming at eliciting participants' qualification and teaching experience were given place in the questionnaire in order to collect overall information of participants. All participants had occupied degree from HEC affiliated universities. 73% teachers were graduates of ELT departments. 27% of them were graduate of other English related departments and obtained a certificate to teach English after graduation (e.g., MA TOFEL, Table 1). 65% teachers were in the first year of their career, considered as novice teachers, 35% of them had teaching experience of two or more than two years. Given below percentages reveal that a great portion of participants were at the beginning of their career in their respective field, which meant that these participants would supposedly recall what they learned on language assessment. Information on participants' teaching experience in ELT is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 1. Undergraduate departments of the participants

Undergraduate Departments	Frequency	Percent
ELT graduate	26	74.285
Literature	05	14.285
Translation	02	5.715
Linguistics	02	5.715
Total	35	100

Table 2. Experience of the participants in ELT

Experience	Frequency	Percent
Novice: Newly Graduate or in the 1st year	26	74.3
2 or More Years of Experience	9	25.7
Total	35	100

In terms of education level, 25 (68.5%) had undergraduate degree (16 years education), and 10 (31.5%) teachers had graduate studies degree from Pakistan's prominent universities. Distribution of sample group in terms of their education levels is shown in Table 4. Additionally, participants are also expected to provide information about the courses they took on language assessment. 06 (17.2%) of participants reported: they attended a course on language assessment after graduation, while 26 (74.3%) of them attended such a course during their bachelors' education. However, 3 (8.5%) of them had never attended a course on language assessment (Table 3).

Table 3. Participants' attendance to courses on language assessment

Taken Courses on Language Assessment	Frequency	Percent
After BA	06	17.2
During BA	26	74.3
No course taken	03	8.5
Total	35	100

## 2.2 Data Collection Tool

The questionnaire splits into two parts in this study. Part 1 consisted of elicited participants' demographic/geographic information as well as educational background. The basic purpose to collect this data is to make provision general idea about the sample group and second research question's variables. To collect information about the teachers' notions on the employment of assessment in language teaching, part 2 was a questionnaire which developed especially for this study by researcher. Addressing four key issues in language assessment, the questionnaire had 20 items, named as 'summative assessment', 'formative assessment', 'students' self-assessment, and 'assessment to meliorate teachers' direction' which leads to constitution of four sub-dimensions of the questionnaire (see Table 4 for questionnaire items).

The questionnaire comprises 20 items addressing four issues language assessment. These issues are namely "formative assessment", "summative assessment", "students' self-assessment" and "assessment to meliorate teachers' direction". These constitute the four sub-dimensions of the questionnaire (see Table 4 for questionnaire items). At five-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, and strongly agree*), each participant was expected to mark the most proper response for each item.

## 2.3 Data Analysis

Using Statistics 21, statistical analyses were channeled with reference to questionnaire responses.. Frequently counts of the participants' response and the man scores of each dimension were first calculated in order to account for participant teachers' belief about dissimilar employment of assessment. As for the 2nd research question, the sample was divided into groups according to their undergraduate departments and their experience in field (Novice/Experienced). The mean values were used for the comparison of these groups.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Descriptive Results as to the Questionnaire Items

The significant outcomes have been deduced for each individual item in the 18 items questionnaire. Against each item, Table 4 exhibits percentages of participant responses. It should be noted that although the items were given in a jumbled order in the actual questionnaire, the items here are grouped according to the sub-dimensions in Table 4 for purposes of clearer presentation and comparison. Items 1–5 are on formative assessment; 6–10 are on summative assessment; 11–15 are on students' self-assessment; 16–20 are on assessment to meliorate teachers' direction.

Table 4. Participant responses to the questionnaire: Research question 1

Questionnaire Items	Percentages (%)				
	Strongly disagree (SD)	Disagree(D)	Unsure(U)	Agree(A)	Strongly agree (SA)
1. Giving feedback to learners in order to meliorate their learning processes in class.	0	0	0	23	77
2. Assist students to meliorate in-class performance.	0	0	3	44	53
3. Providing opportunities to learners to exhibit what they've learnt in class.	0	3	0	33	64
4. Comparing paper and pencil tests, allow learners to perform task-based exercises and drills.	0	3	19	33	46
5. Help students to find out their learning strengths and weaknesses in class.	0	1	3	44	51
6. Evaluating learners' competence level at the end of a unit.	0	4	11	44	40
7. Determining accomplishment level of desired learning outcomes at the end of term/year.	1	1	3	54	40
8. Make final decisions about learner proficiency level at the end of a program.	0	17	26	50	7
9. Assess student performance at the end of a term.	0	6	6	54	34
10. Make a provision of upgraded information to school administrators and parents about the performance of the students at the end of the year.	4	20	41	21	13
11. Help learners develop crystal clear criteria of a good learning practice.	0	1	1	44	53
12. Providing guidance to learners to fix their targets and monitor their own learning progress.	0	4	3	27	66
13. Determining strategy to promote self-access learning process in class.	0	4	37	37	21
14. Provide examples of good self-assessment practice for learners to examine/evaluate their own learning process.	0	0	1	53	46
15. Meliorate the quality of direction for the next teaching term or 1 school year.	0	0	10	50	39
16. Find out effective classroom teaching methodologies.	3	4	14	41	37
17. Gather data from students to meliorate directional processes.	0	3	6	53	39
18. Generating/developing effective teaching activities and drills for my class.	1	3	9	43	44

### 3.2 Comparison of Mean Scores of Sub-Dimensions—Research Question 1

In Table 5, participants' mean scores of the four sub-dimensions in the questionnaire are reported. Results exhibit that the mean score of formative assessment is 22.53, the mean score of summative assessment is 19.33, the mean score of self-assessment is 21.34, and finally the mean score of assessment to meliorate teachers' direction is 20.90. The difference between the mean scores draws an attention.

Table 5. Mean scores of sub-dimensions

Sub-dimension	N	Mean	S.d.
Formative Assessment	35	22.53	1.98
Summative Assessment	35	19.33	2.44
Self-assessment of learners	35	21.34	2.51
Assessment to Meliorate Teachers' Direction	35	20.90	2.85

### 3.3 Comparison of Mean Scores of Groups—Research Question 2

The second research question which focuses on the effects of demographic variables on teachers' perceptions, the mean scores of each sub-dimension is compared according to the participants' experience. To this end, independent samples T- test is required for the analyses. However, as the data obtained from the participants is not normally distributed, Mann-Whitney U Test, a non-parametric alternative of T-test analysis, is conducted for analyses of two demographic variables.

### 3.4 Comparison of Mean Scores According to Experience

In order to see whether the experiences of the participants have an effect on their notions on the purposes of language assessment, Mann-Whitney U Test was used. The outcomes of the analysis have been portrayed in Table 6. The results show that there is no significant difference among the mean ranks of inexperienced teachers and experienced teachers in any of the sub-dimensions ( $p > .05$ ). In other words, the experience level of participants has no effect on their notions on the employment of assessment in teaching English.

Table 6. Mann-Whitney U test outcomes according to the experience

Sub-Dimension	Experience	N	Mean Rank	iSum of Ranks	U	p
Summative Assessment	Novice	45	36.23	1630.50	529.500	.682
	2 or more years	25	34.18	854.50		
Formative Assessment	Novice	45	36.32	1634.50	525.500	.645
	2 or more years	25	34.02	850.50		
Students' self-assessment	Novice	45	34.37	1546.50	511.500	.528
	2 or more years	25	37.54	938.50		
Assessment to Meliorate Teachers' Direction	Novice	45	34.16	1537.00	502.000	.455
	2 or more years	25	37.92	948.00		

## 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Focusing on the two research questions, the discussion of the study is presented. Firstly, the perceived notions of the participant teachers on the different employment of assessment in teaching English will be discussed. Then, the discussion will be further developed focusing on the relationship between these perceived notions and their demographic differences.

The findings of this study explore that the participants' notions on assessment are irresistible on employing assessment for formative purposes. In the second category, Self-assessment procedures are given importance.

What is more, using assessment in order to meliorate the quality of the direction is perceived to be as important as self-assessment according to the teachers as there is no significant difference among the mean scores of these two purposes. On the other hand, teachers' reports indicate that they attach the lowest level of importance to the summative use of assessment in language teaching. Next, teachers want to use assessment mechanisms both to collect feedback about their direction and to meliorate it. Finally, teachers prefer summative assessment the least.

The results also reveal that teachers from undergraduate departments and their experience have no effect on their assessment predilections. On the other hand, participants' teachers (experienced) holding graduate degree from ELT or other relevant department showed their particular inclination to their assessment predilections.

Consequently, outcomes show parallelism with the common belief in literature supporting the idea of using assessment during direction (in-class) to collect information on students' language performance. In Pakistani educational system in which formative and summative assessment both are prioritized in language teaching, the tendency of ESL teachers to highlight process over product in language learning is remarkable. The undeniable fact in Pakistani educational system is also that the teachers strongly favor formative assessment over others may be due to the pedagogical training that the teacher candidates went through before or after graduation.

Since the study focus on the teachers' reported notions, it must be acknowledged that these outcomes may not be entirely portray the picture of teachers' actual practices. Further research and can be made by actual classroom observation and interviews for the reported perceptions. Another limitation of the study is that notions of the teachers reported in this study may not be representative of all Pakistani ESL teachers as the sample is limited in only three campuses of APSACS, Karachi zone, Pakistan. Actual observations of a greater and a more representative sample might produce more comprehensive results. Finally, with reference to current study, the data collection tool has a significant contribution to the literature. This questionnaire should be meliorated by

further studies with more empirical data.

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