

ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

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ABSTRACT

Testing and assessment are fundamental components of the pedagogical process, serving as essential tools for measuring student achievement and informing instructional design. This paper explores the conceptual distinctions between these two terms, identifying **testing** as a specific, formal procedure for measuring knowledge, and **assessment** as a comprehensive, ongoing process of data collection aimed at improving learning outcomes.

Keywords: learning, testing, assessment, educational process, social context,

INTRODUCTION

Testing and assessment play a crucial role in the educational process. They help determine students' knowledge levels and provide teachers with essential information to plan their lessons effectively. This article discusses the main types of testing and assessment, their advantages and disadvantages, and how they are applied in modern education. Assessment can be seen as a different concept than testing because it refers to a whole process of gathering data about language progress by using different kinds of techniques and methods in order to find out what is learned, what needs to be fulfilled, and how to improve learning and teaching effectiveness. In the modern educational landscape, the evaluation of student progress is fundamental to instructional design. Testing and assessment serve as primary mechanisms for measuring knowledge acquisition and informing pedagogical strategies. While often used interchangeably, these terms represent distinct methodologies. This report explores the nuances between formal testing and the broader scope of assessment, examining their applications and the

theoretical frameworks provided by scholars such as Clapham and Bachman.

METHODS

Assessment has two underlying meanings: A general term for all methods of testing and assessment, and a specific term used to differentiate alternative assessment from testing. Moreover, Clapham (2000) has illustrated that some researchers use the term of testing to refer to the development and administration of tests whereas others indicate the term of assessment to mean using more informal methods rather than tests such as school projects, interviews, portfolios and demonstrations. Clapham (2000) has mentioned that assessment has two underlying meanings: A general term for all methods of testing and assessment, and a specific term used to differentiate alternative assessment from testing. Similarly, Bachman (2005) In conclusion, assessment is a cover term both for testing procedures such as designing and administering, and for techniques, methods or tools such as tests, oral tasks, portfolios and projects used to gather information about a language learner's ability, knowledge and performance regarding the use of the target language. Research into the relationship between assessment and teaching can be considered to lead LAL research to expand because there have been changes in the notions of foreign language teaching/learning which have an impact on language assessment procedures, and reciprocally, methods of assessment have influenced teaching practices (Clapham, 2000). Therefore, historically, the impact of these two concepts have been studied from different perspectives.

Alternative assessment was referred to informal assessment protocols which were frequently used in the classroom. It was also understood as the traditional assessment revolution in the US, which moved from multiple choice tasks into other challenging task types (McNamara, 2001). Culbertson & Jalongo (1999) and Hargreaves et al., (2002) also reported that alternative assessment was sensible, self-responsibility, and appreciative on learning process than the learning product. Nevertheless, alternative assessment took more time to do than pencil and paper test. Moreover, it also had validity and reliability issues of inconsistency in

marking criteria (Zhu, 1997;Brown & Hudson, 1998;Clapham, 2000). Nevertheless, alternative assessment took more time to do than pencil and paper test. Moreover, it also had validity and reliability issues of inconsistency in marking criteria (Zhu, 1997;Brown & Hudson, 1998;Clapham, 2000).

In 1993, a new international journal was launched. Its title was *Assessment in Education: principles, policy and practice*. The instigators were a team of academics from the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK and from the Institute of Education, University of London. This team covered a wide range of disciplines, from the technical to the social. The initiative reflected the lack of a mainstream academic journal devoted to the dissemination of all aspects of research on educational assessment. Whilst there were already in existence a number of long-established international journals dealing with many of the *technical* aspects of testing, there was no journal that focused more broadly on the policy and practice of assessment around the world.

Thus *Assessment in Education* was launched. As the journal's subtitle implies, its aim was to provide a forum for scholarly discussion of issues of principle, policy and practice as these were expressed in significant and wide-ranging developments in educational assessment. From the outset, *Assessment in Education* has combined a desire to inform-by providing up-to-date and rigorous descriptive material about assessment practices in various parts of the world, including discussions of technical issues-with a desire to critique, by providing analyses of educational assessment phenomena that are both original and relevant.

Characteristic of the journal is its awareness of assessment within its social context. Whilst the explicit emphasis in this respect varies from article to article, underpin- ning all the analyses is a recognition that decisions about who and what is to be assessed, for what purpose and by what method, reflect a particular social context. By the same token it is recognized that the consequences of these decisions are likely to be different depending on relativities of time and place. At one extreme, these relativities concern international differences of the broadest kind, between developed and developing countries, for example; at the other they may

be embedded in the simplest of interactions-between a teacher and a student in a particular classroom. In each case, however, the underlying principle is the same, namely that educational assessment must be understood as a *social* practice, an art as much as a science, a humanistic project with all the challenges this implies and with all the potential scope for both good and ill in the business of education.

The design of Assessment in education reflects this overall purpose and rationale. As well as pursuing an editorial policy that makes these goals explicit, its contributions include not only conventional academic articles but also major research reviews with invited responses to stimulate debate; special issues devoted to an explicitly international consideration of a particular topic; and extended book reviews which allow leading scholars in the field to offer more general 'state of the art' discussions about key topics. In addition, the journal regularly includes 'country profiles'. These are written according to a standard template by an assessment expert in the particular country being covered who is in a position to offer clear, up-to-date insights about both their national assessment arrangements and a well-informed critique of the key challenges being faced in that particular setting. These elements of the journal are designed to support one of its key goals-disseminating information about the wealth of assessment activity and debate in less well-known parts of the world and especially to the Anglophone world, where such experience can be all too easily ignored. Assessment in Education has now been in existence for ten years. This milestone represents a good opportunity to review the journal's achievements to date. It also represents a good opportunity to review the field of assessment scholarship-especially as it has been represented in the pages of this particular publication-and to sketch in possible developments that are likely to characterize assessment developments over the next ten years or so. As instructors, we are faced with a challenging problem: to determine the conditions of instruction that optimize student learning. This is a challenging problem because the main resources that we would use in making this determination-our intuitions, our common sense, and even our observations about what conditions seem to work best at improving our students' performance in the

classroom-often turn out to be poor guides for informing our decisions.

This predicament arises because conditions of instruction that make performance improve rapidly often fail to support long-term retention and transfer; whereas, conditions of instruction that create difficulties for the learner-often slowing the rate of apparent learning-can actually optimize long-term retention and transfer. It is thus possible for us-as instructors, teachers, and trainers-to be misled as to what are and are not the most effective educational practices and conditions of learning. The nature of these better, but often challenging, conditions of learning that we, as instructors, should prefer is captured in the framework of desirable difficulties (Bjork, 1994). Such conditions include distributed practice (e.g., spacing as opposed to massing study trials), varying the conditions of practice (e.g., studying or practicing in different contexts rather than a constant context), providing contextual interference (e.g., interleaving study trials of different to-be-learned topics, skills, and/or categories rather than blocking them), and testing (e.g., engaging in retrieval practice of to-be-learned information rather than repeatedly studying it). They are desirable because they support better long-term retention and transfer compared to their counterparts; but because they introduce difficulties that can lower performance during acquisition or training, instructors and students alike are susceptible to perceiving such conditions as ineffective rather than desirable study strategies. As instructors, however, we need to become sensitive to the idea that short-term performance is not a reliable index of long-term learning and that difficult, or challenging, learning conditions often lead to enhanced long-term learning.

A more detailed discussion of these desirable difficulties and how both instructors and students can use them to optimize learning can be found in Bjork and Bjork (2011), and a theoretical account of why conditions that appear to hurt performance can actually help learning can be found in the New Theory of Disuse (Bjork & Bjork, 1992). We turn now, however, to a discussion of testing-the desirable difficulty on which the present study focuses-and its benefits for long-term learning and transfer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the field of assessment continues to evolve, there is a need to design assessments that not only measure performance but also provide insights into underlying learning processes. This could involve incorporating formative assessments that emphasize retrieval practice and spaced repetition. Professional development programs for educators should emphasize the importance of understanding the learning-performance distinction and how to implement desirable difficulties in their teaching practices. This could help instructors recognize the value of challenging conditions that foster deeper learning. Future research in assessment scholarship could explore the long-term effects of various instructional strategies on student learning outcomes across diverse educational contexts. Investigating how cultural differences influence perceptions of performance and learning could also provide valuable insights. Leveraging technology in assessments can facilitate desirable difficulties. For instance, adaptive learning platforms can provide tailored practice opportunities that incorporate spaced repetition and varied contexts, enhancing both engagement and retention.

CONCLUSION

The exploration of assessment practices through the lens of learning versus performance underscores the complexities educators face in optimizing student outcomes. By embracing the framework of desirable difficulties and recognizing the importance of long-term retention over short-term performance, educators can enhance their instructional strategies. As the field progresses, continued dialogue and research will be essential in shaping effective assessment practices that truly support student learning across diverse educational landscapes.

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