

# Perspectives and Challenges of Assessment in ELT in Higher Education: A Review Paper

Chitra Bahadur Khatri,  
Assistant Professor, Mid-West University  
khatri.chitra2032@gmail.com

## Abstract

*This review paper examines the challenges associated with assessing English language teaching (ELT) in higher education, encompassing natural obstacles and issues stemming from assessment systems. It evaluates traditional and modern assessment methods, including summative, formative, developmental, and elective exams, while examining their strengths and limitations. The paper also explores the impact of technological advances on assessment practices and emphasizes critical factors such as socioeconomic disparities, linguistic diversity, and the alignment of assessments with learning outcomes. Through a review of literature and case studies, the paper illuminates the influence of assessments on teaching and learning, considering perspectives from both teachers and students, test anxiety, and educational diversity. Key findings underscore the potential of technology to enhance assessment flexibility, yet persistent socioeconomic and linguistic barriers hinder equitable evaluation. The article advocates for adopting more adaptive and inclusive strategies, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach that fosters fair, effective, and comprehensive ELT assessments in higher education.*

**Keywords:** assessment, contemporary, drawbacks, ELT, evaluation, formative, integration

## Introduction

Teaching English is an act of teaching English to the people whose first language is not English. 'English Language Teaching' is shortened to ELT. Higher education institutions' English language teaching (ELT) assessment procedures are extensive and have a big influence on student outcomes and instructional strategies. This study examines the perspectives and challenges related to assessment in ELT within the context of higher education. It looks at various assessment philosophies, the importance of aligning assessments with learning objectives, and the impact of technology on teaching and assessment practices. It also addresses the challenges educators and higher education institutions face, including issues of equality, consistency, cultural sensitivity, and the combination of formative and summative assessments.

In the study's conclusion, recommendations for enhancing evaluation practices are made to better serve the diverse needs of learners in higher education. In higher education, English language teaching (ELT) assessment is essential for monitoring student progress, ensuring that learning objectives are met, and ensuring that language proficiency goals are met. However, several obstacles in this range could compromise its practicality and reason. A contemporary approach to online language instruction emphasises the learner-centric process, which supports the idea that students should be actively involved participants in the session.

In this vein, the instructors of dialects use evaluation exercises in the classroom are utilized by dialect instructors to check the procurement levels. It can be said that the assessment may be a long-term method and includes data and information concerning the improvement of the understudies. (Tosuncuoglu, 2018).

Higher education provides distinct challenges and possibilities for ELT assessments. Students in higher education may have varied levels of English proficiency and come from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A high degree of language proficiency is also necessary to meet the demands of higher education on both the academic and professional fronts. As a result, tests in this setting must be carefully planned to meet the unique requirements and objectives of students seeking higher education.

Over the past two decades, several writers have examined, discussed, and critically thought

about the procedures and topics covered in fieldwork to offer the best approaches that will give students worthwhile educational experiences. This article presents a survey of the literature as it relates to professional practice and higher education in the context of evolving healthcare systems (Bonello, 2001). As of right now, we can declare with confidence that EMI is a developing worldwide problem that affects educational settings and all stages of schooling (Dearden 2015). HE (Smit 2010; Brenn-White & Faethe 2013; W achter & Maiworm 2014; Fillon-Smith, Humphries & Walkinshaw 2017) has had a noteworthy acceleration in its expansion. An increasing number of universities worldwide are rushing to provide undergraduate and graduate programmes in English (Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra 2014; Earls 2016).

Assessment in higher education performs numerous capacities for shifting purposes (Boud, 1995; Carless et al., 2007). Evaluations advise programme choice choices, decide understudy movement toward capabilities, and degree understudy learning towards accomplishing graduate profiles (Banta and Partners, 2002; Brown et al. 1997). Assessments, moreover, give data to staff almost instructing adequacy (Biggs 2003; Ramsden 2003; Yorke 2003) and to understudies nearly how well they are doing and how they can make strides in their learning (Carless et al. 2007; Gibbs 2006; Gibbs and Simpson 2004). It should be possible for English teachers to gauge and analyse the academic progress of their pupils. Compared to assessment and testing, evaluation has a wider meaning and purpose. Tests and assessments are the subcategories of evaluation. Evaluation is the process of determining whether teachers have carried out the learning and instruction processes effectively and properly by determining if or not the markers, the materials, the media and learning strategies, the assessment techniques, and the test items are in line with the learners, their skills, and the learning environment. The results of observations, interviews, tests and assessments conducted in the classroom can be used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process (Gultom, 2016). Teachers' self-efficacy "affects the effort they invest in teaching, the goals they set, and their level of aspiration," according to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001, 783). Higher self-efficacious teachers are more likely to be willing to lead impromptu class discussions based on students' questions (Borg 2001), be more committed to their work as teachers (Coladarci 1992), and have more humanistic classroom control and management orientations than lower self-efficacious teachers (Woolfolk, Rosoff, and Hoy 1990).

The English language has become increasingly significant in cross-cultural communication and interaction. Globally, approximately 400 million people speak English, making it the most frequently used lingua franca among non-native speakers (Aydın & Zengin, 2008; Gömleksiz & Özkaya, 2012). As English is the predominant global language, proficiency in it can offer personal advantages, including staying current with technological advancements, career progression, cultural awareness, and the adoption of new perspectives (Demirel, 1993; Akpur, 2017). In formal higher education, assessment plays a crucial role in facilitating effective learning. Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) argue that assessment is integral to successful learning, advocating for assessment-centered practices that allow students to demonstrate their abilities and receive support to enhance their learning. However, there is often tension between formative assessments, aimed at supporting learning, and summative assessments, intended for certification and validation (William & Black, 1996). Research on problem-based learning highlights the importance of integrating assessment into pedagogy, showing how embedded assessments affect evaluation processes (Gijbels, Dochy, Bossche, & Segers, 2005). Nicol and Macfarlane (2006) and Hattie and Timperly (2007) suggest that formative feedback is most effective when closely aligned with clearly defined learning objectives, motivating students to develop effective learning strategies (Gikandi et al., 2011).

However, establishing effective learning communities, particularly in online and hybrid environments, can be challenging due to the lack of structured approaches for fostering meaningful interactions (Akyol et al., 2009). Skillful integration of formative assessment into online settings can create a framework for continuous, meaningful student-teacher interactions, promoting fruitful learning communities and enhancing significant learning experiences (Sorensen & Takle, 2005). Maintaining interactive and cooperative relationships between teachers and students is crucial for scaffolding learning and fostering self-regulated learning attitudes, essential for success in remote

learning (Ludwig-Hardman & Dunclap, 2003). Extended, meaningful interactions within the learning community can improve learner support and encourage deeper engagement in distance learning (Gikandi et al., 2011).

In Bangladesh, the legacy of colonial rule has contributed to the marginal status of English, with inadequate educational policies and practices failing to meet global standards. The lack of effective teaching strategies and the perceived conflict between learning English and maintaining national identity present significant challenges (Imam, 2005). Addressing these issues requires careful curriculum planning and implementation to improve the quality of English instruction in higher education preparatory classes. Existing literature (Akpur, 2017; Balcı, Durak Üğüten & Çolak, 2018; Cloves & Aytunga, 2019; Coştu, 2011; Gökdemir, 2005; Karatas & Fer, 2009; Öztürk, 2017; Scott & Akdemir, 2018; Seven & Sonmez, 2004; Shirtless & Özkaya, 2012; Şen Ersoy & Kürüm Yapıcıoğlu, 2015) highlights ongoing issues with English instruction in these contexts, underscoring the need for targeted improvements.

Therefore, this study focused on examining the perspectives of various stakeholders—such as educators, students, administrators, and policymakers—regarding the current evaluation system in higher education in Nepal. It aimed to explore their views on the effectiveness, fairness, and relevance of existing assessment practices while identifying potential challenges that may hinder the successful implementation of an improved evaluation system. These challenges may include limited access to resources, technological infrastructure, and socio-economic disparities that affect both students and institutions. Additionally, the study sought to understand how cultural and linguistic diversity, as well as institutional policies, shape assessment strategies. By analyzing these perspectives, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into how the evaluation system can be refined to promote equity, academic integrity, and meaningful learning outcomes. Furthermore, the research addressed the practical hurdles involved in transitioning to more holistic and technology-mediated assessment methods, particularly in the context of Nepal's evolving educational landscape.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this review paper involves a comprehensive examination of literature and case studies to explore the challenges and complexities associated with assessing English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education. The study evaluates both traditional assessment methods, such as summative and formative exams, and more contemporary approaches like developmental and elective assessments. In addition, it investigates the impact of technological advancements on assessment practices, with a focus on critical factors including socioeconomic disparities, linguistic diversity, and the alignment of assessments with intended learning outcomes. By synthesizing research from academic publications, reports, and case studies, the paper offers a holistic perspective on how assessments shape teaching and learning experiences in higher education. The review considers perspectives from teachers and students, examining key concerns like test anxiety, educational diversity, and the role of feedback. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the strengths and limitations of various assessment strategies, while also identifying barriers to equitable evaluation.

### **Results**

The following section presents the results of the study, where findings are systematically organized and analysed according to key themes identified throughout the research. Each theme is thoroughly discussed, providing a detailed interpretation of the data collected. The presentation of results includes a comprehensive examination of how each theme relates to the broader context of the study, highlighting significant patterns, trends, and insights. The analysis not only summarizes the empirical evidence but also offers an in-depth discussion of the implications of these findings, elucidating their relevance to the evaluation of English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education. By connecting the themes to the research questions and objectives, this section aims to offer a clear and nuanced understanding of the study's outcomes and their potential impact on current assessment practices and policies.

### **Perspectives on Assessment in ELT**

The act of finding and compiling data about students to find solutions for their needs and strategies to overcome barriers to learning is known as assessment. To effectively employ language tools with English language learners, teachers must have a thorough awareness of the many tools available, including their advantages, disadvantages, and appropriate applications (MoE, NZ, 2006). Analysing assessment data yields insightful commentary on the teaching and learning. In light of this knowledge, educators can modify their lesson plans and schedule additional instruction to better meet the requirements of their students. Additionally, they can use the data to have the students set goals and evaluate themselves in light of their feedback (Ali, n.d.). According to Crooks (2002), the goals of school-based evaluation are to enhance student learning and provide parents and children with feedback. To give teachers a clear and current image of their students' existing abilities, attitudes, and development, assessments give teachers information about the students' learning requirements. Let us deal with the types of evaluation first, which are formative and summative assessments. They are the two main categories under which the ELT assessment falls; each has a different function and produces a different kind of data.

**Formative Assessment:** This kind of evaluation is carried out in the course of learning and is designed to give teachers and students feedback to enhance continuing education and student achievement. Quizzes, peer evaluations, and classroom exercises are just a few examples. Throughout the teaching process, teachers (and instructors!) can monitor students' progress through formative evaluation. It helps teachers see how far the students have come and whether they need to modify their teaching style to get everyone to the destination, much like using guideposts on a hike.

The following are some crucial aspects of formative assessment:

- Objective: To enhance rather than simply quantify student learning.
- Timing: Takes place all along the way, not only at the conclusion.
- Focus: Offers chances for criticism and modification.
- Examples: They may be official (brief quizzes) or informal (class discussions).

*Benefits:* Assists students in recognising their assets and liabilities.

Let educators adapt their lessons to the requirements of their students.

increases interest and motivation in students.

**Summative Assessment:** Summative tests are given after a class to gauge how well students have learnt to a set of criteria. Major projects, standardised assessments, and final exams are just a few examples. The flip side of the formative assessment coin is the summative assessment. All of it comes down to assessing a student's learning after a unit, course, or programme. You may see it as a summary of what a student has studied and retained, similar to a final exam. The following are some essential elements of summative evaluation:-the objective is to compare a student's performance to a predetermined benchmark.

-Time: Following a time of education.

-Focus: Offers a final learning assessment or grade.

Examples include research papers, final projects, exams, and standardised tests.

*Benefits:* Aids in monitoring students' advancement over time.

helps make decisions about future learning, placement, or grades.

can be applied to assess the efficacy of instructional strategies.

Although formative and summative evaluations have different goals, they can be combined to give a complete picture of students' learning. Teachers can use formative assessment data, for example, to create summative examinations that are both effective and efficient.

### **Challenges of assessment in ELT**

Research on listening and speaking education has received significantly less attention than that on reading, writing, and grammar instruction, despite increased efforts to understand teachers' ideas in these areas (Borg 2006). Our knowledge of English language instruction (ELT) is noticeably lacking as a result of the small amount of research in this field. This study aims to address this research gap, if only a little, by examining how teachers perceive the challenges they face when instructing speaking.

To improve their professional practice, instructors should, in our opinion, be aware of the challenges and be able to add more teaching strategies to their toolkit. To create professional development and teacher preparation programs that can assist teachers in overcoming some of these obstacles and improving their teaching effectiveness, teacher educators must have a deeper grasp of the difficulties that teachers encounter.

First, it doesn't seem like pre-service teachers in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs are prepared for assessments. Second, because of various limitations like finance, teaching load, and resource scarcity, teacher educators may not be completely informed on the most recent advancements in assessment. Third, there is a discrepancy between how EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers judge writing and their own beliefs. A thorough and reliable evaluation of EFL writing in the Arab world may also be lacking due to other issues like top-down management, a lack of accountability, bureaucratic procedures, teachers' workloads, big class sizes, and a lack of opportunities for professional development (Ahmed, 2018). Here are some of the challenges of assessment in ELT in higher education:

1. Individualization vs. Standardization

A major difficulty in ELT assessment is striking a balance between individualization and standardization. The uniform measure of student competency provided by standardized exams is crucial for accountability and comparability. They might not, however, take into consideration the variations among individual learners, including their needs, histories, and learning styles.

2. Equity and Fairness

It is crucial to guarantee fairness and justice in assessments, especially in diverse higher education environments. Evaluations must be impartial and fairly represent the skills of every student, irrespective of their linguistic or cultural heritage. This necessitates giving test administration, design, and interpretation some thought.

3. Sensitivity to Culture

Given how closely language use is entwined with cultural contexts, cultural sensitivity is crucial in ELT assessment. Certain kids may suffer from assessments that do not take cultural variations into account. Teachers need to try to design tests that are relevant to all students and inclusive of all cultures.

4. Combining Summative and Formative Evaluations

Although there is a need for both formative and summative assessments in ELT, successfully combining both can be difficult. Summative evaluations examine overall performance, but formative assessments offer continual feedback and facilitate learning. Effective assessment practice involves figuring out how to use formative assessments to guide summative decisions.

5. Integration of Technology While there are many advantages to technology integration in assessment, there are drawbacks as well. It is necessary to address issues such as digital literacy, technological access, and the accuracy and consistency of computer-based tests.

Teachers also require assistance and training to use technology for assessment in an efficient manner.

### **Impact of Assessment on Teaching and Learning**

Reviews of studies by Natriello (1987), Crooks (1988), and more recently Black and Wiliam (1998a) have shown that formative assessment can help teachers implement significant learning improvements in the classroom. These evaluations and other studies (Black & Atkin, 1996) make it abundantly evident that accomplishing this is far from simple (Wiliam \* et al., 2004). The effects of assessment on teaching and learning are significant. Both the lecturer's methods of instruction and what students learn are influenced by it. Below is a summary of the effects of each.

- Impact on learning: Motivation and Engagement: By establishing precise objectives and standards, well-designed tests can inspire students. By helping individuals in recognizing their advantages and disadvantages, feedback motivates them to actively participate in the learning process.

*Self-Control*: Throughout the learning process, formative evaluations allow students to take charge of their education. They can recognise areas that require development and modify their learning techniques accordingly.

*Greater comprehension*: Exams that promote problem solving and critical thinking in addition to rote memorisation might help students get a deeper understanding of the material.

*Emphasis on Learning versus Grades*: Students may give more weight to memorisation than actual learning in tests that are only intended to determine grades. Well-crafted tests, on the other hand, might promote a growth mentality in which learning is prioritised over achieving a certain mark.

○ **Impact on teaching**: -

*Customising Instruction*: Teachers can learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their students using assessment data. This enables them to modify their teaching strategies to suit each student's needs and preferred mode of learning.

*Finding Gaps*: Evaluations can point out conceptual omissions from the curriculum. This enables educators to modify their strategy or offer more help to make sure everyone is moving along.

*Optimising Educational Strategies*: Teachers can analyse the success of their lessons by looking at how well their students perform on exams. This enables them to hone their tactics and consistently improve their methods of instruction.

*Curriculum Development*: Assessment results might provide information on areas that should be given more attention or subjects that might need to be reorganized to improve student understanding.

### **Strategies for an Effective Assessment in ELT**

Strategies imply when the teacher/instructor introduces various teaching-learning methodologies in the assessment in ELT at higher education in our case. Several studies have demonstrated that using higher-order goals is consistent with success, even when attainment is quantified in such limited terms as exam results from outside sources. In a three-year study of schools in the midwest of the United States, Newmann et al. (2001) discovered that students outperformed students not assigned such work, and the size of the effects (as measured by standardized effect size) was substantial. Authentic classroom tasks are defined as requiring construction, rather than reproduction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school (William \* et al., 2004).

In ELT (English Language Teaching), effective evaluation involves more than merely reviewing vocabulary and grammar. It involves developing a procedure that guides instruction as well as learning. Here are some crucial tactics to think about:

#### Variety Is Essential:

-Go beyond conventional assessments: Tests can be supplemented with presentations, discussions, role-plays, simulations, and portfolios demonstrating a student's development over time.

-Attend to the four abilities: Make that all aspects of reading, writing, speaking, and listening are fairly assessed. For a more accurate assessment, use tasks that incorporate these abilities.

#### Put Communication First:

-Assess real-world usage: Create assignments that gauge a student's proficiency using English in real-world contexts, such as emails, presentations, and discussions.

-Include real materials: Assess students using real-world resources such as videos, social media posts, and news articles to introduce them to the use of language in everyday situations.

#### Adopt Formative and Summative Thinking:

-Formative for Feedback: To give continuous feedback and direct learning, use regular, low-stakes formative assessments such as talks, quizzes, or brief writing prompts.

-Summative to Measure Progress: After a unit or course, use summative exams such as essays, projects, or presentations to gauge overall achievement.

#### Participation of Students:

-Self-evaluation and introspection: Motivate pupils to consider what they have learned and set objectives for themselves. This encourages ownership of the learning practice and self-awareness.

-Peer assessment: Include peer review exercises in which students give one another helpful criticism. Problem-solving and interpersonal abilities are fostered by this.

Through the application of these techniques, instructors can develop an all-encompassing evaluation framework that supports efficient communication, inspires learners, and guides instructional strategies—all of which contribute to a more fruitful ELT learning process in higher education.

### **Discussion**

The various views on assessment in ELT for higher education and the difficulties in putting into practice efficient assessment procedures are two of the major themes that are examined in this part. During the preparation of this paper, I dealt with academic materials on the Web, journals, and various books and thoroughly understood the assessment of its role in ELT in higher education in different parts of the world. The primary findings of this review highlight the various challenges of effectiveness, equity, impact on teaching, and influence on learning of the assessment techniques employed in higher education. The following topics are also covered: modes of assessment in higher education related to self- and peer assessment practices and the monitoring of learning taking into consideration formative, continuous, and summative assessment; learning and teaching practices and their impact on assessment. These aspects of assessment methods and their impact on students' performance are also covered. There is also a discussion of how different learning settings and environments affect student assessment and learning.

We have shown that evaluation is essential to ELT in higher education. It is used to assess student competency, guide instructional strategies, inspire students, and ensure that all programme criteria are met. However, the conversation around assessment is not limited to outcome measurement. The present tendency places a strong emphasis on a communicative approach, assessing students' ability to use English successfully in authentic contexts. This change calls for a move away from traditional grammar-focused exams and toward a more comprehensive suite of evaluation instruments. However, the study also discusses the inherent difficulties in putting meaningful assessments into practice. Keeping evaluations impartial and fair, matching them to learning objectives, and considering the wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students are some of these problems. It also looks at how digital tools and technology changes have affected assessment methods and how teachers continue to need professional development and training to keep up with changing educational paradigms. In the end, the paper highlights the significance of a thoughtful, balanced approach to assessment that not only measures language ability, but also promotes a welcoming, inclusive learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

In general, the diverse functions of assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT) for higher education were examined in this article. I looked at how crucial assessment is to determining competency, guiding, teaching, inspiring students, and guaranteeing programme needs. The discussion brought to light the growing focus on a communicative approach to assessment, one that measures students' proficiency in the language in authentic contexts. Higher education's ELT assessment is a varied, complicated process that calls for careful consideration of many viewpoints and difficulties. To promote language learning outcomes for students, educators can improve the efficacy and fairness of language tests by implementing a balanced, inclusive and technologically advanced strategy. Enhancing ELT evaluation procedures will require ongoing reflection and adjustment to new problems and trends. It highlights how important it is for appropriate evaluation procedures to improve students' academic performance and English language proficiency in higher education. Draw attention to the intricate relationships between different assessment techniques, how well they match learning goals, and how important it is to be flexible when working with different types of learners. Examining issues such as preserving inclusivity, justice, and dependability highlights the need for continuous innovation and reflective practice in the creation and administration of assessments. In addition to highlighting the value of summative and formative assessments, the study promotes a balanced strategy that offers thorough assessments of students' progress and encourages ongoing learning. In the end, the results urge educators, institutions, and policymakers to work together to address the changing needs of the assessment of ELT, making sure that it not only accurately assesses learning outcomes, but also supports students' overall growth in a dynamic, globalised educational environment.

English teachers must assess their English teaching results by assessing the process and outcome of their students' English learning. The assessment of the English learning process could be done in each classroom session. Teachers must assess the participation of students during the English teaching and learning process. Through active participation and creativity among learners in solving problems in the learning process, a teacher can evaluate that he or she has assessed his participation during the process of learning. Mastery level on basic competence as well as some indicators results from this assessment on the process of learning. Observing whether students are participating in the learning activity can also perform this task through observations only. In addition to noting down exercises such as structured, non-structured assignments, one can document authentic proofs of a learner's process. Therefore, to evaluate the result of English learning, English teachers must determine whether students have achieved proficiency through the process of learning English. Competency can be classified into cognitive, affective, and psychomotor types. Cognitive, affective and psychomotor assessments in the domain can be performed through everyday tests, mid-semester tests, semester tests, and final examinations.

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