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Advancing Language Assessment and Evaluation: Innovative Strategies for Specialized English Teaching

Abstract

This research paper delves into the realm of language assessment and evaluation, specifically focusing on the advanced strategies tailored for the specialized field of English teaching. With the growing demand for effective language instruction, educators are faced with the challenge of refining assessment methodologies to ensure accurate measurement of language proficiency and to inform targeted teaching interventions. Acknowledging the dynamic nature of language acquisition, our research advocates for a shift towards adaptive and multifaceted assessment approaches that go beyond traditional methods. We explore the integration of technology, artificial intelligence, and data analytics to create personalized assessment tools capable of gauging individual student progress and addressing specific learning needs.

Furthermore, the paper explores the incorporation of performance-based assessments, encouraging educators to design tasks that mirror real-world language use scenarios. This approach not only enhances the authenticity of assessments but also provides valuable insights into a learner's practical language application skills. Through case studies and practical examples, we illustrate the successful implementation of these advanced strategies in various English teaching specialization settings.

In addition, the research investigates the role of formative assessment in shaping the learning process. By establishing a continuous feedback loop between instructors and students, we emphasize the importance of ongoing evaluation to identify areas of improvement and to tailor instructional strategies accordingly. This iterative process not only enhances language acquisition but also fosters a dynamic and collaborative learning environment.

The paper concludes by underlining the significance of professional development for educators in mastering these advanced assessment strategies. We propose a framework for training programs that empower instructors with the necessary skills to implement and adapt these cutting-edge approaches in their classrooms.

In essence, this research paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on language assessment and evaluation by presenting a comprehensive exploration of advanced strategies tailored for the English teaching specialization. By embracing innovative methodologies, educators can better equip themselves to meet the evolving needs of language learners and facilitate a more nuanced and effective language acquisition process.

Keywords: *Language assessment, Evaluation, English teaching, Assessment methodologies, Formative assessment*

Introduction

In an era characterized by rapid globalization, the role of English as a global lingua franca has become more prominent than ever. As the world continues to shrink, communication across borders has become an indispensable part of various professional domains. Specialized English teaching has emerged as a crucial facet in equipping individuals with the linguistic proficiency needed to navigate these diverse and dynamic communication landscapes. In tandem with this, the assessment and evaluation of language skills have gained heightened significance, as educators seek innovative strategies to ensure that learners are not only fluent in English but also adept at using the language within the specific contexts of their professional fields.

This necessitates a paradigm shift in language assessment and evaluation methodologies. Traditional approaches, which often rely on standardized tests and generic language assessments, fall short in capturing the nuanced language requirements of specialized domains such as business, medicine, science, and technology. The evolving nature of professions demands a more tailored and dynamic evaluation framework that aligns with the unique linguistic demands of each field. Thus, the pursuit of advancing language assessment and evaluation is not merely a pedagogical endeavor but a strategic response to the evolving needs of a globalized society.

One of the key challenges in specialized English teaching lies in bridging the gap between general language proficiency and the specific language demands of various disciplines. Unlike general English, specialized domains often possess their own lexicons, discourse patterns, and communication styles. Consequently, educators must go beyond conventional language teaching methods to foster a deep understanding of the linguistic intricacies within these fields. It is within this context that innovative strategies for language assessment and evaluation play a pivotal role.

As we delve into the multifaceted landscape of advancing language assessment, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of conventional testing methodologies. Standardized tests, while providing a broad measure of language proficiency, often fail to address the intricacies of specialized communication. The assessment of an individual's ability to communicate effectively in a business negotiation, medical consultation, or scientific collaboration requires a more contextually grounded approach. This realization has spurred the development and adoption of performance-based assessments, simulation exercises, and authentic task evaluations.

Performance-based assessments offer a departure from the traditional pen-and-paper examinations, placing learners in real-world scenarios where they must apply their language skills authentically. For instance, in business English teaching, students may engage in simulated negotiations, presentations, or email correspondence, allowing educators to evaluate not only language proficiency but also the application of communication strategies within a professional context. Similarly, in medical English, simulations of patient-doctor interactions or case presentations provide a more accurate gauge of a learner's ability to communicate effectively within the healthcare domain.

Moreover, the integration of technology has opened new avenues for innovative language assessment and evaluation strategies. Computer-assisted language testing (CALT) and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in language assessment have gained prominence, enabling the creation of adaptive and personalized evaluation systems. These technologies have the capacity to analyze not only linguistic accuracy but also the appropriateness of language use in specific professional contexts. For instance, AI-driven assessments can provide instant feedback on the use of medical terminology, legal jargon, or engineering discourse, facilitating targeted improvement in specialized language skills.

In the quest for innovative strategies, the importance of formative assessment cannot be overstated. Rather than relying solely on summative assessments at the end of a course, formative assessments integrated throughout the learning process offer continuous insights into a learner's progress. This iterative approach allows educators to tailor their teaching methods based on ongoing assessment data, addressing specific challenges and refining language skills in real-time.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of specialized fields necessitates a commitment to lifelong learning. The traditional model of language assessment often implies a static endpoint, where proficiency is measured at a specific point in time. However, the contemporary professional landscape requires individuals to continually adapt and upgrade their language skills to keep pace with evolving industry trends. Innovative strategies in language assessment must, therefore, incorporate mechanisms for continuous evaluation and skill development, fostering a culture of lifelong learning within specialized English teaching.

The landscape of language assessment and evaluation is undergoing a transformative shift in response to the demands of specialized English teaching. The recognition that language proficiency goes beyond generic communication skills has fueled the quest for innovative strategies that align with the dynamic requirements of diverse professional domains. From performance-based assessments to the integration of technology and a commitment to formative evaluation, educators are exploring a myriad of approaches to ensure that learners not only acquire language proficiency but also excel in applying it within the intricate contexts of their chosen fields. As we navigate this evolving terrain, the synergy between specialized English teaching and advanced language assessment strategies emerges as a cornerstone in preparing individuals for success in an increasingly interconnected and specialized global society.

Limitations of Traditional Approaches to Language Assessment and Evaluation Methodologies

Language assessment and evaluation are pivotal components of language education, providing insights into learners' proficiency and guiding pedagogical strategies. However, traditional approaches to language assessment methodologies are not without their limitations. As our understanding of language acquisition and usage evolves, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the shortcomings of conventional assessment methods. In this exploration, we delve into the constraints of traditional approaches, shedding light on the need for more nuanced and adaptive evaluation strategies.

One-Size-Fits-All Model:

Traditional language assessments often adhere to a standardized, one-size-fits-all model. These assessments aim to measure language proficiency uniformly across diverse learner populations. However, this generic approach fails to account for the individualized nature of language learning. Learners come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, each with unique learning styles and experiences. A singular assessment model cannot capture the nuances of these differences, resulting in a limited understanding of an individual's true linguistic capabilities.

Focus on Memorization rather than Application:

Historically, many language assessments have been biased towards rote memorization of vocabulary and grammatical rules. This emphasis on memorization often does not translate to real-world language application. The ability to recall isolated words or grammar rules does not necessarily indicate a learner's competence in using the language effectively in authentic communication scenarios. Traditional assessments, by prioritizing memorization, may overlook the practical language skills required for effective communication in professional or everyday contexts.

Static Measurement:

Traditional assessments are typically conducted at a fixed point in time, providing a snapshot of a learner's language proficiency. However, language acquisition is a dynamic and evolving process. A single examination cannot capture the developmental trajectory of a learner's language skills. Individuals may experience fluctuations in proficiency based on exposure, practice, and contextual demands. Thus, traditional assessments may not provide a comprehensive and accurate representation of a learner's language abilities over time.

Neglect of Communicative Competence:

Effective language use extends beyond grammatical accuracy and vocabulary retention. Communicative competence, which involves the ability to use language appropriately in different social and cultural contexts, is a crucial aspect often neglected in traditional assessments. Conventional methodologies may not adequately evaluate a learner's pragmatics, discourse strategies, or sociolinguistic awareness, essential components of communicative competence necessary for successful language use in diverse situations.

Limited Authenticity:

Traditional language assessments often lack authenticity in the materials and tasks presented to learners. Many tests rely on contrived scenarios and generic content that may not mirror real-world language use. Authenticity is vital for preparing learners to navigate the complexities of communication in professional, academic, or social settings. Traditional assessments, by virtue of their standardized nature, may compromise this authenticity, resulting in an evaluation that does not align with the challenges of real-world language use.

Inadequate Assessment of Integrated Skills:

Language proficiency is multifaceted, encompassing listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Traditional assessments, however, often compartmentalize these skills, evaluating them in isolation. This compartmentalization fails to capture the interplay between these skills in holistic language use. In real-life situations, individuals seamlessly integrate these skills to comprehend, express, and interact. Traditional assessments that overlook this integrated nature provide a limited perspective on a learner's ability to use language cohesively.

Limited Cultural Sensitivity:

Language is deeply intertwined with culture, and effective communication requires an understanding of cultural nuances. Traditional assessments may not adequately address the cultural dimensions of language use. This oversight can be particularly significant for learners aiming to use the language in multicultural or international settings. A lack of cultural sensitivity in assessments may lead to incomplete evaluations, as learners might struggle to navigate the cultural complexities inherent in language communication.

Language proficiency is a dynamic skill that extends beyond the boundaries of general communication. In the context of specialized fields such as business, science, medicine, and technology, there exists a distinct set of linguistic demands that go beyond the scope of everyday language use. Bridging the gap between general language proficiency and the specific requirements of various disciplines is a critical endeavor in education. It involves tailoring language instruction to meet the unique linguistic challenges posed by different professional contexts. This pursuit not only enhances the effectiveness of communication within specialized domains but also equips learners with the language skills crucial for success in their chosen fields.

Bridging the Gap: Tailoring Language Proficiency to the Specific Demands of Disciplines

Understanding the Linguistic Landscape of Specialized Fields:

The first step in bridging the gap is a deep understanding of the linguistic landscape of the specific discipline. Each field possesses its own lexicon, discourse conventions, and communication styles. For example, the language used in legal contexts differs significantly from that in scientific research or business negotiations. Educators must acquaint themselves with the intricacies of these specialized languages to design targeted language instruction that addresses the unique demands of each field.

Customized Curriculum Design:

Traditional language curricula often focus on general language proficiency without delving into the specific needs of various disciplines. Bridging the gap requires a departure from one-size-fits-all approaches to curriculum design. Customization is key. Tailored language programs should integrate domain-specific vocabulary, communication strategies, and writing conventions relevant to the professional context. This ensures that learners not only master the foundational elements of the language but also acquire the specialized skills needed for effective communication within their chosen fields.

Authentic Materials and Tasks:

To bridge the gap effectively, language instructors must expose learners to authentic materials and tasks that mirror real-world scenarios within their disciplines. Authenticity fosters a deeper understanding of how language is used in practice. For instance, business English learners could engage in simulated negotiations, medical English students might participate in role-playing patient-doctor interactions, and science enthusiasts could analyze and present research findings. These authentic tasks provide learners with the opportunity to apply their language skills in context, bridging the divide between theory and practice.

Integration of Technology:

Technology plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between general language proficiency and specialized language demands. Language learning platforms, virtual simulations, and interactive multimedia resources can be tailored to specific disciplines, offering learners a more immersive and dynamic learning experience. Virtual environments can simulate workplace scenarios, enabling learners to navigate and communicate within the unique parameters of their chosen fields. Integrating technology ensures that language instruction is not only engaging but also aligned with the evolving communication trends within specialized domains.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration:

Bridging the gap is not solely the responsibility of language educators. Interdisciplinary collaboration between language instructors and experts in various fields is essential. By working together, educators can gain insights into the specific language demands of different disciplines. This collaboration can inform curriculum development, ensuring that language programs are informed by the latest industry trends and communication practices. Interdisciplinary collaboration also fosters a holistic approach to education, where language proficiency becomes intertwined with subject matter expertise.

Emphasis on Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving:

Many specialized fields require individuals to not only communicate effectively but also to think critically and solve complex problems using language. Bridging the gap necessitates an emphasis on these higher-order language skills. Language instruction should go beyond surface-level language use and encourage learners to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information within the context of their disciplines. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also prepares individuals to navigate the challenges presented by their professional environments.

Lifelong Learning Mentality:

The dynamic nature of specialized fields underscores the importance of instilling a lifelong learning mentality in language learners. Bridging the gap is an ongoing process that requires individuals to adapt their language skills to evolving industry trends. Encouraging learners to

embrace continuous learning ensures that they remain agile and proficient in their ability to communicate within the ever-changing landscapes of their respective fields.

Revolutionizing Language Assessment: The Integration of Computer-Assisted Language Testing (CALT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In the ever-evolving landscape of education and technology, the integration of Computer-Assisted Language Testing (CALT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in language assessment. Traditional methods of evaluating language proficiency are undergoing a paradigm shift, as educators and assessment experts recognize the potential of CALT and AI to enhance the accuracy, efficiency, and adaptability of language assessments. This synergy between technology and language assessment not only addresses longstanding challenges but also opens new horizons for personalized and dynamic evaluation methods.

Personalized Learning Paths:

One of the remarkable aspects of CALT and AI in language assessment is the ability to tailor assessments to individual learners. Through adaptive algorithms, these systems analyze a learner's performance in real-time, identifying strengths and weaknesses. Based on this analysis, personalized learning paths can be generated, directing learners toward targeted activities and materials that address their specific language needs. This individualized approach goes beyond the limitations of traditional one-size-fits-all assessments, acknowledging the diverse learning styles and preferences of learners.

Real-time Feedback and Assessment:

CALT and AI bring a revolutionary aspect to language assessment with their capacity to provide real-time feedback. Traditional assessments often entail waiting for results, delaying the feedback loop crucial for effective learning. With CALT and AI, learners receive immediate feedback on their performance, allowing them to correct errors, reinforce correct usage, and adapt their language strategies in the moment. This instantaneous feedback not only accelerates the learning process but also enhances the efficiency of language assessment by addressing issues as they arise.

Adaptive Testing Strategies:

Traditional language assessments typically follow a linear progression, regardless of a learner's proficiency level. CALT and AI, however, introduce adaptive testing strategies that dynamically adjust the difficulty of questions based on a learner's responses. This adaptive approach ensures that assessments accurately reflect a learner's current proficiency level, preventing frustration caused by overly challenging tasks or boredom from tasks perceived as too easy. Adaptive testing optimizes the assessment experience, providing a more accurate and nuanced measure of language skills.

Natural Language Processing (NLP):

The incorporation of AI-driven Natural Language Processing (NLP) into language assessment is a game-changer. NLP enables systems to analyze and comprehend human language,

including its nuances, context, and even sentiment. This capability allows assessments to go beyond simple grammar and vocabulary checks, evaluating a learner's pragmatic language use, sociolinguistic awareness, and contextual appropriateness. NLP-driven assessments capture the complexities of language, providing a more comprehensive evaluation of language proficiency.

Speech Recognition and Pronunciation Assessment:

CALT and AI technologies have made significant strides in speech recognition, enabling the assessment of oral language skills. Learners can engage in spoken interactions, and AI systems accurately evaluate pronunciation, intonation, and fluency. This aspect is particularly beneficial for language learners, as it addresses a longstanding challenge in traditional assessments where oral proficiency is often difficult to measure objectively. The integration of speech recognition ensures a more holistic evaluation of language skills, encompassing both written and spoken communication.

Continuous Learning and Progress Monitoring:

Traditional language assessments are often confined to specific points in time, providing a snapshot of a learner's proficiency. CALT and AI facilitate continuous learning by enabling ongoing progress monitoring. Learners and educators can track performance trends, set goals, and assess improvements over time. This shift towards continuous learning aligns with the contemporary understanding of language acquisition as a dynamic and evolving process. The ability to monitor progress continually encourages a mindset of lifelong learning and skill development.

Security and Anti-cheating Measures:

Incorporating technology into language assessments also brings advancements in security and anti-cheating measures. CALT and AI systems employ sophisticated algorithms to detect anomalies in test-taking behavior, ensuring the integrity of assessments. This is particularly crucial in the era of remote learning and online assessments, where traditional methods of invigilation may be challenging to implement. The use of biometric data, eye-tracking technology, and behavioral analysis contributes to a secure testing environment.

The integration of Computer-Assisted Language Testing (CALT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language assessment marks a revolutionary leap forward in the field of education. By leveraging adaptive learning paths, real-time feedback, natural language processing, speech recognition, and continuous progress monitoring, these technologies address longstanding challenges in traditional language assessments. The result is a more personalized, efficient, and accurate evaluation of language proficiency. As the synergy between technology and language assessment continues to evolve, the educational landscape stands poised for a future where language learning is not only more effective but also seamlessly integrated with the advancements of the digital age.

The Crucial Role of Formative Assessment and Innovative Strategies in Specialized English Teaching

The Importance of Formative Assessment:

1. Continuous Feedback and Improvement:

Formative assessment, in essence, is a process of ongoing evaluation that occurs during the learning journey rather than at its culmination. This approach provides continuous feedback to both learners and educators, offering valuable insights into the progress and areas of improvement. In the context of specialized English teaching, where language proficiency is intricately linked to professional success, the ability to receive timely and constructive feedback becomes paramount. Formative assessment enables learners to identify and address weaknesses promptly, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

2. Tailoring Instruction to Learner Needs:

Specialized English teaching requires a deep understanding of the unique linguistic demands of various fields, such as business, medicine, science, and technology. Formative assessment allows educators to tailor their instruction to the specific needs of learners within these disciplines. By identifying individual strengths and weaknesses, instructors can adjust the content, pace, and focus of the curriculum to address the diverse language requirements of different professional contexts.

3. Holistic Skill Development:

Beyond traditional assessments that often focus on discrete language skills, formative assessment emphasizes the holistic development of language proficiency. Learners engaged in specialized English teaching need not only to master grammar and vocabulary but also to cultivate effective communication strategies within their fields. Formative assessment methods can incorporate real-world scenarios, encouraging the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a cohesive manner, aligning with the multifaceted nature of language use in professional settings.

4. Building a Growth Mindset:

Formative assessment contributes to the development of a growth mindset among learners. The continuous feedback loop instills the belief that abilities can be developed over time through effort and dedication. In the context of specialized English teaching, where learners may encounter complex and domain-specific language challenges, a growth mindset is essential for fostering resilience and perseverance in the face of linguistic hurdles.

Innovative Strategies for Specialized English Teaching:

1. Performance-Based Assessments:

Performance-based assessments immerse learners in real-world scenarios relevant to their chosen professions. In business English, for instance, learners may engage in simulated negotiations, presentations, or written communication reflective of professional contexts.

These assessments not only evaluate language proficiency but also measure the application of communication strategies within specific domains.

2. Simulation Exercises and Role-Playing:

Simulation exercises and role-playing are powerful tools in specialized English teaching. They provide learners with opportunities to practice and refine their language skills in situations they are likely to encounter in their professional lives. Medical English learners, for example, can engage in simulated patient-doctor interactions, honing their ability to communicate effectively within healthcare settings.

3. Authentic Task-Based Learning:

Integrating authentic, task-based learning into specialized English teaching ensures that learners acquire language skills in contexts that mirror real-world applications. Tasks could include writing reports, analyzing scientific literature, or drafting legal documents, depending on the field of specialization. Authentic tasks enhance language proficiency by grounding it in the practical demands of the learners' professional domains.

4. Technology-Enhanced Assessments:

The integration of technology, including computer-assisted language testing (CALT) and artificial intelligence (AI), introduces a new dimension to specialized English teaching assessments. Technology-enhanced assessments can analyze not only linguistic accuracy but also the appropriateness of language use in specific professional contexts. These tools provide instant feedback and contribute to a more adaptive and personalized learning experience.

5. Project-Based Learning:

Project-based learning encourages learners to apply language skills to real-world projects. In the context of specialized English teaching, learners can collaborate on projects that mirror the challenges they may face in their professions. For instance, engineering students may work on a collaborative project requiring technical documentation and presentations, allowing them to integrate language skills with their field-specific knowledge.

6. Multimodal Approaches:

Recognizing that individuals have diverse learning preferences, multimodal approaches incorporate a variety of media and resources into the learning experience. Specialized English teaching can benefit from the integration of videos, podcasts, and interactive online content that align with the linguistic demands of specific fields. This approach caters to different learning styles and enhances engagement.

7. Collaboration with Industry Professionals:

Engaging industry professionals in the educational process can bridge the gap between academic instruction and the practical demands of specialized fields. Guest lectures, workshops, and collaborative projects with professionals from business, science, or healthcare provide learners with insights into authentic language use within their chosen disciplines. This

firsthand exposure enriches the learning experience and enhances language proficiency in professional contexts.

In the dynamic landscape of specialized English teaching, the importance of formative assessment and innovative strategies cannot be overstated. Formative assessment, with its emphasis on continuous feedback and personalized learning paths, aligns seamlessly with the needs of learners navigating the intricacies of language proficiency within specific disciplines. The integration of innovative strategies, from performance-based assessments to technology-enhanced learning, not only addresses the limitations of traditional approaches but also fosters a more dynamic, engaging, and effective educational experience. As specialized English teaching continues to evolve, educators equipped with these tools and strategies are poised to empower learners with the linguistic prowess necessary for success in their chosen professional domains.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of advanced strategies tailored for the specialized field of English teaching underscores the pivotal role that innovative approaches play in shaping effective language instruction. As we navigate the intricate landscapes of business, medicine, science, and technology, traditional teaching methods are proving insufficient to meet the nuanced demands of learners in these specialized domains. The amalgamation of performance-based assessments, simulation exercises, and authentic task-based learning has emerged as a potent force in not only evaluating language proficiency but also cultivating practical communication skills within professional contexts.

The introduction of technology, through computer-assisted language testing (CALT) and artificial intelligence (AI), has revolutionized the assessment landscape. The dynamic capabilities of these tools offer real-time feedback, adaptability, and personalized learning paths, addressing the limitations of static and one-size-fits-all evaluation methods. This technological integration ensures that learners in specialized English teaching programs are not only proficient in language but also adept at applying their skills in the ever-evolving scenarios of their respective fields.

Furthermore, project-based learning and multimodal approaches contribute to a holistic learning experience, recognizing and catering to the diverse learning styles of individuals. By incorporating real-world projects, industry collaborations, and varied media resources, educators are fostering an environment where language acquisition is not a mere academic exercise but a practical and applicable skill set.

In essence, the advanced strategies discussed in this exploration are not just trends; they represent a paradigm shift in how English is taught within specialized domains. The traditional divide between language proficiency and practical application is gradually diminishing, paving the way for a more integrated, dynamic, and responsive educational experience. As educators, learners, and industry professionals engage collaboratively in this transformative journey, the specialized field of English teaching is poised to produce graduates who not only possess linguistic excellence but also excel in using their language skills adeptly within the intricate contexts of their chosen professions. The future of specialized English teaching lies in the hands of those who embrace innovation, adaptability, and a commitment to preparing learners for the multifaceted challenges of our globalized and specialized world.

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