

## Evaluating the Assessment Process of English Language Program at Higher Secondary Level: How far practice embodies prescribed?

Amna Umar\*, Sumaira Noreen†

### Abstract

*This research is an evaluation study of the assessment process of English language program (ELP) at higher secondary level in Pakistani context. The Ministry of Education (MoE) states clear objectives of ELP in the document of National Curriculum for English Language (MoE, 2006) (NCELD). These objectives are categorized under five competencies and presented in the form of 87 student learning outcomes (SLOs). This study evaluates the practiced methods of assessment, adopted to assess the prescribed objectives/ SLOs of ELP. The aim of the research is to evaluate: How far does the process of assessment integrate the SLO's of ELP at higher secondary level? This research is based, purely on quantitative data. The data is collected through checklist, based on the 87 SLOs of ELP as mentioned in NCELD. The data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics. The findings of the research infer that the process of assessment does not conform to the objectives/ SLO's of ELP at higher secondary level. According to the NCELD, the emphasis of the ELP is on 'practical skills' and 'competency in all areas of language' rather than 'content' and 'information'. However, the findings of the evaluation explicate that ELP has not been able to execute its objectives during the process of assessment. And, the means/ methods of assessment, adopted to assess the desired learning outcomes, have failed to assess 55 % of its SLOs. Moreover, the process of assessment has merely reduced to the assessment of the content knowledge/ information. Resultantly, it promotes lower order language skills and rote learning. The study recommends the adoption of modern, authentic and versatile methods of assessment to bridge the gap between prescribed and practice*

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, intended learning outcomes, practiced means, English Language Competencies.

### Introduction

Genesee and Upshur (1996), defines evaluation as a process which collects, analyzes and interprets information about teaching practices and learning activities. According to them the aim of evaluation is to make informed decisions to boost students' progress and the success of educational program (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). In other words, the aim of evaluation in educational setting is to evaluate: whether the objectives of the program have been attained or not? However, assessment is the process to measure and analyze the extent to which students have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the educational program. Therefore, assessment is the part of evaluation. In ELP, the main concern of assessment is to assess the language competency of the learners; and, to evaluate the methods of assessment, adopted to assess the language competency. Therefore, the process of assessment in a language program is core to a language curriculum. And its effective implementation is crucial to the successful attainment of the intended objectives of the curriculum. Harlen (2005) defines assessment as the process which encompasses decisions regarding the evidences which are relevant to achieve particular purpose. Moreover, according to Harlen (2005), it also involves the means through which the evidence has to be collected and interpreted. Therefore, assessment includes contexts, theories and practices (Fulcher, 2012). This study aims to evaluate the process of assessment of English language program (ELP) as prescribed in NCELD at higher secondary level and as practiced in real life settings (i.e. classrooms, board of examination). Consequently, this study encompasses both formative and summative assessment. However, the basics to this research are the objectives/ student learning outcomes (SLO's), suggested by the Ministry

\* Amna Umar, PhD scholar at Research and Evaluation Department, Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), Lahore. [amnaumar2016@gmail.com](mailto:amnaumar2016@gmail.com)

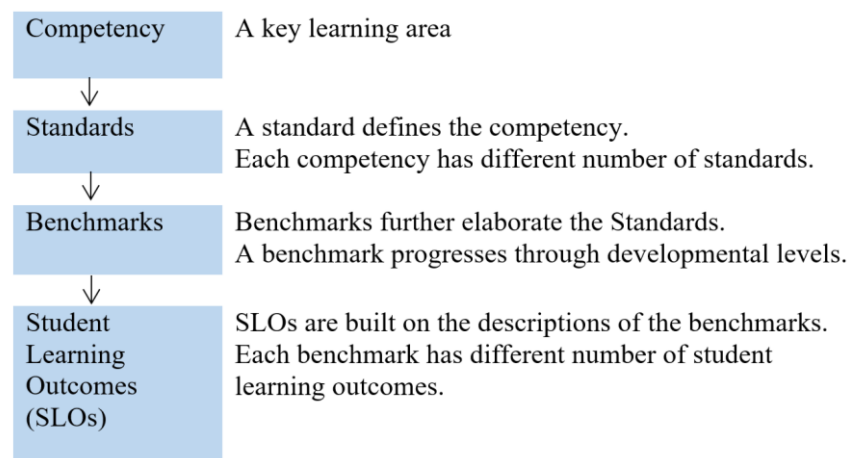
† Dr. Sumaira Noreen, Assistant Professor, CoD (incharge) History Department, & Collaborative Faculty, Research and Evaluation Department, Institute of Education, LCWU, Lahore.

of Education (MoE) through NCELD (2006).

### Objectives of the NCELD

Objectives refer to goals of a program or curriculum. According to Taba (1962), objectives define the purposes of the educational program according to the needs of the nation, identified in national policy. In NCELD, these objectives are based on five competencies (C); including: Reading and Thinking Skills (C1), Writing skills (C2), Oral Communication Skills (C3), Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language (C4), and; Appropriate Ethical and Social Development (C5). According to 21<sup>st</sup> century definitions of competence, a competence is not just knowledge. It includes skills and attitudes. A competence enables an individual to cope up with complex scenarios in a particular setting, by mobilizing and relying on psychosocial resources (Ryehen & Salganik, 2003). Therefore, in 21<sup>st</sup> century competence is a far-reaching concept, which comprises of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). In NCELD, the five competencies of English language are elaborated through specific standards (S), benchmarks (BM) and student learning outcomes (SLOs).

**Figure 1: Organization of Curriculum Objectives (MoE, 2006, p.6)**



Akin to the UNESCO's definition of 'competence', the objectives/ SLO's of ELP in NCELD emphasizes on skills-based learning and discourages the concept of knowledge without skills (content based learning). Therefore, the SLO's of Reading skills are based on the development of reading comprehension. This competency aims to enable the students to: read for pleasure, read with adequate pronunciation, interact with the text, analyze text organization and to analyze different patterns and functions of the devices used within the text. The SLOs of Writing Skills aim to enable the students to develop composition, drafting, paraphrasing, summarizing, and using information in the new context. The SLOs of Oral Communication Skills focus on the development of fluency and accuracy. The SLOs of Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language focus on lexical and grammatical function of language. Appropriate Ethical and Social Development focuses on ethical issues and social values, but this competency is not elaborated in the form of SLO's and that is why, it is not concluded in the study.

### Review of Literature

This section of the research explicates various definitions of summative and formative assessment and their characteristics. It also ascertains basic differences between the two types of assessment and gives an overview of the existing literature related to the evaluation of formative and summative assessment in the context of English language curriculum. Moreover, it depicts the research gap by asserting the existing researches on evaluation of assessment in Pakistani context.

### Summative Assessment

According to Taras (2005), Summative Assessment is the form of judgment. It encompasses the entire data of evidences till a particular point. The particular point can be labeled as 'time interval' and can be in the form of tests or examination. Brown (2004) defines summative assessment as a summation of

students' learning. It implies to evaluate the extent to which the students have been able to accomplish the objectives within a specific time period. However, it does not include suggestions for future progress. Hence, the important aspect of summative assessment is to assess past performance rather than providing directions for the improvement of learners' performance for the future. Harlen (2005) asserts that summative assessment aims to record or report the achievement of the students. The product of summative assessment reflects: what students have learned, previously. Moreover, it is also viewed as a type of evaluation which helps the teachers to assess the success or failure of the students in the process of learning through numerical scale (Herrera et al., 2015). While summative assessment indicates the progress of the students in retrospect, however, it does not provide accountability to evaluate teachers' practices and to rejuvenate the process of teaching and learning in accordance with the needs of the program. Hence, in a nut shell, summative assessment is that type of assessment which records the achievements of the students till a specific time, in numerical form, and aims to assess: how far does students have achieved the objectives of the program.

### **Formative Assessment**

The frequent, recurrent and interactive assessment within the classroom, along with teaching and learning is defined as formative assessment (William, 2011). The aim of this sort of assessment is to assess the learning progress of the students'; to help: the identification of learning needs; and, to adopt teaching practices accordingly. Moreover, this type of assessment not only reflects the achievement and progress of the students, but also reflects the efficacies and/or inefficacies of teaching methodologies. William (2011) explains formative assessment three steps: (1) Monitoring, (2) Diagnosis, and, (3) Action. These steps refer to: (1) Is learning taking place? (2) What is not being learned? (3) What to do about it? Consequently, this perceptive guides the teachers to plan and design their teaching practices in future. Hence, formative assessment is the assessment of: what is happening in the classrooms? Be it from students or teachers. According to Taras' (2005) definition: formative assessment is based on Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). According to ZPD, students are assumed incompetent to achieve a specific position. And, MKO refers to the teachers who are more knowledgeable and who can guide the learners to achieve the standard position. Moreover, in Taras (2005) definition, the results of previous assessment which indicates the performance of the students, also helps to find out the solutions to reach the standard position. Therefore, due to these characteristics, formative assessment is referred as a type of assessment which helps to shape the methods of teaching and learning activities (William, 2006). Brown (2004) defines formative assessment as a continuous process. It remains constant even in classroom participation. In a nut shell, due to all these characteristics, formative assessment can be summarized as the process which helps to understand and identify the needs of the learners through monitoring, diagnosis and action. And shapes the methods of teaching and activities of learning.

### **Research Gap**

Leafing through the existing literature, the researcher concludes that much has been written about assessment for English language (Sireci et al., 2003). Duran (2008) assessed English language learners' achievement. Abedi et al. (2004) reviewed test accommodation strategies for English learners. Biggar (2005) made recommendations on scrutiny and assessment of young ESL learners. Troudi et al. (2009) explored the views of EFL teachers, about assessment of English Language at higher education in the context of United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. Davison and Leung (2009) explored the issues in English language teacher based assessment. Their study provided an overview of the issues in teacher-based assessment. In another study, based on Australia and Hong Kong, Davison (2004) explored the inconsistencies of the culture of teacher based assessment. Cheng et al. (2004) explored the formative assessment practices of ESL teachers in classroom context. Similarly, another study (Leung & Mohan, 2004) explored formative assessment with special reference to the discourse/ talk in classroom setting. Rea-Dickins (2004) advocates the role of teachers as the agents of the process of assessment.

Moreover, in the field of English language curriculum evaluation, scores of studies have been

conducted. For instance, Brown (2009) contributed an evaluation model for English language curriculum at a Japanese University. Aftab's (2012) study asserts the situation of English language textbook in Pakistan. Asghar (2014) evaluated the reading goals in the curriculum document of English language in Pakistan. Similarly, Siddique's (2013) study is also an evaluation research but it is related to the assessment criteria only. His study focuses on summative assessment only, and that too in the context of the paper pattern and the distribution of marks. It analyzes the question papers used for the assessment of students in board exams. Hence, this study explores the weaknesses of summative assessment only. While these studies and other similar studies hold significance in their research areas of reference, the present study provides for a comprehensive analysis of the two types of assessment, including formative and summative assessment. Moreover, this research further identifies the objectives/ student learning outcomes at grade XI-XII as prescribed in NCELD 2006; and, evaluates in the context of both: theory and practice.

### **Research Questions**

The aim of this research is to evaluate the process of assessment of ELP with special reference to the objectives/SLO of NCELD. The study evaluates: How far the process of assessment has been able to incorporate the intended SLOs of English language curriculum through checklist based on SLO's of NCELD for grade XI-XII.

Therefore, the guiding research questions are:

1. How far does the process of assessment integrate the SLO's of ELP at higher secondary level?
2. How far does the process of assessment apt to achieve the Objectives/ SLO's of ELP?
3. How far do the practices of the process of assessment embody the prescribed process of assessment (NCELD)?

### **Significance of the Research**

1. The research evaluates the assessment strategies being practiced by teachers, educators and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Lahore (BISE, Lahore); and identifies if these strategies can actually help to evaluate the extent to which the intended student learning outcomes have been achieved.
2. The research will benefit educationist, curricularists, administrators and students; not only in the field of higher secondary ELP, but also in other fields of educational research.
3. The findings of the research will help curricularist to make informed decisions about ELP, not only at higher secondary level but also at other levels.
4. The findings of the research guide teachers about the inefficacies of formative assessment and the teaching and learning activities of the classrooms.
5. The findings of the research also guide the stake holders of the board of examination about the ineffectiveness of the paper pattern and the process of assessment and will help them in the process of revision.

### **Research Design**

This research is purely a quantitative evaluation research. The research evaluates the process of formative and summative assessment, as practiced by the teachers and BISE, Lahore.

For the study, the target population was all Government colleges of Lahore, affiliated with BISE, Lahore and all the assets/documents/ content/ activities, related to NCELD grades XI-XII of these colleges, BISE Lahore, and Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore (PCTB, Lahore). The source population was three government colleges of Lahore. The study population consisted of all the teachers and students of ELP of grade XI and XII of the selected colleges.

The sample for the evaluation of summative assessment consisted of 20 English language papers (Part I and Part II, accumulatively), conducted by BISEL in years 2008-2018. The data for each grade was collected on separate sheets; therefore, total two sets of data were collected at this stage. For the collection of the data a structured checklist was designed by the researcher. This checklist was based on 87 SLOs of

ELP, recommended by Ministry of Education, Pakistan (MoE) in NCELD. All the material of the checklist was adopted from NCELD (MoE, 2006, p. 12-142). The detailed checklist is presented in appendix. The checklist enabled the researcher to evaluate: How far the process of assessment has been able to incorporate the objectives/ SLOs of ELP?

After the collection of data, the figures of both grades were accumulated for each SLO, and the data was presented accumulatively in the form of percentage. Moreover, for the evaluation of formative assessment 10 English language classrooms were selected through convenience sampling techniques. Each class was observed for 50 times. Therefore, 500 observations were made. Lastly, the data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics.

## Data Findings Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1: Evaluation of the process of Assessment**

How far does the process of assessment, integrate the objectives/ SLOs of NCELD at higher secondary level?	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Not at All
Total no of SLO's: 87	<b>1.14%</b>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>55%</b>

The results of the study show that the process of assessment of English language program at higher secondary level is unable to assess 55% SLO's of ELP as prescribed in NCELD (MoE, 2006). Moreover, only 28.7% SLO's are measured to some extent in the process of formative and summative assessment.

**Table 2: Accumulated data for Each Competency**

Competencies	No. of SLO's	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Not at All
C1	36		5.5%	36.1%	58.3%
C2	14			42.8%	57.1%
C3	05				100%
C4	32	3.1%	34.3%	18.7%	43.7%
C5	This competency is not included in the evaluation. NCELD does not specify any SLO for this competency. Moreover, this competency is not academic/ language based. It is about the social and ethical development of the students through classroom activities.				

The accumulated data for each competency as presented in Table 2; shows that competency 3 (Oral Communication skills) is the most neglected part of the assessment. None of the SLO of this competency is assessed in the process of assessment. However, more than 50% of the SLO's of C1 and C2 are also not assessed throughout the process of assessment. The detailed breakup of percentage according to each benchmark is presented in table 3.

## Discussion

In this section of the research, the findings of 'How far does the process of assessment, integrate the objectives/ SLOs of NCELD at higher secondary level?' have been discussed in detail. The researcher has discussed the implications of the findings with reference to the needs of learners in Pakistani context. Moreover, the findings of the research have also been discussed with reference to the previous studies and literature related to the evaluation of assessment.

**Table 3: Accumulated data for Each Bench Mark (Summative Assessment)**

C	S	BM	SLO's	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Not at All
<b>Reading and Thinking Skills</b>							
C1	S1	BM1	06		16.6%	33.3%	50%
		BM2	07		14.2%	28.5%	57.1%
		BM3	06				100%
		BM4*	06			16.6%	83.3%
	S2	BM1	11			72.7%	27.2%
<b>Writing Skills</b>							
C2	S1	BM1	04			50%	50%
		BM2	04			25%	75%
		BM3	02			100%	
		BM4*	04			25%	75%
<b>Oral Communication Skills</b>							
C3	S1	BM1*	01				100%
		BM2*	04				100%
<b>Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language</b>							
C4	S1	BM1*	04				100%
	S2	BM1	02	50%	50%		
	S3	BM1	09			33.3%	66.6%
		BM2	11		90.9%	9.09%	
		BM3	06			33.3%	66.6%

\*The benchmarks with steric (\*) shows the data of formative assessment. In NCELD (MoE, 2006) these SLO's are marked as the part of formative assessment. Due to the issue of coherency the SLO's of formative assessment are not presented in a separate table however, the findings are discussed separately in terms of summative and formative assessment to explicate the weakness of the process of assessment of ELP ta higher secondary level.

## Summative Assessment

### Reading and Thinking Skills

Leafing through the data findings, it is evident that the ELP has not been able to assess reading and thinking skills to the full extent. As shown in data presentation, 58% SLOs of this competency have not been measured in examination. Only 36% objectives been measured to some extent. The S1 of the competency aims to access students' comprehension skills and fluency; through multiple reading strategies and thinking skills (MoE, 2006) but, in the process of assessment, this objective has been overlooked, completely. The understanding of students with the text has not been assessed anywhere. Therefore, no 'reading comprehension and thinking strategies' (BM2) (MoE, 2006, p. 121), seems to be assessed through the process of assessment. There were hardly a very few questions in 10 years' papers which required the actual understanding of the text. The rest of the questions were as simple as two and two makes four. Some examples are: (i) On which place was the package lying? (Inter Part I, 2018, Group 1). (ii) What is the cherry tree wearing? (Inter Part I, 2017, Group 1). (iii) Why was spring 1896 important for Mr. Chips? (Inter Part II, 2016, Group 1). Siddique (2013) asserts that the pattern of board papers is based on content knowledge which only requires memorization skills. He claims that the means of assessment do not offer any skim and scan or critical thinking activity to students (Siddique, 2013). Furthermore, Khan (1995) asserts that the questions related to textbooks are centered on literal level. "Such questions can only measure low order language skills" (Umar & Noreen, 2021, p. 186). However, NCELD advocates the use of 'item analysis to find out the validity and reliability of the text' (MoE, 2006, p.156), keeping in mind the purpose and objectives of the program. Furthermore, for the assessment of this competency, the question of reading comprehension/ précis writing is much suitable. But, the exam papers of part I and II lack this.

Khan (1995) also states that reading comprehension paragraphs are useful for the assessment of the understanding of the learner, particularly, if the questions offer the learners to actively participate and formulate the answers themselves, rather than replicating the same text. Moreover, there is not any part of the question paper which could address BM3, which aims to enable the students to interpret 'visual organizers'.

However, 72% objectives of S2 of the competency have been integrated to some extent in the process of assessment. The aim of this standard is to enable the students seek out information and ideas. It encourages the students to relate themselves and their surroundings with the text and make the learning enjoyable (MoE, 2006). The process of assessment has been able to assess the information as depicted in the text but it was not able to assess the real interaction of the students' with the text and its relevance with their own lives.

### **Writing Skills**

The data of the findings shows that 42% SLOs of the competency have been assessed to some extent. And the other 57% are not assessed at all. This competency is catered, mainly through the Section II of the exam paper. Techniques for text organization (BM1) (MoE, 2006, p. 127), are assessed through essay writing and letter or application writing. Descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and analytical writing skills (BM2) (MoE, 2006), are assessed through section I and section II both. Interpersonal and transactional writing skills (BM3) (MoE, 2006) are assessed through letter and application writing. Siddique (2013), in his analysis of question papers also concludes that the major part of the paper revolves around reading and writing skills. However, the problem lies with the quality of the questions. Throughout these 10 years, neither the syllabus has changed nor the pattern. There is no versatility in the questions; the same questions are repeated again and again and this factor promotes rote learning. Siddique (2013) asserts that in Pakistan, the exam papers are based on rote learning. Students are not encouraged to write on their own. This aspect makes the entire process of assessment dubious and does not promote skills/ competence based language learning. Rehmani (2003), also objects to the reliability and validity of the content/pattern of the means of assessment i.e. question papers. He criticizes with reference to content coverage, distribution of marks, curriculum guidelines (objectives), selection and abilities of paper setters, of paper checkers, marking system and preparation of results.

### **Oral Communication Skills**

This skill is not included in summative assessment. MoE (2006, p.2) asserts that due to the constraints of resources, it is not possible for the time being to assess listening and speaking skills during summative assessment. Therefore, these skills need to be developed and assessed in classrooms, during formative assessment (MoE, 2006). Hence, this competency is discussed in formative assessment.

### **Formal and Lexical Aspect of Language**

The S1 of this competency is related to formative assessment and is discussed in formative assessment. S2 focuses on the improvement of vocabulary for effective communication (MoE, 2006), the data findings show that, 50% of the objectives of this standard are been assessed to a great extent and other 50% of the objectives are being assessed to a moderate extent. This is the only standard whose objectives coincide with the process of assessment, but still it lacks the assessment of 'effective communication' (MoE, 2006, p. 136). The SLOs of this standard are assessed, mainly through section I (objective type) of the paper. Moreover, the questions based on the pair of words, use idioms/phrases and translate into English, essay writing, story writing, letter or application writing also help to assess the vocabulary of the students. Moreover, S3: 'grammar and structure' (MoE, 2006, p. 137), of the C4, seems to be highly neglected, excluding BM2. The grammatical functions (BM1) have not been emphasized much or the number of allocation to access this learning outcome has not been done correctly. 5 marks are allocated to the use of prepositions only. 2/3 marks are allocated to the use of articles and the rest 2/3 marks are to assess sentence structure in part II. Moreover, 5 marks are allocated to the correct form of verb in part I. Consequently, all other grammatical functions have been overlooked. However, there is ample margin to assess all the SLOs

of this competency through objective type questions. But again the focus is to assess 'information' based on the content of the text book, and this strategy; being implied consistently, is promoting rote learning rather than competency based language acquisition. Shah and Saleem (2010), also assert that the education system of Pakistan is based on textbooks and rote learning. Therefore, the process of teaching and learning is also confined to the content of the textbooks (Umar & Noreen, 2021) and in result, students become passive recipient with compromised higher order skills. Siddique's (2013) study also confirms the findings of this research. He concludes that 65% of the paper is based memorization, 10% is related to understanding and only 25% offer to assess grammar (Siddique, 2013).

Moreover, to assess the mechanics of punctuation (BM2), 5 marks are allocated in part I examination. But again, there are only 3 lines which are not enough to assess all the SLOs and that too from the content which is taken from the text books. The example is as follows:

whatever reasons he gave people were not willing to believe him those are lying excuses  
they said behind his back hubert felt this shame and disgrace to his self- esteem and  
character (Inter part I, 2018, GI)

Lastly, only 33.3% SLOs of BM3 have been accessed through out the examination. Translation into English and a few questions related to select the correct sentence (part II) cater this benchmark. However, translation into English seems to be the only question in the entire process of assessment which requires actual skills and which actually enables the examiner to access the language competency of the students. The question related to the mechanics of punctuation (BM2) can also be improved by integrating a lengthier paragraph form an unseen/ random text.

## **Formative Assessment**

### **Reading and Thinking Skills**

In this competency, study skills (S1, BM4) are categorized in formative assessment. All the SLOs of this benchmark are related to classroom activities, including: the use of dictionaries; identification of appropriate synonyms and antonyms; use of different informational sources i.e. encyclopedia, internet sources, library skills; use of effective study strategies; use of textual aids etc. (MoE, 2006). Therefore, these skills can only be assessed through formative assessment. However, the data shows that only 16% SLOs of this benchmark are being assessed to some extent, through formative assessment. Only 'the effective study strategies' (SLO5; C1, S1, BM4) (MoE, 2006, p.124) are being assessed to some extent in some classrooms. Majority of teachers have completely overlooked this objective. This SLO includes: note taking, note making, mind mapping, organization of ideas and writing a summery. Moreover, mind mapping is not practiced as it needs to be. It is practiced to some extent in the form of essay writing.

### **Writing Skills**

In this competency, revising and editing skills (S1, BM4) are categorized in formative assessment. The data shows that only 25% SLOs of this benchmark are being assessed to some extent. Akin to SLO5 of C1, S1, BM4; the SLO2 of C2, S1, BM4; also emphasizes on 'brain storming' and 'mind mapping' (MoE, 2006, p. 130). Apart from this, the emphasis in on revising and editing skills, which are not assessed at all. The practice of peer review is assessed, but, in a very few classrooms. All other SLO's are being completely neglected in classroom assessment.

### **Oral Communication Skills**

This competency is entirely dependent on formative assessment and it is the most overlooked competency. The data shows that 100% of the SLOs of this competency are not assessed at all. This competency accentuates to assess oral communication in social and academic context, both formally and informally, with individuals and in groups (S1, C3) (MoE, 2006). Moreover, 20% marks have been allocated to assess listening and speaking skills in NCELD (MoE, 2006, p.158). However, no weightage is given to this competency in final grades of board examination.

The findings of the evaluation show that none of the SLOs of this competency has been assessed in the classroom or through formative assessment. It infers that the SLOs of this competency are not even



included in the process of teaching and learning. In classrooms, it is observed that teachers focus on traditional methods of teaching, which includes reading and writing skills only. Hodson (2006) also points out the same and asserts that teaching of speaking and listening are neglected explicitly. Moreover, Alam (2013) concludes that English language teachers, themselves have poor communication skills, they are unable to communicate in English, properly. Furthermore, he says that the process of teaching and learning: in English language classrooms, is not for the attainment of language skills but the aim is merely to clear the examination. However, his action research proves that students can be skilled with oral communication skills by giving conducive learning environment and by providing opportunities to practice oral communication.

Consequently, it is high time for the stake holders to revisit their policies. It has been fourteen years since 2006, and the authorities are still stuck to the 'constraints of the resources. They should have at least kept a check and balance system for the process of formative assessment to promote this competency.

### **Formal and Lexical Aspect of Language**

In this competency, the assessment of pronunciation (S1) is categorized in formative assessment. Similar to oral communication skills (C3), the assessment of pronunciation (C4, S1) is also neglected completely in the process of assessment. The standard focuses on the understanding and articulation of conventional pronunciation, stress and patterns of intonation (MoE, 2006, p.5). But the data of classroom observation depicts that there is no system for the assessment for these SLOs. Apart from assessment, these skills are not even practiced in classroom. Students are made to read aloud from the text books during the lecture, but it is preferred to choose the ones who can read fluently. Moreover, this practice itself is very rare. Teachers are observed to read the text by themselves to explain the story and/or translation. Therefore, this skill is neither practiced nor assessed.

The findings of the data depict that the entire system of assessment is based on summative assessment. Formative assessment has nothing to do with the final grades of the students (Umar & Noreen, 2021). Summative assessment owes the last decision (Siddique, 2013). No weightage is given to the SLOs of formative assessment in final grades. Therefore, the SLOs related to formative assessment has been overlooked long since. However, it is suggested in NCELD that both formative and summative forms of assessment should be employed to evaluate the language competency of the students (MoE, 2006). Moreover, the findings of formative assessment call into question the teaching and learning practices of English language program at higher secondary level. It infers that the entire process of teaching and learning has reduced merely to board examination and the sole aim of the English language program at higher secondary level is to surpass summative assessment rather than language acquisition.

### **Conclusion**

In a nut shell, the study concludes that the process of assessment of ELP has merely reduced to the assessment of the content knowledge/ information. The process of assessment has failed to assess language skills and the SLOs which are aimed in NCELD. According to the NCELD, the emphasis of the curriculum is on 'practical skills' and 'competency in all areas of language' rather than 'content' and 'information' (MoE, 2006, p.2). However, the findings of the research assert that ELP has not been able to execute its objectives in the domain of assessment, as the process of assessment is limited to the assessment of text books content. In other words, "the process of assessment is based on the assessment of content" (Umar & Noreen, 2021, p.189), information and knowledge rather than skills and competencies. Consequently, the process of assessment of English language program at higher secondary level has not been able to assess 55% of its SLOs. Siddique (2013) also claims that "the methods of academic assessment; practiced in Pakistan are not appropriate to evaluate real competence" (p.53).

Moreover, the figures of the evaluation depict all the disparities between the prescribed and practiced. Reading skill is negligibly assessed which cannot be called a genuine assessment since there is no segment in the paper asking for skimming and scanning of the text. Critical thinking and language comprehension skills are overlooked in the assessment which promotes rote learning.

The prime focus of the assessment remains on the writing skill but major section of the paper carries content based questions without asking for students' critical views. Students can easily reproduce such answers by committing them to their memory. Being based on textbook exercises, the examination fails to promote or assess creativity and insight in writing which has been aimed in NCELD.

For effective oral communication, the NCELD proposes students to use acceptable social and academic oral discourse. The NCELD also provides the rubric for the assessment of oral communication and guides about the criteria of performance too, but in actual practice formative assessment and the activities related it cannot be witnessed in classroom observations. Moreover, summative assessment carries no weightage for the formative assessment whereas NCELD allocates 20% marks to formative assessment in order to accommodate this competency.

The curriculum document proposes for all students to be able to use conventional pronunciation, using stress, intonation etc. Furthermore, they are required to enhance their vocabulary and understanding of grammatical principles and functions to enhance their oral communication and writing skills. Grammar and lexical competency though assessed in the paper, yet lags far behind the objectives/SLOs of ELP. A number of structures and vocabulary items, mostly picked from textual exercises, are used to assess this competency. Such an assessment negates the spirit of the stated aims.

The curriculum puts forward for all students to develop ethical and social attributes and values relevant in a multicultural, civilized society. Being focused in NCELD as a separate competency, these values are inculcated cumulatively and subtly throughout the curriculum. There is, however, no particular assessment criterion for these.

Precisely, the research concludes that the process of assessment has a weaker connection with the objectives of the ELP. The prevailing system of assessment rewards memorization and does not judge real competence. The more they reproduce, the better they score. The need of the hour is to shift from conventional knowledge based assessment, practically. Modern and authentic techniques of assessment should be approached to assess competencies and skills rather than content knowledge. There should be much versatility in the summative assessment to cater all the SLOs of NCELD. Moreover, practical guidelines must be given to teachers for the implementation of formative assessment. And the results of formative assessment must share some weightage in summative assessment. There is a dire need to bridge the gap between prescribed and practiced. The deficiencies of the system, like rote learning and assessing lower level skills, need to be recovered and the objectives of assessment need to be shifted from theory to practice in Pakistan.

## References

- Abedi, J., Hofstetter, C. H., & Lord, C. (2004). Assessment accommodations for English language learners: Implications for policy-based empirical research. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(1), 1-28.
- Aftab, A. (2012). *English language textbooks evaluation in Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Birmingham).
- Alam, Q., & Bashir Uddin, A. (2013). Improving English oral communication skills of Pakistani public school's students. *International journal of English language teaching*, 1(2), 17-36.
- Asghar, J. (2014). Review of reading goals in the national curriculum of English language (grades 11-12) in Pakistan. *Academic Research International*, 5(3), 292.
- Ananiadou, K. and M. Claro (2009), "21st Century Skills and Competences for New Millennium Learners in OECD Countries", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 40, OECD Publishing.
- Biggar, H. (2005). NAEYC recommendations on screening and assessment of young English-language learners. *YC Young Children*, 60(6), 44.
- Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brown, K. A. (2009). An iterative needs assessment/evaluation model for a Japanese university English-language program. Temple University.
- Chang, C. (2005). Oral language assessment: Teachers practices and beliefs in Taiwan collegiate EFL

- classrooms with special reference to Nightingale University. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter, England.
- Cheng, L., Rogers, T., & Hu, H. (2004). ESL/EFL instructors' classroom assessment practices: Purposes, methods, and procedures. *Language Testing*, 21, 360-389
- Davison, C. (2004). The contradictory culture of teacher-based assessment: ESL teacher assessment practice in Australia and Hong Kong secondary schools. *Language Testing*, 21, 305-334.
- Davison, C., & Leung, C. (2009). Current issues in English language teacher- based assessment. *Tesol Quarterly*, 43(3), 393-415.
- Duran, R. P. (2008). Assessing English-language learners' achievement. *Review of Research in Education*, 32(1), 292-327.
- Fulcher, G. (2012). Assessment literacy for the language classroom. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 9(2), 113-132.
- Genesee, F. and J. Upshur (1996) Classroom-Based Evaluation in Second Language Education. Cambridge University Press.
- Harlen, W. (2005). Teachers' summative practices and assessment for learning—tensions and synergies. *Curriculum Journal*, 16(2), 207-223.
- Herrera Mosquera, L., Macías, V., & Fernando, D. (2015). A call for language assessment literacy in the education and development of teachers of English as a foreign language. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 17(2), 302-312.
- Hodson, P. (2006). Listening to children's voices: unlocking speaking and listening in the primary classroom. In J, Deborah & H, Pamela (Eds.) unlocking speaking and listening. Great Britain: David Fulton. Pp.1-16.
- Khan, S. N. (1995). An evaluation of the exercises provided in the English compulsory textbook for class X. Unpublished MA (Research project). Department of English, faculty of English Linguistics. University of Karachi, Pakistan.
- Leung, C., & Mohan, B. (2004). Teacher formative assessment and talk in classroom contexts: Assessment as discourse and assessment of discourse. *Language Testing*, 23, 335-359.
- Pennycook, A. (1994). The cultural politics
- McClam, S., & Sevier, B. (2010). Troubles with grades, grading, and change: Learning from adventures in alternative assessment practices in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(7), 1460-1470.
- Ministry of Education. (2006). National curriculum for English language grades I-XII. Government of Pakistan. Islamabad: Author. Retrieved on October, 16, 2006, from: <http://www.moe.gov.pk/Curriculum.html>.
- Rea-Dickins, P. (2004). Understanding teachers as agents of assessment. *Language Testing*, 21, 249-258.
- Richards, K (2003). Qualitative inquiry in TESOL
- Rehmani, A. (2003). Impact of public examination system on teaching and learning in Pakistan. *International Biannual Newsletter ANTRIEP*, 8, 3-6.
- Shah, S. M. H. & Saleem, S. (2010). Factors Conducive for The Purposeful Use of Libraries Among University's Students in Pakistan. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implications* 1, (1), 52-64.
- Siddique, N. (2013). Evaluation of the assessment criteria of English language at higher secondary level in Pakistan. *Evaluation*, 5(4).
- Taba, H. (1962). *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*. New York, USA: Harcourt, Brace and Company, p.7.
- Taras, M. (2005). Assessment-summative and formative—some theoretical reflections. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 53(4), 466-478.
- Troudi, S., Coombe, C., & AL- HAMLIIY, M. A. S. H. A. E. L. (2009). EFL teachers' views of English language assessment in higher education in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. *TESOL*

Quarterly, 43(3), 546-555.

Umar, A., & Noreen, S. (2021). A Qualitative Exploration of Teachers' Perceptions about the Theory and Practice of English Language Curriculum at Higher Secondary Level. *AJSS*, 5(2), 178-192.

William, D. (2006). Formative assessment: Getting the focus right. *Educational Assessment*, 11(3-4), 283-289. doi:10.1080/10627197.2006.9652993

William, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37(1), 3-14. doi:10.1016/j.stueduc.2011.03.001