READING ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES AMONG SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN PAKISTAN: CURRENT TRENDS AND PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses and reports the reading assessment practices of secondary school teachers to ascertain EFL/ESL learners' English reading performance at the secondary school level in Pakistan. This exploratory study was designed primarily to examine what specific reading assessment technique is preferred and brought into practice by secondary school teachers in an assessment of grade 10 students' reading comprehension. Keeping in view the aforesaid issue, the study was conducted in one urban district of Pakistan's densely populated city Karachi. To do so, samples were gathered from three different groups of teachers as private boys, girls, and co-educational schools. In this exploratory study, (N =120) teachers who were affiliated by different private non-elitist schools had participated. The survey instrument was developed based on the suggested methods and assessment techniques for reading comprehension by Alderson (2000). The results yielded from data were analyzed and reported through mean, rank order and percentage study. The primary findings revealed and indicated that 'multiple-choice' is considered at the top and most generally practiced followed by 'short-answer', 'close-ended', and 'subjective method' of reading assessment techniques among secondary school teachers.

Keywords: Assessment in reading, students' reading performance, secondary school teachers, reading assessment techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching and learning holds a pivotal place in building a quality educational system, it eventually affects the socio economic growth of the country. In order to progress towards the development of the country this aspect should not be ignored. Since the time of Pakistan's independence in 1947, seven different education policies have been implemented in the country. The main thrust of all these policies is to promote quality education and the improvement of teaching-learning process. Yet, the improvement in these areas has not been achieved and is quite unsatisfactory (Rizvi, 2000). In Pakistan, assessments do not judge real competence or genuine educational accomplishment of the students. Instead, Pakistani educational system encourages those who can best reproduce what they have learnt in class and fails those who are unable to do that. It seems as if the whole system of education revolves around exams (Khan, 2006). In Khan's perspective, such type of assessment and evaluation is narrow in scope.

Thus, for stakeholders such as schools the objective is to "pass the examinations with good grades and to bring good name to school [and] for some schools, teachers, and students, passing examinations with highest

positions becomes a question of prestige" (Rehmani, 2003, p.3). To be very specific to this issue under discussion Rehmani (2003) identifies that, "teachers teach for testing, rather than for learning. The examination system reinforces approaches to teaching that reward memorization. The more the reproduction, the better and higher are the scores or marks awarded by the examiners" (p.3). Consequently, it is presumed that in the current examination system, learners' learning outcomes are absolutely ignored. However, testing of memorization is holistically measured. Accordingly, it is apparent from the above excerpts that assessment system suffers from multiple deficiencies such as fostering rote-learning, and not adopting critical or analytical approach for assessing learners. Whereas, Ministry of Education (henceforth, MoE) (2009) documents that:

> Student performance shall be based on assessing competence in a specialised area that requires a given skill set. There shall be periodic reviews of the assessment system. Multiple assessment tools in addition to traditional examinations shall be explored, to ensure the right balance between the uses of formative assessment approaches combined with the summative approach of high-stake examinations (p. 41).

Accordingly, it is suggested by MoE (2009) that students' performance based on specific skills have to be measured through multiple assessment techniques. According to Warsi (2004) assessing the English language in Pakistan is subjective in setting in such a manner that it measures pupils' knowledge of the language rather than their performance in it. However, the MoE (2006) has stated that language teachers should employ both formative and summative forms of assessment. Secondly, teachers should explore the cause of students' strengths and weaknesses and provide helpful and effective feedback to them. Moreover, in constructing an English reading comprehension test, teachers should primarily decide on the purpose of the test and the objectives. Thirdly, the teachers should do an item analysis to find out the validity and reliability of the test (MoE, 2006).

In addition, Khan (1996) observes that "The research in testing highlights the decline in examination system, its ineffectiveness, and unreliability in diagnosing students' weaknesses and assessing their abilities" (p.6). He reiterates that the "design and content of the test papers is such that students only have to rely on their memories, and do not have a beneficial effect, on syllabi and teaching practice" (p.6). Above all, tests lack validity and reliability (Khan, 1996, as cited in Imran, 1998). Similarly, Ali (1994) also notes that "... testing is not viewed as a vital component of teaching and is considered quite distinct from teaching and learning as well as practice" (as cited in Imran, 1998, p.6). In terms of reliability and validity of assessment procedures, Rehmani (2003) pinpoints that "Reliability and validity of examination papers in terms of coverage of curriculum, selection of paper setters, lack of training or otherwise of the paper setters and examiners, marking system and preparation of results, are considered dubious" (p.3). Moreover, SPELT (1986) also points out that textbook materials are prescribed by the teacher for their learners "to be learnt and explained word by word and sentence by sentence" (p.12). According to Shah and Saleem (2010) Pakistan's educational system depends on rote learning that is confined to only one textbook. Due to this approach of teaching and learning, students become passive recipients of prescribed content knowledge of the textbooks. Khan (1995) also states that the questions after each lesson of the textbook are based on literal level that measures only low order thinking skills.

She (1995) goes on to reiterate that:

> Comprehension questions are useful for checking understanding particularly if they are of the type which requires the students to actively seek out the answer and formulate it themselves, rather than simply repeat a section of the text – moreover the questions do not encourage the personal involvement of the learner which is an important factor in motivating students (p.11).

Accordingly, it is presumed that in order to measure students' comprehension, question types have to be high order instead of low order thinking skills. This will not only require students to simply locate the answer from the texts using only low order skills, but also to read between and beyond the lines in order to become independent and proficient readers. In addition, they will become proficient to interact with text, such as, narrative, expository, argumentative, persuasive, and informative or a combination of text types.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Assessment can be used to evaluate the overall system's efficiency as well as students' performance. Secondly, it provides feedback for improvements at all tiers "starting from changes in the classroom to improvements in the national systems" (MoE, 2009, p.41). In addition, keeping in view the crucial role in determining the impact of teaching as well as learning, public examinations in Pakistan have more demerits than merits (Rehmani, 2003). Moreover, modern assessment techniques are not being used to measure students' achievements and hence dependency on traditional learning processes yields low quality of education in the country (Christie and Khushk, 2004). In this accord Rehmani (2003) states that:

Examination questions are repeated at least every three to five years and hence questions can be predicted. There are 'model papers', or 'guess paper guides' available in the market with readymade answers based on the question papers of previous five years. Teachers and students tend to rely on such guides and put their content to memory. Regurgitation seems to be the only key for students to pass the examinations rather than creative thinking and independent analyses. The irony is that those students who can reproduce better score higher marks. This leads to lecture method and curriculum based teaching approaches. (p.4)

It is apparent from the cited excerpt that even the examination questions can be predicted since they are repeated every three or five years and can easily be accessible in the market generally known as 'guess paper guides' and 'model papers'. Moreover, Gipps (1994) suggests that the major purpose of assessment is to support the teaching and learning process (as cited in Rehmani, 2003). However, in Pakistan only few teachers have had proper training in designing tests and modern approaches to assessment (Mirza, 1999, as cited in Rehmani, 2003).

To date, reading assessment methods at secondary schools in Pakistan context has not been empirically investigated and addressed in conjunction with students' reading performance. Having discussed reading assessment practices in a current scenario, the present exploratory study seeks to answer the following research questions:
1. What reading assessment techniques do teachers of private secondary boys' schools employ in their reading tests?
2. What reading assessment techniques do teachers of private secondary girls' schools employ in their reading tests?
3. What reading assessment techniques do teachers of private secondary co-educational schools employ in their reading tests?

Objectives of the Study
The aim of this study is to explore the utilization of private boys', girls' and co-educational secondary school teachers' reading assessment techniques at matriculation level in order to assess students' reading performance.

Methodology and Instrument's Reliability
For the present study, one of the populous and largest cities of Pakistan namely, Karachi was selected. To do this, first the secondary data i.e. the list of private registered schools was gathered from Secondary Board of Education Karachi and then selection was carried out using purposive/purposeful sampling. Creswell (2002)

states that the term purposeful sampling is used for the qualitative sampling approach wherein researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon. Therefore, only co-educational, boys, and girls schools were chosen for this current study. All respondents were drawn from Karachi due to its socio-economic disparity and homogeneity. Karachi has a total of 18 towns and from each town 7 registered schools have been selected. Among 126 private schools, six schools have declined to participate in this study due to monthly tests and their extracurricular activities. As a result, only 120 secondary private non-elitist schools were selected. Table 1 will further illustrate the demographic details of the respondents from private co-educational, boys', and girls' secondary schools.

The selected schools were private in a sense that they had their own administration, clerical, and teaching staff hired by themselves. In addition, the school administration designed official procedures, criteria and regulations to execute all academic and non- academic affairs. There was not any intervention or interference of Ministry of Education in these selected schools. However, in order to conduct annual public examination for Grades 9 and 10 these schools were affiliated with Board of Secondary Education in Karachi. The data collection period lasted approximately for two months. The survey instruments were disseminated among respondents in person in order to get 100% return rate. The demographic factors of respondents are shown in the following figures.
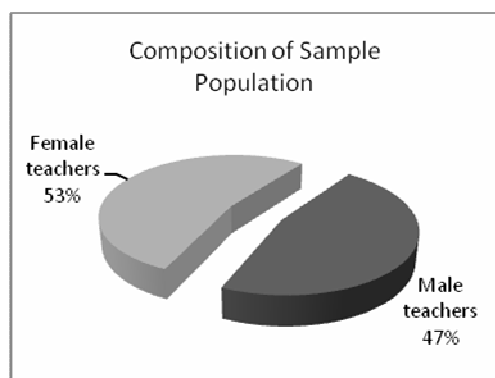

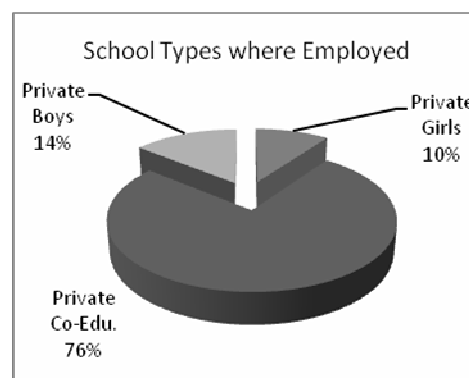Figure 1: Gender Composition   Figure 2: Secondary School Types

In order to ascertain assessment practices of reading comprehension among secondary school teachers, a tool Comprehension Assessment Techniques Questionnaire (henceforth, CATQ) was developed. The instrument is meticulously designed based on the suggested methods for reading comprehension assessment by Alderson (2000). CATQ was piloted prior execution of the main study in order to seek scale reliability coefficient. This instrument has been piloted drawing 30 random samples from target population of equal gender distribution. The reliability analysis of scales was measured by means of software called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 using reliability test as Cronbach Alpha. The achieved Cronbach Alpha coefficient of CATQ is α = 0.81. According to George and Mallery (2003), Nunnaly (1978), and Riazi (1999), 0.70 and above Coefficient Alpha is considered significant and acceptable. This quantitative instrument was comprised of sixteen items. The first section of this instrument is for the demographic data of the respondents and the remaining items i.e. from 1 to 16 were exclusively based upon comprehension testing techniques on five-point Likert scale.

Data Analysis
Descriptive means and percentages were acquired to analyse teachers' use of reading assessment techniques on CATQ. To do so, frequencies were analyzed, their means were investigated and cross tabulation were also carried out. Furthermore, overall means were also performed for rank order analysis.

Table 1: Demographic Factors of Secondary School Teachers

Demographics		f	%
Gender	Male	56	46.7
	Female	64	53.3
Age	20-30 Years	4	3.3
	31-40 Years	60	50.0
	41-50 Years	36	30.0
	> 50 Years	20	16.7
Schools where employed	Private Co-educational Secondary	91	75.8
	Private Boys Secondary	17	14.2
	Private Girls Secondary	12	10.0
Current Position	Secondary English Teacher	51	42.5
	Senior Secondary English Teacher	69	57.5
Basic Degree	Local	115	95.8
	Overseas	5	4.2
Qualification	BA	7	5.8
	BA in English	25	20.8
	BA & BEd	8	6.7
	BCom	9	7.5
	BCom & BEd	12	10.0
	BSc	8	6.7
	BSc & BEd	7	5.8
	MA	4	3.3
	MA in English	34	28.3
	MA & MEd	6	5.0
Certificate Course	TESL	4	3.3
	Others	19	15.8
	None	97	80.8
Teaching Experience	1-5 Years	25	20.8
	6-10 Years	59	49.2
	11-15 Years	26	21.7
	16-20 Years	1	.8
	> 20 Years	9	7.5
Expertise in Teaching	English only	64	53.3
	English & Maths	19	15.8
	English & Science	14	11.7
	English & Others	23	19.2
Organization Affiliation	Local	20	16.7
	None	100	83.3
N = 120			

FINDINGS

This section discusses teachers' responses to various statements related to their reading assessment techniques. Each statement will be discussed according to the demographic factors of gender and school type. Teachers through survey technique were asked to give their responses on CATQ, these sixteen statements were on five-point Likert scale as: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 2 = Disagree (D); 3 = Undecided (U); 4 = Agree (A); and 5 = Strongly Agree (SA). The results are illustrated in Tables 3-8.

Use of Close-Ended versus Open-Ended Type Questions
Tables 3-6 show the results of teachers' responses to statement 1 'I use close ended type questions in assessment for reading comprehension' according to the demographic factors of gender and school type. From Table 3 it is revealed that significant number of teachers tend to agree using the 'close-ended' type assessment technique. When the responses to statement 1 were analyzed according to the demographic factor of school type, it was found that significantly high percentage 10 (83.3%) teachers of private girls' and 12 (70.6%) of private boys' schools showed agreement in using 'close-ended' type question in assessment for reading comprehension (See Tables 4 and 5). Besides, as shown in Table 6 a significant number of private co-educational schools' teachers 73 (80.3%) also showed agreement to this statement. From gender viewpoint, 51 (79.6%) female and 44 (78.6%) male teachers tend to agree with statement 1. On the other hand, merely 12 (20.3%) female and 11 (19.6%) male teachers showed disagreement with the statement. Similarly, only 5 (29.4%) boys', 2 (16.7%) girls', and 17 (18.7%) private co-educational schools' teachers showed disagreement with the statement. Therefore, from Table 3 it was surmised that teachers, regardless of boys', girls' or co-educational type schools prefer 'close-ended' type questions in their reading tests.

In response to statement two, a significant higher percentage of male teachers (76.7%) have disagreed using 'open-ended' type question in order to assess their students' reading performance as they opted options 1 and 2. Only, (21.4%) male teachers expressed a positive view on this aspect of reading assessment. Females also tend to disagree in significantly high percentage (81.3%) in using 'open-ended' type questions in their reading tests and only (18.7%) teachers agreed with statement 2. When the responses to statement 1 were analyzed according to the school type demographic factor, it was found that the highest significant percentage (82.3%) private boys' secondary schools' teachers showing disagreement with the statement. Only, (17.6%) teachers of the same group tend to agree with statement 2. The second highest percentage (81.4%) teachers of private co-educational schools showed disagreement using 'open-ended' type question in their reading tests. Similar to private boys' secondary school teachers, merely (17.6%) teachers of private co-educational schools were using 'open-ended' type questions when assessing students' reading performance. Besides, (58.3%) teachers of private girls' schools were also showed disagreement with statement 2 and (41.6%) teachers of the same group showed agreement with the statement (See Tables 4-6). From Table 3 it is surmised that teachers in general disagreed using 'open-ended' type questions in their reading tests which is considered to measure students' high-order thinking skills. Secondly, since both gender were disagreeing with the statement, it also revealed that teachers prefer giving 'close-ended' to 'open-ended' type questions when measuring students' reading performance.

Table 2: Items in Comprehension Assessment Techniques Questionnaire (CATQ)

No.	Items
1	I use close ended type questions in assessment for reading comprehension.
2	I use open ended type questions in order to assess my students' reading performance.
3	I use 'Cloze tests' assessment technique for assessment.
4	I use 'Gap-filling' assessment technique to develop student's reading performance.
5	I use 'Multiple-choice' technique for testing my students' comprehension.
6	I use 'Matching-technique' for my student's reading performance.
7	I use subjective method in my English reading tests.
8	I use 'Dichotomous item' technique in my English reading tests.
9	I adopt 'Editing test' technique in my English reading test.
10	I like giving 'C test' in assessment for reading comprehension.
11	I give 'Cloze Elide' test in my English reading test.
12	I give 'Short-answer test' in order to assess my students' comprehension
13	I use 'Free-recall test' technique for reading assessment.
14	I adopt 'Summary test' technique in my English reading test.
15	I use 'Gapped-summary test' to develop my students' reading performance.
16	I use 'Information-transfer' technique in my English reading test.

Table 3: Response Analysis of Teachers' Assessment Techniques by Gender (%)

Items	Strongly Disagree=1		Disagree =2		Undecided=3		Agree =4		Strongly Agree =5	
	male	Female	male	female	male	Female	male	female	male	female
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	6(10.7)	5 (7.8)	5 (8.9)	8 (12.5)	1(1.8)	-	16 (28.6)	20 (31.2)	28(50)	31 (48.4)
2	18(32.1)	27(42.2)	25(44.6)	25(39.1)	1(1.8)	-	6 (10.7)	7 (10.9)	6(10.7)	5(7.8)
3	28(50)	29(45.3)	15(26.8)	21(32.8)	1(1.8)	3 (4.7)	8 (14.3)	9 (14.1)	4 (7.1)	2 (3.1)
4	16(28.6)	23(35.9)	25(44.6)	30(46.9)	2(3.6)	-	9 (16.1)	8 (12.5)	4 (7.1)	3 (4.7)
5	3(5.4)	1(1.6)	7 (12.5)	3 (4.7)	-	-	24(42.9)	31(48.4)	22(39.3)	29 (45.3)
6	19(33.9)	23(35.9)	25(44.6)	30(46.9)	1(1.8)	1 (1.6)	6 (10.7)	7 (10.9)	5 (8.9)	3 (4.7)
7	9(16.1)	6(9.4)	5(8.9)	2(3.1)	-	2(3.1)	19(33.9)	20(31.2)	23(41.1)	34(53.1)
8	15(26.8)	24(37.5)	32(57.1)	33(51.6)	4(7.1)	-	3(5.4)	4(6.2)	2(3.6)	3(4.7)
9	20(35.7)	26(40.6)	33(58.9)	36(56.2)	-	2(3.1)	1(1.8)	-	2(3.6)	-
10	26(46.4)	25(39.1)	23(41.1)	38(59.4)	3(5.4)	-	2(3.6)	-	2(3.6)	1(1.6)
11	30(53.6)	29(45.3)	22(39.3)	31(48.4)	2(3.6)	2(3.1)	1(1.8)	1(1.6)	1(1.8)	1(1.6)
12	4(7.1)	4(6.2)	2(3.6)	4(6.2)	1(1.8)	-	33(58.9)	24(37.5)	16(28.6)	32(50)
13	28(50)	24(37.5)	24(42.9)	37(57.8)	2(3.6)	2(3.1)	1(1.8)	1(1.6)	1(1.8)	-
14	11(19.6)	10(15.6)	25(44.6)	23(35.9)	-	2(3.1)	10(17.9)	21(32.8)	10(17.9)	8(12.5)
15	19(33.9)	11(17.2)	25(44.6)	44(68.8)	1(1.8)	1(1.6)	7(12.5)	2(3.1)	4(7.1)	6(9.4)
16	15(26.8)	18(28.1)	27(48.2)	39(60.9)	1(1.8)	1(1.6)	6(10.7)	3(4.7)	7(12.5)	3(4.7)
N = 120										

Use of Cloze versus Gap-Filling Assessment Technique

The analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that 76.8 percent of male teachers and 78.1 percent of female teachers showed disagreement with statement 3 as they have chosen option 1 and 2. It is evident from Table 3 that (21.4%) male and (17.2%) female teachers do not use 'cloze test' assessment technique for assessing students' reading performance. A significant higher percentage of private boys and co-educational schools' teachers (82.4% and 80.2% respectively) showed disagreement with statement 3; however, 50 percent of teachers of girls' private schools also tend to disagree with the statement (See Tables 4-6). Whereas, in terms of gender merely 21.4 percent of male and 17.2 percent of female teachers used 'cloze test' assessment technique as a part in their reading tests.

From Table 3 it is evident that significantly high percentage of male teachers (73.2%) and (82.8%) female teachers showed disagreement with statement 4. Only 23.2 percent of male and 17.2 percent of female teachers showed positive view as they chose option 4 and 5. Nevertheless, from the demographic factor of school type a high percentage of private girls' and co-educational schools' teachers (75% and 80.2% respectively) showed disagreement with statement 4. Moreover, 70.6 percent of teachers of private boys' school also confirmed their disagreement in using 'gap-filling' assessment technique to develop students' reading performance. On the other hand, merely (29.4%) of teachers of boys', (16.7 %) girls', and (18.7%) co-educational schools showed agreement with statement 4. From the findings it is revealed that neither male nor female teachers agree with the statement.

Table 4: Response Analysis of Teachers of Private Boys' Secondary Schools

Items	Strongly Disagree=1	Disagree =2	Undecided=3	Agree =4	Strongly Agree =5
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
1	2(11.8)	3(17.6)	-	4(23.3)	8(47.1)
2	9(52.9)	5(29.4)	-	-	3(17.6)
3	7(41.2)	7(41.2)	-	2(11.8)	1(5.9)
4	8(47.1)	4(23.5)	-	4(23.5)	1(5.9)
5	2(11.8)	-	-	9(52.9)	6(35.3)
6	6(35.3)	9(52.9)	-	2(11.8)	-
7	4(23.5)	-	-	3(17.6)	10(58.8)
8	3(17.6)	9(52.9)	1(5.9)	2(11.8)	2(11.8)
9	7(41.2)	9(52.9)	-	-	1(5.9)
10	8(47.1)	8(47.1)	-	1(5.9)	-
11	8(47.1)	7(41.2)	1(5.9)	1(5.9)	-
12	2(11.8)	1(5.9)	-	8(47.1)	6(35.3)
13	5(29.4)	12(70.6)	-	-	-
14	1(5.9)	6(35.3)	2(11.8)	4(23.5)	4(23.5)
15	1(5.9)	10(58.8)	-	3(17.6)	3(17.6)
16	7(41.2)	8(47.1)	-	2(11.8)	-
N = 17					

Use of Multiple-Choice versus Matching-Technique

It is apparent from Table 3 that high percentage of female (93.7 %) and 82.2 % of male teachers showed agreement with statement 5. Only (17.9%) of male and (6.3%) of female teachers prefer to use 'multiple-choice' technique for testing students' reading performance. When responses to statement 5 were analyzed according to the demographic factor of school type, it was found that 88.2 % of private boys', 100 % of girls', and 86.9 % of co- educational schools' teachers prefer to use 'multiple-choice' assessment technique in their reading tests (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). In addition, 11.8% of teachers of private boys' schools and 13.2% of teachers of private co-educational schools disagreed with the statement. From the findings, it is surmised that teachers are limited to assessment techniques such as 'closed-ended' and 'multiple choice' to ascertain students' reading performance.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 6 'I use 'Matching-technique' for my student's reading performance'. From Table 3 it is evident that 78.5 % of male and 82.8 % of female teachers showed disagreement using the 'matching-technique' in their reading tests. Only, 11 (19.6%) of male and 10 (15.6%) of female teachers expressed a positive opinion on this aspect of assessment technique. When responses were analyzed according to school type demographic factor, it was revealed that a significant high percentage of private boys' 15 (88.2%) and 73 (80.3%) of co-educational schools' teachers showed disagreement with statement 6. In addition, 9 (75%) private girls' schools teachers also disagreed with the statement.

Table 5: Response Analysis of Teachers of Private Girls' Secondary Schools

Items	Strongly Disagree=1	Disagree =2	Undecided=3	Agree =4	Strongly Agree =5
	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %
1	2(16.7)	-	-	4(33.3)	6(50)
2	3(25)	4(33.3)	-	4(33.3)	1(8.3)
3	4(33.3)	2(16.7)	-	5(41.7)	1(8.3)
4	4(33.3)	5(41.7)	1(8.3)	2(16.7)	-
5	-	-	-	4(33.3)	8(66.7)
6	4(33.3)	5(41.7)	-	2(16.7)	1(8.3)
7	3(25)	-	-	3(25)	6(50)
8	2(16.7)	7(58.3)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)
9	5(41.7)	6(50)	-	1(8.3)	-
10	-	10(83.3)	1(8.3)	-	1(8.3)
11	4(33.3)	7(58.3)	-	-	1(8.3)
12	1(8.3)	-	-	9(75)	2(16.7)
13	7(58.3)	5(41.7)	-	-	-
14	-	4(33.3)	-	7(58.3)	1(8.3)
15	3(25)	4(33.3)	1(8.3)	1(8.3)	3(25)
16	2(16.7)	5(41.7)	-	3(25)	2(16.7)
N = 12					

Use of Subjective Method versus Dichotomous Item Technique

The analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that females (84.3%) in comparison with male teachers (75%) significantly higher in percentage using 'subjective method' of questioning in their reading tests. Furthermore, the findings also confirm that only 14 (25%) male and 8 (12.5%) female teachers were showed disagreement with statement 7. It is also evident from Table 3 that a significant high percentage of private co-educational, private boys' and girls' (81.4%, 76.4%, and 75% respectively) schools' teachers prefer 'subjective method' when testing students' reading performance. From the analysis of the data in Table 3, it was found that 42 male and 54 female teachers had chosen option 4 and 5 that indicates their agreement with the statement. Consequently, it is surmised from the data findings that both genders of three types of schools used 'subjective method' of assessment technique to ascertain students' reading comprehension.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 8 'I use Dichotomous item technique in my English reading tests'. The analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that a significant high percentage of male 47 (83.9%) and 57 (89.1%) female teachers showed disagreement using 'dichotomous item' technique in their reading tests. Only, 5 (9%) male and 7 (10.9%) female teachers showed agreement with statement 8. Data analysis according to the demographic factor of school type revealed that a significantly high percentage of private co-educational, private girls and boys schools' teachers 83 (91.2%), 9 (75%), and 12 (70.5%) respectively expressed disagreement with statement 8 (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). Thus, it is deduced from the data findings that neither male nor female teachers of three types of schools use 'dichotomous item' assessment technique to ascertain students' reading performance.

Use of Editing Tests versus C Tests

The findings in Table 3 show that very few respondents showed agreement with the statement. It is obvious from Table 3 that 94.6 percent of male and 96.8 percent of female teachers do not use 'editing test' technique in their English reading tests. Only few males (5.4%) showed agreement with the statement. The data is further analyzed according to the demographic factor of school type. It is revealed that a significant high percentage of private co-educational, teachers of private boys' and girls' schools 96.7 percent, 94.1 percent, and 91.7 percent respectively expressed disagreement in adopting 'editing test' technique in their reading tests (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). What is interesting in these findings from Table 3 is that both genders do not adopt 'editing test' technique in order to ascertain their students' reading performance.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 10 'I like giving 'C test' in assessment for reading comprehension'. In response to statement number 10, a majority of respondents revealed that they do not like giving 'C test' in assessment for reading comprehension. The findings in Table 3 show that a significant high percentage of female (98.5%) and male (87.5%) teachers showed disagreement with statement 10. On the other hand, data analysis from the school type demographic factor revealed that 94.6 percent of private co-educational, 94.2 percent of private boys, and 83.3 percent of private girls' school teachers do not prefer giving 'C test' in their English reading test (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). The most important finding to appear from the data is that neither male nor female gender showed agreement with the statement. Consequently, from the analysis of the data in Table 3, it can be concluded that teachers from three different schools do not practice this particular reading assessment technique in their reading test to ascertain students' reading performance.

Table 6: Response Analysis of Teachers of Private Co-educational Secondary Schools

Items	Strongly Disagree=1	Disagree =2	Undecided=3	Agree =4	Strongly Agree =5
	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %	(f) %
1	7(7.7)	10(11)	1(1.1)	28(30.8)	45(49.5)
2	33(36.3)	41(45.1)	1(1.1)	9(9.9)	7(7.7)
3	46(50.5)	27(29.7)	4(4.4)	10(11)	4(4.4)
4	27(29.7)	46(50.5)	1(1.1)	11(12.1)	6(6.6)
5	2(2.2)	10(11)	-	42(46.2)	37(40.7)
6	32(35.2)	41(45.1)	2(2.2)	9(9.9)	7(7.7)
7	8(8.8)	7(7.7)	2(2.2)	33(36.3)	41(45.1)
8	34(37.4)	49(53.8)	2(2.2)	4(4.4)	2(2.2)
9	34(37.4)	54(59.3)	2(2.2)	-	1(1.1)
10	43(47.3)	43(47.3)	2(2.2)	1(1.1)	2(2.2)
11	47(51.6)	39(42.9)	3(3.3)	1(1.1)	1(1.1)
12	5(5.5)	5(5.5)	1(1.1)	40(44)	40(44)
13	40(44)	44(48.4)	4(4.4)	2(2.2)	1(1.1)
14	20(22)	38(41.8)	-	20(22)	13(14.3)
15	26(28.6)	55(60.4)	1(1.1)	5(5.5)	4(4.4)
16	24(26.4)	53(58.2)	2(2.2)	4(4.4)	8(8.8)
N = 91					

Use of Cloze Elide versus Short-Answer Tests

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 11 'I give Cloze Elide test in my English reading test'. From Table 3 it is evident that 92.9 percent male and 93.7 percent female teachers showed disagreement using 'Cloze Elide' technique in their reading tests. This statement when analyzed according to the demographic factor of school type it was found that 88.3 percent of private boys', 91.6 percent of girls', and a significant high percentage of co-educational (94.5%) private schools' teachers do not use 'Cloze Elide' technique in their English reading test (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). From the analysis of the data in Table 3, it can be surmised that overall both genders do not employ 'Cloze Elide' technique in order to ascertain their students' reading performance.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 12 'I give Short-answer test in order to assess my students' comprehension'. The analysis of the data in Table 3 shows that a significant high percentage of male and female teachers (87.5%) showed agreement with the statement and used to give 'short-answer' test to ascertain students' reading performance. In terms of school type demographic factor it is revealed that 82.4 percent teachers of private boys' school, 88 percent of co-educational, and a high percentage of private girls' schools' teachers 91.7 percent give 'short-answer' test to measure students' comprehension (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). The most important finding to appear from the data is that teachers from three types of schools prefer to 'give short-answer' test to ascertain students' reading performance.

Use of Free- Recall versus Summary Tests

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 13 'I use Free-recall test technique for reading assessment. The findings in Table 3 show that a significant high percentage of male 92.9 percent and 95.3 percent female teachers showed disagreement with statement 13 and revealed somewhat close similarity in disagreement between the genders. When the responses to statement 13 were analyzed according to school type demographic factor, it was evident from Tables 4, 5 and 6 that significant high percentage of private boys', girls' and co-educational school teachers do not use 'free-recall' test technique to ascertain students' reading performance (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). Consequently, in response to statement 13, a majority of the respondents showed their disagreement in adopting the 'free-recall' reading assessment technique.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 14 'I adopt Summary test technique in my English reading test. It is apparent from Table 3 that 64.2 percent of male and 51.5 percent of female teachers showed disagreement and only 35.8 percent of male and 45.3 percent of female expressed their agreement with statement 14. When analyzed according to the demographic factor of school type it was revealed that (63.8%) private co-educational, (33.3%) girls' school, and (41.2%) boys' school teachers do not adopt 'Summary test' technique in their English reading test. On the other hand, (47%) private boys' school, (66.6%) girls' school, and (36.3%) co-educational school teachers showed agreement with statement 14 as they chose options 4 and 5 (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). From the data analysis in Table 3, it can be surmised that both genders somewhat evenly adopt 'Summary test technique' in order to measure students' reading performance.

Use of Gapped-Summary versus Information-Transfer Technique

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 15 'I use Gapped-summary test to develop my students' reading performance'. From Table 3 it is evident that 78.5 percent male and 86 percent female teachers expressed their disagreement and merely 19.6 percent male and 12.5 percent female teachers showed their agreement with statement 15. When the data were analyzed according to school type demographic factor, it was found that (89%) private co-educational, (58.3%) girls' school, and (64.7%) boys' school teachers do not use 'Gapped summary' test and only (35.2%) boys, (33.3%) girls, and (9.9%) co-educational schools teachers use this technique to ascertain students' reading performance (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). What is interesting and apparent in these findings as shown in Table 3 is that both genders do not prefer using 'Gapped summary' technique in their English reading tests.

Table 3 shows the results of teachers' responses to statement 16 'I use Information-transfer technique in my English reading test'. The findings in Table 3 show that a significantly high percentage of male 75 percent and 89 percent female teachers showed disagreement with statement 16 as they chose options 1 and 2. Only (23.2%) male and (9.4%) female teachers showed their agreement with this statement. When data are analyzed according to school type demographic factor, it was revealed that significant high percentage (88.3%) private boys' and (84.6%) co-educational schools teachers do not use 'Information transfer' technique in their English reading test. However, (41.7%) private girls' school teachers use this assessment technique in order to ascertain students' reading performance (See Tables 4, 5 and 6). The most important finding to appear from the data as shown in Table 3 is that significantly both genders do not employ 'Information-transfer' technique in their English reading test. The mean of teacher's self-rating is also analyzed and shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Mean Ratings of Teachers' Reading Assessment Techniques

Reading Assessment Techniques	Mean Ratings Gender		Overall Mean Ratings
	Male	Female	
Close-ended type questions	3.98	4.00	3.99
Open-ended type questions	2.23	2.03	2.12
Cloze tests assessment technique	2.02	1.97	1.99
Gap-filling assessment technique	2.29	2.03	2.15
Multiple-choice technique	3.98	4.31	4.16
Matching-technique	2.16	2.02	2.08
Subjective method	3.75	4.16	3.97
Dichotomous item technique	2.02	1.89	1.95
Editing test technique	1.79	1.62	1.70
C test	1.77	1.66	1.71
Cloze Elide test	1.59	1.66	1.62
Short-answer test	3.98	4.19	4.09
Free-recall test technique	1.62	1.69	1.66
Summary test technique	2.70	2.91	2.81
Gapped-summary test	2.14	2.19	2.17
Information-transfer technique	2.34	1.97	2.14

The results in Table 7 show the mean ratings of secondary school teachers' reading assessment techniques according to gender. There were 56 male and 64 female teachers participated in this study. It is evident from Table 18 that male respondents on eight items have higher means than female respondents: using 'open-ended' questions (2.23), using 'cloze-tests' (2.02), in 'gap-filling' technique (2.29), in 'matching-technique' (2.16), in 'dichotomous-item' technique (2.02), in 'editing' test (1.79), and in 'information-transfer' technique (2.34). However, what is interesting in the findings from Table 18 is that both genders prefer similar type of reading assessment techniques as evident from the higher mean on five-point Likert scale such as: 'close ended' (m = 3.98; f = 4.00); 'multiple-choice' technique (m = 3.98; f = 4.31); 'subjective method' (m = 3.75; f = 4.16); and 'short-answer' assessment technique (m = 3.98; f = 4.19). It is obvious from this table that remaining 12 reading assessment techniques show lower means and were not the choice of reading assessment in their reading tests to measure students' reading performance. Consequently, it can be surmised from the forgoing data that secondary (as shows high mean ratings) school teachers preferred four reading assessment techniques such as: 'close-ended' type (mean = 3.99), 'multiple-choice' (mean = 4.16), 'subjective method' (mean = 3.97), and 'short-answer' test (mean = 4.09) to ascertain students' reading performance. Table 8 shows teachers' reading assessment practices in a rank order formation.

Table 8: Overall Mean Ratings of Teachers' Assessment Techniques in Rank Order

Reading Assessment Techniques	Mean
Multiple-choice technique	4.16
Short-answer test	4.09
Close-ended type questions	3.99
Subjective method	3.97
Summary test technique	2.81
Gapped-summary test	2.17
Gap-filling assessment technique	2.15
Information-transfer technique	2.14
Open-ended type questions	2.12
Matching-technique	2.08
Cloze tests assessment technique	1.99
Dichotomous item technique	1.95
C test	1.71
Editing test technique	1.70
Free-recall test technique	1.66
Cloze Elide test	1.62

The rank ordering of surveyed teachers' assessment techniques is evident from Table 8. The more generally practiced reading assessment technique, the higher it is rated. In this accord, it can be observed that 'multiple-choice' technique is the most practiced one since it is rated highest in the table. Moreover, the second highest rated assessment technique in Table 8 is 'short-answer' followed by the third 'close-ended' and fourth 'subjective method' of reading assessment technique. Consequently, from the analyses of the data in Table 8 it can be surmised that the aforesaid four assessment techniques are preferred among both genders when developing a reading comprehension test.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current findings revealed that assessment techniques employed by secondary school teachers for measuring students' reading performance were not diverse in reading comprehension contexts. With regard to secondary school teachers' assessment of reading practices, results yielded from five-point Likert scale questionnaire show that male respondents on eight items in the questionnaire have higher means than female respondents: using 'open-ended' questions (2.23), 'cloze-tests' (2.02), in 'gap-filling' technique (2.29), in 'matching-technique' (2.16), in 'dichotomous-item' technique (2.02), in 'editing test' (1.79), and in 'information-transfer' technique (2.34). The results also revealed that secondary school teachers preferred four reading assessment techniques such as: 'close-ended type', 'multiple-choice', 'subjective method', and 'short-answer' test to ascertain students' reading performance. From the findings it is concluded that significant number of secondary schools' teachers employed and adhered to; 'close ended type', 'multiple-choice', 'subjective method', and 'short-answer' assessment techniques in their reading test. Reading comprehension assessment has different purposes, however, Klingner, Vaughn, and Boardman (2007) distinguish three principal purposes:

One of these is to compare students' comprehension levels to those of students in a norming sample. Another is to find out if students have met preestablished criteria for their grade level. A third purpose is to inform instruction by determining when students understand what they read and how efficiently they use which comprehension strategies (p.14).

Consequently, it is presumed that teachers before developing a test, determine these three purposes in order to obtain the objectives of their assessment. According to Invernizzi, Landrum, Howell, and Warley (2005) "Assessment can be technically sound in ways that preserve the theoretical integrity of reading development and provide the flexibility and instructional transparence that teachers need" (p.610). In addition, Invernizzi et. al. (2005) state "Comprehension is the ultimate goal of reading, so it is a skill that teachers want to assess accurately and quickly" (p.612). Multiple-choice questions are a common device used in testing text comprehension (Weir, 1995; 1990; Cohen, 1998; Ur, 1996; and Hughes, 2003). Ur (1996) defines multiple-choice questions as consisting "... of a stem and a number of options (usually for), from which the testee has to select the right one" (p.38). In multiple-choice items the test-taker is presented with a question along with four or five possible answers from which one must be selected. Usually the first part of a multiple-choice item is known as the stem. The different possible answers are known as alternatives or distractors (Richards and Schmidt, 2002). In addition, Verghese (2005) points out that "Multiple-choice questions are particularly valuable for testing the receptive skills because no composition skill is required in the answering, however, a good deal of sophistication and diligence is required to compose multiple-choice questions" (p. 100). Alderson (1996; 2000) states that 'multiple-choice', 'short answer questions', 'yes/no questions', 'true or false', and 'Wh-questions' are commonly used for testing text comprehension. Nevertheless, it is increasingly unpopular in the testing world due to the number of distracters, which results in a false measure. Sometimes, even a good reader does not guarantee being successful in attempting a 'multiple-choice' test; therefore, some cultures do not use it at all. Furthermore, 'short-answer' tests is an alternative approach to 'multiple-choice' test whereby learner has to write a brief response to a question and by this technique teacher can interpret students' response whether he/she understood the subject (Alderson 1996; 2000). According to Alderson, (1996) and Cohen, (1998), 'short-answer' questions are not easy to construct therefore, it is essential to put question in such a way that all answers are foreseeable. Hughes (2003) points out that the "best short-answer questions are those with a unique correct response" (p.144). However, he states that thorough consideration ought to be observed in preparing answer key, which is essential and on which the scoring depends. Another method for determining reading comprehension is known as cloze technique. Alderson (2000) defines cloze test as "... typically constructed by deleting from selected text every nth word ... and simply requiring the test-taker to restore the word that has been deleted". According to Alderson nth refers to every fifth or every twelfth word; for McNamara (2000) nth refers to fifth and seventh; and according to Weir (1990) the nth number is either fifth or eleventh. As an alternative integrated approach C-test is introduced a derivative of the cloze test, in which the second half of every second word is deleted which has to be restored by the reader (Alderson, 1996). A different alternative technique is called the cloze-elide test. In 1960's this is known as 'intrusive word technique' but later relabeled as the 'cloze-elide' test (Alderson, 1996; 2000). According to Alderson (2000), this test is also called "... 'text retrieval', 'text interruption', 'doctored text', 'mutilated text,' and 'negative cloze'..." (p.225). He goes on to state that this type of test is not for comprehension but for a measure of comprehension for instance, "The number of correctly identified items was taken as a measure of reading speed" (p.226). Similarly, another test is also used to measure reading comprehension which is known as 'Free-recall' test. In this test, Alderson (1996) points out that, readers are simply asked to read a text and then put it aside. Next, the reader has to write down everything they can remember from the text. In addition, Alderson (1996) points out another test which is used to measure students' understanding of texts is the use of information-transfer techniques, often associated with figures, charts, tables and illustrations. In this procedure, test takers have to restore information deleted from a figure, chart, table and so on. Above all, each comprehension assessment technique is unique and distinctive in nature. Nevertheless, prior administering a comprehension test it is critical to note components such as text's genre, layout, constructs, timing, skill, vocabulary, familiarity of text, and so on in order to get reliable and valid outcomes from test-taker.

There are various methods of testing in the field of reading comprehension whereby different skills can be tested. However, Alderson (1996; 2000) argues that there is no best method for testing reading and no single method can measure all skills in one particular test. The current teachers' assessment practices measure only low order skills in the tests. Their tests are not diverse in type, lack in validity and reliability which do not examine specific reading skills due to which learners have no choice but to memorize the contents (Khan and Pandian, 2011). In a Pakistan secondary schools' context, discrete point approach in testing is not being practiced to determine students' reading performance. On the other hand, 'teaching for the testing' is preferred by most of the teachers in Pakistan whereby learners are prepared for the declarative and factual knowledge. The results of the study revealed that less variety in comprehension testing techniques is utilized by secondary school teachers. According to the findings, teachers were adhered to; 'close ended type', 'multiple-choice', 'subjective method', and 'short-answer' assessment techniques in their reading tests. Consequently, in order to facilitate and develop learners' high order thinking skills teachers must employ diverse comprehension techniques in classrooms. To do this, EFL/ESL teachers must augment their reading instruction and focus on building learners cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Secondly, by means of multiple comprehension techniques in classroom tests and in high-stakes testing, learners will not adhere to retrieve or recall the information from the text by reading only the lines, however, they will read between and beyond the lines. Keeping this notion of comprehension testing, learners will develop their high order thinking skills and they will become skillful and capable to cope up with their pre-university academic reading materials.

The findings of the study are useful for EFL/ESL teachers and test developers in testing of reading context. It is believed that with the findings of this study, stakeholders such as, teachers, curriculum designers, material developers, and test constructors can gain insights to supplement testing in order to improve teaching and learning in a reading context. Up till now, no study has been done in Pakistan as per Higher Education Commission Education archive (http://bpt.hec.gov.pk/view/subjects/) whereby secondary school teachers are informed about their use of comprehension assessment techniques to examine learners' reading performance. Consequently, it is hoped that this study will contribute significantly to the field of secondary school education in reading assessment context in Pakistan.

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