

# Innovative Testing Methods: Use of Posters and Pamphlets

D. Christina Sagaya Mary

Assistant Professor of English

Loyola College, Chennai.34

---

**Abstract :** *The paper focuses on the use of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' in testing certain specific skills of English in addition to 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' and 'Writing' at the tertiary level, in a heterogeneous class room. It also discusses the advantages of 'Innovative methods of testing' over 'Paper-Pencil Tests' and L2 learners' preference for the same. It elaborates on the method of employing 'Posters and Pamphlets' as test item in the general English Classroom and the process of preparation observed by the 'test-takers.' The paper also unravels L2 learners' penchant and solidarity for this method of testing through the findings collected from a pilot study. It equally embarks on a comparative study of L2 learners' performance and acquisition of English skills in this method of testing.*

*The central idea of this paper is a thematic analysis of the use of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' as innovative methods of testing the skills of 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading', and 'Writing' of English. The paper also discusses advantages of innovative methods of testing the skills of English as opposed to 'Paper-Pencil Tests.' It elaborates the L2 learners' psychology as a 'Test-Taker', the galvanization of his latent 'Second Language Acquisition' faculties, the role of the L2 facilitator, general instructions pertaining to the preparation of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' and the techniques adopted by the L2 learners during the process of preparing this project. The paper equally focuses on the 'Zone of Comfortable Performance', in which the L2 learners are immersed during the process of 'Test-Taking.' In addition to this, the paper also reviews the views of renowned Linguists like Bachman, Hughes, Alderson, Hasselris, Tim McNamara, etc in harmonization with the use of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' as method of testing the skills of English while striking a positive 'Wash back' on learning.*

*In the words of Bachman (1990) "It is only when the results of tests are used as a basis for making a decision that evaluation is involved." (22-23). According to Bachman the end result of the testing is to be employed for the process of 'Decision making' in terms of evaluation in the lives of the learners.*

## AN OBSERVATION OF PAPER PENCIL TESTS AND IT'S EFFECTS ON THE L2 LEARNER

Testing serves a pivotal role in the lives of L2 learners. Generally this process of testing is institutionalized at the primary and tertiary level in most educational institutions due to which it transforms itself into monotonous, claustrophobic, paranoiac, fear inspiring manoeuvre in the minds of the L2 learners. As facilitators of English we can imagine the appalling picture of the L2 learner, whose pre-conceived images about the nuances of L2 and its culture is severely quaked and disintegrated. In this context the article "Testing and Evaluation in Language Teaching" by Hill and Parry in 1994 advocates that testing can be threatening to some test takers and others including some parents and teachers and the educational role of formal testing in particular is generally contested. (79)

Hill and Parry (1994) have also recommended abolishing the formal testing pattern in educational institutions. (79) They equally emphasize that formal testing practices are confined within the 'Power structures' and teachers are ostracized from these testing patterns. In the context of test reform the traditional Paper-Pencil test under the guise of written examinations are 'Teacher-centred', 'Syllabus obsessed' and 'Institution friendly', where in the process the L2 learners is conveniently relegated to the fringes of the testing process. Most often he is a muted and a disinterested 'Test-taker.' Alderson (1991) establishes this difference between 'Norm – referenced' and 'Criterion- referenced' tests (89). This 'Norm –referenced' testing induces disparity among the L2 learners by ranking them based on their performance. (89) The L2 learner is unwillingly made to yield and perform in this condescending process of testing and his performance is valued, rated and decisions are made on the same. This claustrophobic process of testing the major skills of language has governed the existence and destiny of the L2 learners of English for quite some time.

Testing has relentlessly featured as an inevitable aspect of human existence since time immemorial. It has served as a marker of a person's potentialities and his social status. Tim

McNamara (2000) is of the view that testing is a worldwide feature of social life since the time of Homeric epic and Arthurian legends. McNamara adds that in modern societies testing has proliferated rapidly. Testing is employed for the purpose of detecting one's parentage and establishing one's identity in the fields of Sports, Law and Medicine. It is quite appalling that this practice of testing is most often institutionalized and centralizes into paper pencil test for a period of two to three hours. In this context the L2 learners' performance is curtailed and the added monotony and repetitive aspect of paper-pencil tests makes the L2 learners performance stereotypical. The L2 learner is perpetually alienated from this process of testing and his own performance in the examination hall. Arthur Hughes (1997) in the book is of the view "Too often language tests have a harmful effect on teaching and learning; and too often they fail to measure accurately whatever it is they intend to measure."(6)

#### **THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR INNOVATIVE METHODS OF TESTING**

The use of innovative methods of testing unleashes the creativity and originality of the L2 learner during the performance and this subjective performance of the L2 learner is eventually transferred to the 'criterion' situation, where the four skills of the English language are sensibly relinquished by the L2 learner for various performances in real-life situation. The advantages of innovative testing methods have already been discussed in the paper titled "The Positive Impact of Innovative Testing Methodology", published in ELTweekly May 2013 issue. A few of its inevitable and inextricable influence in the testing of the four skills of the language is revisited in the context of this paper. In the words of Dr. Love Joy, J "Hassleris (1982) feels that an assessment approach that incorporates multi-measure decisions and specific need-based holistic valuation can give enough space for the student to grow and such an assessment is the need of the hour." (Cited in Love Joy J, 2006: 56)

Hassleris' concept of a holistic assessment approach is reverberated by Tannenbaum J. Richard and Baron A. Patricia (2013) who are of the view that it is unfeasible for a single test to measure the candidates' proficiency in the skills of 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' and 'Writing' skills of English. (12)

#### **THE USE OF POSTERS AND PAMPHLETS AS AN INNOVATIVE METHOD OF TESTING LANGUAGE SKILLS.**

Dr. Sajitha (2014) in the article "The Relevance of Four Skills Assessment in English Language Teaching is of the view that 'Four Skilled Assessment' is the need of the hour (3) This paper discusses the salient aspects of the use of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' as an alternative method of testing in a general English classroom to assess the acquisition of 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' and 'Writing' skills of the L2 learner. It also attempts a comparative analysis of the same on grounds of language usage of the L2 learners. 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' were applied as innovative testing implements in a single class room comprising of about sixty five learners who sleet from diverse academic and sociolinguistic backgrounds. Most important of all this class also encompasses first generation learners and students from marginalized sections of the society, residing in remotest parts of the state. In simpler terms this classroom is a salad bowl of L2 learners possessing different degrees of 'Fluency' with LSRW skills. 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' were separately used to test the four skills of the language of the L2 learners. Unlike the use of 'Newsletters' which was employed in the previous stage as a mode of innovative testing methodology, posters and pamphlets were prepared individually by the L2 learners and not in groups and yet as innovative testing methodologies would eternally demand the L2 learners naturally resorted to peer learning strategies and group discussions.

The instructions for the preparation of 'Poster' and 'Pamphlet' are included in the appendix.

#### **PILOT STUDY AND L2 LEARNERS' RESPONSE TOWARDS THE METHODOLOGY**

A questionnaire has been employed to verify the viability of this approach among the L2 learners at the tertiary level. The questionnaires are in the appendix for the reader's reference. The overall response of the L2 learners towards this method of testing is quite propitious. The L2 learners have displayed a great degree of adherence to this method of testing which is quite explicit in their responses. In the words of the L2 learners themselves:

"Pamphlets were an interesting project for me to work on. I gained lot of information about the library. I was using English very frequently. I can now fluently use English in formal and informal situations." (Prince, Loyola College)

“It was a wonderful experience in my point of view. I gained lot of confidence, while speaking to others during the preparation of Pamphlet. I learned lot of new words while doing the assignment. It has improved my writing style. I visited the library frequently and read a lot of books. My reading speed has improved.”( Sijo, Loyola College)

“These pamphlets helped me to communicate fluently outside the class-room, with people whom I did not know. It helped me to write proper sentences and develop them into paragraphs.” (Srinivas, Loyola College)

“Poster work had helped me to improve my reading skills.” (Elavarasan, Loyola College)

### **ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS BY EMPLOYING POSTERS AND PAMPHLETS AS ‘TEST-ITEMS’.**

This paper equally focuses on the acquisition of English language skills by the L2 learner through the preparation of ‘Posters’ and ‘Pamphlets’ as innovative methods of testing at the tertiary level. In addition to the skills of ‘Listening’, ‘Speaking’, ‘Reading’ and ‘Writing’ this method of testing equally aggrandizes the acquisition of other skills of English like ‘interaction’, ‘expression’, ‘comprehension’ etc . The making of ‘Posters’ and ‘Pamphlets’ sans any doubt galvanises the creative ability of the L2 learners. It is expected to boost their vocabulary and encourage the mutual use of dictionary and thesaurus. It equally encourages extensive reading, frequent visits to the library, re-reading of the prescribed text, exploration of deeper layers of meaning, comparative interpretations of the prescribed texts, systematic consultation and counselling with the L2 facilitator, extensive learning sessions outside the class-room, wide scale interactions in English outside the class-rooms, mutual expression of ideas through peer-learning strategies, group- discussions and most important of all an imperative strategy, which as a facilitator of English, I consider as a pre-requisite approach for the acquisition and the sharpening of the four skills of the language i.e. to relentlessly ruminate or ‘Think in English’ about the task that has to be accomplished within the stipulated time duration. In simpler terms the L2 learner is capable of creating a ‘Poster’ or a ‘Pamphlet’ only when he relinquishes this parameter of test –taking.

The preparation of ‘Poster’ unleashes the expressive skills of the L2 learner. The preparation of posters augments the ‘Thinking’ skills of the L2 learner besides churning their analytical and reasoning faculties which is coupled with an intensive understanding of the titular themes of text, based on an extensive understanding of the

text and exposes the L2 learner to subaltern world views. It sharpens their perception of the text and synchronises the L2 learner with the text. The L2 learner’s tryst with the test content optimizes his performance in the end semester written examination. The preparation of poster enables the L2 learner’s coherent and systematic presentation of ideas. This elucidation of their point of view within the extended realms of creativity propels the flow of language.

Nevertheless the preparation of pamphlet is equally interesting and motivating. In fact it is a more challenging methodology because of the word limit prescribed for the L2 learner as per the test instructions. The L2 learners’ familiarity with the topic leads to a greater adherence with the performance and waxes the same. In general terms the pamphlet is a public genre which is expository in nature, this strategy could be well appropriated for the purpose of L2 language acquisition, when it is applied as a testing method. A pamphlet can be employed for informative purposes in language acquisition in comparison to the poster. The structure of the pamphlet and meaning conveyed through limited words would broaden the horizons of L2 acquisition.

The preparation of pamphlet demands focussed, structured presentation of facts with the superlative choice of words. The preparation of pamphlets discards unnecessary substandard information, illustrations, examples or the mincing of words. It enables the L2 learner in the systematic presentation of ideas in well structured paragraphs which greatly relies on Coherence and Cohesion. The preparation of pamphlets fine tunes the ‘Writing’ skills of the L2 learner, since it mandates effective sentence structures. This innovative testing methodology subconsciously compels the L2 learner in writing effective ‘Topic Sentence’ and relevant ‘Supporting ideas’ which constitute a well organized paragraph. These well organized paragraph structures evidence the systematic presentation of factual information. Further the preparation of pamphlets stimulates the ‘Interviewing’ and ‘Reporting’ skills of the L2 learner. It equally fuels the spirit of discovery of information and verification of the authenticity of elicited information.

The preparation of pamphlet arouses the exemplary presentation skills of the L2 learner, for the L2 learner as test taker of the pamphlet methodology is in a coercive situation to present the most relevant information with minimum words. In the process of preparation the L2 learner acquires techniques of ‘Information generation’ which is composed of ‘Amalgamation of information’, ‘Discrimination of information’ and ‘Synthesis of information’ where he relegates the inappropriate information and takes into

consideration the relevant one and effectively presents the same.

This strategy is applicable to the L2 learner's internalization of the grammatical rules and the use of the same during 'Speaking' and 'Writing.' It can equally be extended to the elimination of L1 influence and maximization of the L2 acquisition. Structural nuances and the acquisition of skills quotient apart, the preparation of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' also embarks on the unconscious and effective use of 'Form.' The test-takers employ lofty language while writing a poem as part of poster presentation. They employ figures of speech like alliteration, symbols, metaphors and personification. The use of Personal Pronoun, Adjectives, Adverbs and Interjections are quite common. Certain L2 learners also employ the rhetoric while dealing with high altitude emotional themes. While preparing pamphlets the L2 learners are bound to employ the parts of speech more often Qualitative, Quantitative and Countable Nouns. The use of Preposition is also important for pamphlet preparation. Moreover the use of Punctuation marks also plays a significant role in the preparation of pamphlets and posters. The L2 learners unconsciously imbibe the correct form of grammatical structures and also employ them in their use of language. It vents the 'Inductive acquisition' of grammar on the part of L2 learners. Further the availability of a detailed 'Test instruction' eliminates enigma.

The use of Innovative Testing Methods will stand the test of time. The use of 'Posters' and 'Pamphlets' for the purpose of testing is an unblemished success among the tertiary learners of English. The method of testing 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' and 'Writing' skills of the L2 learners through posters and pamphlets is definitely here to stay, which would serve as a paradigm shift from the traditional paper pencil test. Moreover the methodology of testing equally had insured the acquisition of 'Visualizing in English', 'thinking in English' 'schematic representation of ideas in English', 'absorption and retention of ideas in English', 'Conversion of schema into text in English,' 'Parallel referencing in English', and 'elucidation of ideas in English.' The concept is reminiscent of Tennysonian quest

for knowledge, where Lord Tennyson says in the poem Ulysses:

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."(31-32)

#### WORKS CITED

1. Bachman F. Lyle.(1990): *Reliability based on: Fundamental considerations in Language Testing*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
2. Frost, Robert. *The Road Not Taken*. Retrieved from [http://www.poemhunter.org/wiki/Main Page](http://www.poemhunter.org/wiki/Main_Page)
3. Hinkel Eli, *Integrating the Four Skills: Current and Historical Perspectives*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/.../oxfordhb-97801953...> wiki. Main Page
4. Hughes Arthur, (1997). *Testing for Language Teachers*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
5. Love Joy, John.J.(2005).*The Portfolio Assessment Way To Empower At Risk Learners*. Chennai: India.
6. McNamara, Tim.2000. *Testing*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.
7. Sajitha. *The Relevance of Four Skill Assessment in English Language Teaching*. Retrieved from <http://www.farookcollege.ac.in> wiki. Main Page
8. Tannenbaum and Baron, (2011) *Mapping TOEFL® ITP Scores onto the Common European Framework of Reference* Retrieved from [https://www.ets.org/.../toefl\\_itp/.../mapping\\_toefl\\_itp..](https://www.ets.org/.../toefl_itp/.../mapping_toefl_itp..) wiki. Main Page
9. *Linking Classroom Assessment with Student Learning*. Retrieved from [https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL\\_Institutional\\_Testing.../ELLM2002.pdf](https://www.ets.org/Media/Tests/TOEFL_Institutional_Testing.../ELLM2002.pdf) wiki. Main Page
10. *Testing and Evaluation in Language Teaching* Retrieved from <https://es.scribd.com/document/89503672/> wiki. Main Page

## APPENDIX

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR POSTER PREPARATION:

<b>Poster Size</b>	: Legal
<b>Word Limit</b>	: 100-150 words
<b>Nature of the preparation</b>	: Group Work
<b>Time Duration</b>	: Four Weeks

#### Focal Themes:

- International Peace
- National Integration
- Preservation of Nature and Environment
- Teacher Student Relationship
- Inevitability of the Human Teacher in the age of Technology
- Animal Welfare
- Time Travel

#### Please Note:

- The final poster has to be specified on the appropriate date allotted by the Professor
  - The learners are permitted to choose any other themes apart from the ones mentioned above in relation to the prescribed text.
  - The Poster has to be prepared in groups and not individually.
- 

#### D.ChristinaSagaya Mary

AssistantProfessorofEnglish

Loyola College

Chennai.34

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PAMPHLET PREPARATION

<b>Pamphlet Size</b>	:A4
<b>Word Limit</b>	: 100words
<b>Nature of the preparation</b>	: Individual
<b>Time Duration</b>	: Five weeks

**Topics:** Loyola College Library or Loyola College Canteen or Loyola College Men's hostel.

#### Please Note:

- The final Pamphlet has to be specified on the appropriate date allotted by the Professor.
  - Pamphlet has to be prepared individually and not in groups.
-

POSTER:

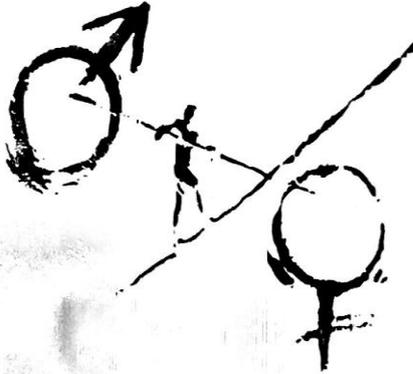


**GENDER**  
**DISCRIMINATION**  
(Madame Baptiste)



They only want a son,  
Never a girl child.  
What have the girls done?  
That society rejects them so?  
Why is the girl not allowed to be born?  
Killed in her mother's womb.  
Goddesses the society will worship and adorn,  
But will hate the girl in real life.

To the girl, the society is unfair,  
Filled with biases and prejudices.  
For the girl the society will never care,  
She is an object of scorn.  
They don't want a girl,  
She spells doom for the family.  
They'll be ashamed before the world,  
If a birth of a girl occurs.



These biases are simply defects,  
Of a very backward society.  
Please stop female infanticide,  
Every girl deserves a life.  
Put all your stereotypes aside,  
And please help nurture the girl child.

BY  
S.P.M.DEEPAK  
12-CO-032

**PAMPHLETS:**

