

Assessment for Language Learning

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is the parameter to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The use of appropriate assessment strategies and techniques helps to ascertain the proficiency of the learner in a subject. Thus to assess the knowledge of any subject, appropriate assessment methods are required so that learning becomes better. It is a matter of real concern how assessment and consequent learning can be influenced by the decisions in the educational field. M.P Higher Education has introduced changes in the syllabus and as well as evaluation process since 2021. As a part of the change, they have introduced Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) assessments for all the Foundation Courses. The Foundation Course consists of four subjects:- English language, Hindi language, EVS and Yoga. This sort of assessment may be appropriate for yoga and EVS but assessing language purely on multiple choice-based questions (MCQ) is worthy of thinking. This study is based on an analysis of various viewpoints of all the stakeholders (faculty members, students, educational institutes and society in general) in this respect. It is a review of the assessment process in foundation courses especially Hindi and English languages in Madhya Pradesh higher education. This will also include the pros and cons of different forms of assessment and their relative impact on the learning of different language skills viz. LSRW.

Keywords:- Assessment, MCQ, OEQ, Language learning, LSRW,

INTRODUCTION

“Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.”

Assessment Reform Group (2002)

Assessment is a powerful driver of innovative changes in education and defines goals for learners and teachers. It is the feedback on any course taught and a way to ascertain how much percentage an instructor is able to achieve his/her set or pre-decided objective of the

course. However, the assessment of learning is often one of the more complex and time-consuming aspects of education. It is also said to drive student learning and define curriculum. The performance assessment communicates to the students what material is important, motivates the students to study, identifies areas of deficiency and the need for further learning. It also identifies areas, where the course or curriculum is weak, and it facilitates modification of the syllabus or curriculum and helps in guidance and counseling.

Success in education, in turn, is largely measured by performance on examinations. There are varied ways to test or adjudicate which is based on the nature of the course. It can be multiple

choice or open ended assessment, questions requiring long and short answers or viva-voce or presentation based assessments. Selection of assessment is dependent on the outcome and level competency an instructor is expecting in the learner. If students know that their success on the examination rests entirely on rote recall of facts, they will adopt a learning style that relies purely on memorization. On the other hand, if students are required to integrate, interpret and apply the information they will adopt a strategic learning style in order to drive the highest degree of success.

Assessment in language teaching is an intricate task since grading the receptive and productive skills stand out as a natural and undeniable factor in language learning objectives. Teaching techniques in language classes have changed a lot in the last few years and are continuously evolving. However, the commonly used techniques to test students' language skills have not changed much regardless of the recent awareness in Bloom's taxonomy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. (Huba and Freed, 2000). "Evaluation is the process of determining merit, worth, or significance; an evaluation is a product of that process" (Scriven, 1991, p. 53) Assessment tools in education differ according to cognitive and affective factors, they are also categorized according to their test preparation techniques such as multiple choice, open ended, matching, true/false, and completion items (Black

et al., 2003). Obviously, all these question types vary in their strengths and weaknesses, and none could be considered ideal for all language testing objectives (Cheryl et al., 2017). Nonetheless, considering all of these question types and their world-wide preference, popularity and extensive use in most language testing procedures, multiple choice and open-ended question types were studied in this research.

OBJECTIVE:

Madhya Pradesh has become the second state ,after Karnataka, to introduce NEP 2020. MP higher education has introduced various changes after the adoption of NEP 2020. New education policy emphasized on transforming assessment for optimizing learning and development of all students with a focus on the assessment of learning. It focusses on regular, formative and competency-based assessment that helps in promoting learning and development of students. It also tries to employ various ways to test higher-order skills like analysis, critical thinking and conceptual clarity etc.

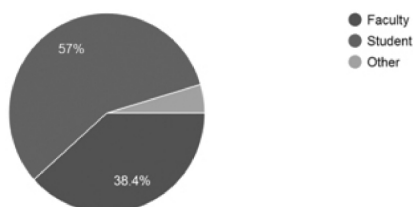
Consequently MP higher education introduced various ways for assessment or evaluation of different subjects and skills set. As per the mentioned scheme, there are four mandatory foundation courses in every stream at undergraduate level. One of the major changes that are being introduced is Multiple Choice Assessment (MCQ) in place of earlier pattern of assessment which was a mix of objective, short and long answers. The idea behind this study is to judge the suitability of this change in assessment method and establish a proper assessment method for Hindi and English language .As in assessment of these language skills, there is a strong need that a student is evaluated on the clarity of concepts, critical thinking, creativity, and cognitive behavior. The

descriptive assessment will focus on the uniqueness and competency of each student.

METHODOLOGY:

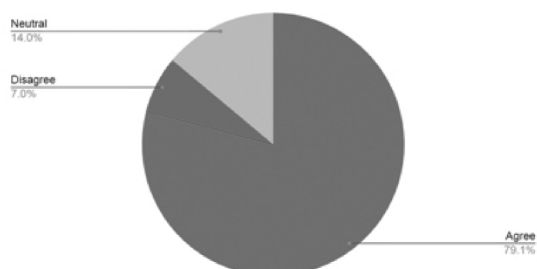
Apart from the observation and analysis, both theoretically and practically, a questionnaire was floated amongst various stakeholders; students, teachers and other members of the society. In this study, out of the total number of participants, 57% belong to the students' community, 38% are faculty members and the remaining are from other classes of stakeholders.

Your role as a stakeholder in the process of learning.
86 responses



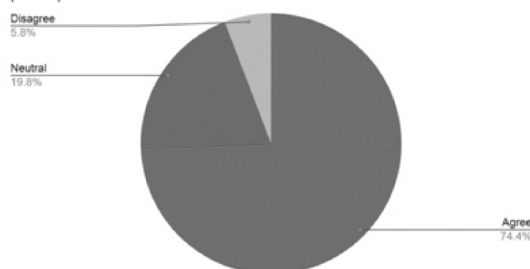
One of the ideas behind this change is that assessing through multiple choice questions (MCQ) are reliable, cost effective and time savers. It was based on the response of the following question which was part of a questionnaire, specially designed for the study. **MCQs help in assessing various aspects of language skills in limited time.** Out of total number of contributors approximately 79% opined that MCQs are the best way to assess in limited time.

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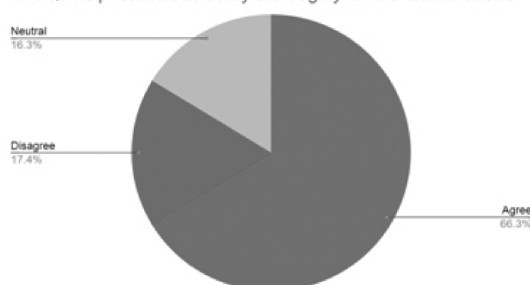
74% stakeholders believe that MCQs are a better way to assess as **Evaluation of long and short questions varies as per teachers' perceptions.** It is an unbiased way to assess language skills.

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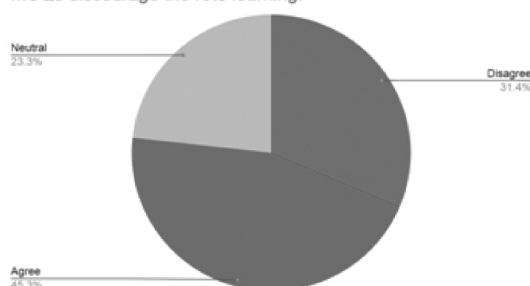


In our survey more than 66% stakeholders opined that for MCQs assessments, learners need to study thoroughly and it discourages the practice of rote learning.

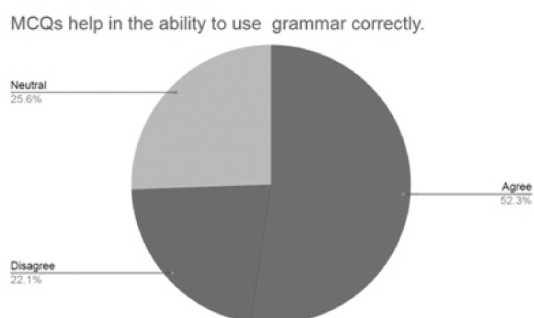
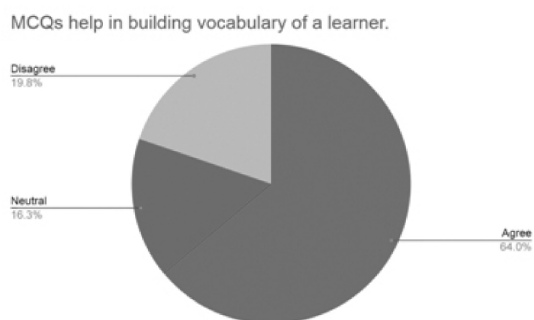
MCQs help learners to study thoroughly for the examinations.



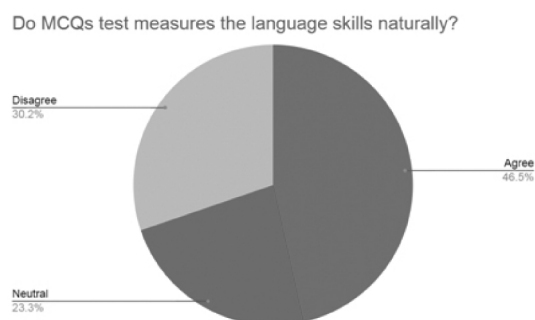
MCQs discourage the rote learning.



In response to the questions whether MCQs help in building vocabulary and developing grammar skills of learners, more than 50% answered positively that this type of assessment helps in developing vocabulary and correct usage of grammar.



of language and continuous practice of various language skills(LSRW) help in developing the competence of learners in language. Effectiveness in using the language requires the sound knowledge of four skills. Language skills are not usually used in isolation but they require integrated use of all skills. Out of these four skills Listening and Reading are known as Receptive skills and Speaking and Writing are Productive skills.

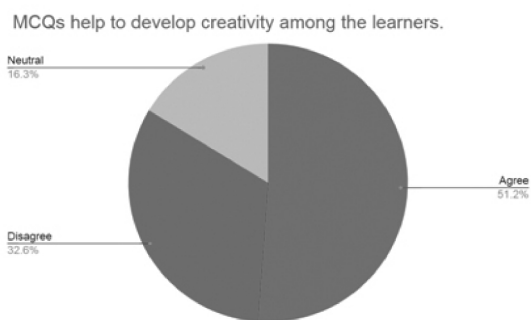


There are undoubtedly many advantages if the assessment is being done through multiple choice questions. Learners need to study thoroughly if they have to take multiple choice assessments for any course. In order to get better results in this respect, the questions should be on the various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. If the questions are set only on basic level and get frequently repeated in successive years, the learner will not take the whole assessment process seriously. It is the major concern of this whole study. It has been observed lately, that a large section of students are unwilling to attend language classes as their prime motive of the study at this level is, to clear university examination. They fail to realize the importance of these subjects of foundation courses for their future. This has become a cause of concern if we see the things from the perspective of other stakeholders; it necessitates the modification of this assessment system at the earliest.

When asked whether MCQs test measures all the language skills naturally, less than 50% stakeholders supported this as reading and listening skills can be assessed to some extent through multiple choice objective questions but to test speaking and writing skills comprehensively, we require some other assessment tools. So we can judge the receptive skills by MCQ based assessment, but for judging productive skills we require other ways as viva-voce, open ended questions etc.

It is strongly believed that the sound knowledge

In addition, these measures only test surface information in a particular skill while other skills such as critical thinking and synthesis cannot be evaluated using MCQs. On the other hand, open-ended question (OEQ) tests include analysis and synthesis and a higher level of cognitive processing, with some washback effects such as less reliable results and more time and effort in scoring.



CONCLUSION:

As this change in assessment pattern was introduced from last academic year, some sections of undergraduate students have already started taking these essential foundation subjects casually. We, the language Teachers, are really afraid and concerned about its implications on upcoming batches. This change will serve its purpose only when the MCQs are set on various levels of Bloom's taxonomy and should also be coupled with some type of practical assessment. Multiple choice questions are a common type of assessment due to their reliability, validity and ease of scoring. MCQs offer the advantage of being more versatile in measuring rote memory to more complex knowledge. A large amount of information can be measured in a short time. Scoring is objective and can be reliably completed. With 3-5 options, the effects of guessing can be reduced. Another common type of assessment is short or long essay-type questions. This format allows students more flexibility in their responses and reflects their individuality of approach in which interpretative skills can be evaluated.

As a two sided coin, MCQs are appropriate to assess certain skills in language learning but to use this solely may result in an inappropriate assessment for the other skills. Some researchers agreed that most MCQs do not involve higher thinking skills and include a potential of guessing

(sometimes just by chance) the correct option which reduces the validity and reliability of the overall test (Breland et al., 1994; Cronbach, 1988; Freahat&Smadi, 2014). Harrison et al., (2017) add to this stating that nowadays students have enough expertise to find the correct option even if they do not have enough knowledge about the task. In a similar vein, Cahill and Leonard (1999) found out that when learners are over tested by MCQs on tests, skilled testees perform well just because of their ability to recognize.

Education is a purposeful activity directed at achieving certain aims, such as transmitting knowledge or fostering skills." Learners need endless feedback more than they need endless teaching"

Grant Wiggins, *Less Teaching & More Feedback*.

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