

## Book Review

### *Evaluation in foreign language education in the Middle East and North Africa*

(S. Hidri & C. Coombe, Editors)

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*Evaluation in foreign language education in the Middle East and North Africa* is divided into eight parts containing nineteen chapters.

Part I is on Teacher and Faculty Evaluation. Chapter 1 focuses on "Teacher Evaluation: What Counts as an Effective Teacher." According to the authors, Mazandarani and Troudi, although effective teaching has been well researched in mainstream education, studies on effective teaching in EFL/ESL contexts in higher education are rare. The research took place at a university in Iran and used an adapted exploratory sequential design using a mixed methods approach. A total of 43 lecturers responded to a questionnaire with open-ended and closed questions, and a subsequent ten lecturers participated in follow-up interviews. Traits found to be relevant in effective

teaching are personal attributes, cognitive qualities, meta-cognitive qualities, pedagogical skills, and professional skills. Chapter 2 is a theoretical perspective on EFL teacher evaluation. Its objective is to review and contribute to the purposes and methods of evaluating language teachers' performance in contexts where, according to the authors, Alamoudi and Troudi, teachers seem to receive the least amount of support and opportunities to assess their teaching proficiency or evaluate their teaching skills, while at the same time, they are unaware of the purposes and policies behind the systems used to evaluate them. The chapter ends with a recommendation to policymakers to look at the uniqueness of foreign language teaching when compared to content teaching. The third chapter is a case study on faculty appraisal and evaluation in higher education at a private university in Syria. Data was collected using interviews, document analysis, and observations from three different groups of stakeholders: administrative staff members, academic staff, and students. The author, Al-Fattal, recommends that the first two stages of the evaluation process, namely establishing standards for evaluation and communicating the standards to employees could be improved.

Part II is on Assessment Practices. It contains three chapters. The first chapter describes a quantitative study done in Kuwait on 28 teachers from a public higher educational institution. A survey of 50 items comprising five dimensions of assessment was used to assess teachers' assessment practices and their assessment ethicality. The authors, Torkey and Haider, recommend that teachers should be provided with clear

guidelines about what constitutes score pollution and why score pollution is unethical. The next chapter, "Problematizing Teachers' Exclusion from Designing Exit Tests," used a mixed methods design for a small critical exploratory study including questionnaires and a semi-structured interview to examine this phenomenon at a tertiary vocational education institution in the United Arab Emirates. Twenty-three teachers responded to the questionnaire, and one administrator was interviewed. The author, Dammak, concludes that the excluded teachers' intention to discuss the issue of exit tests with their supervisors reflects the success of the study. The third chapter explores the relationship between Native Speaking (NS) teachers versus Non-Native Speaking (NNS) teachers on the performance rate of students. Specifically, the researcher, Albaiz, proposes that NNS can attain the voice of classroom (VoC) in the teaching process. Forty environments were identified for analysis, 19 created by NS teachers. A statistical analysis, which included a regression analysis, of learners achieving five levels of grades from "A" to "F" was conducted on NS environments; it concluded that "there is a direct correlation between the teachers' native language and the students' success rate."

Part III is on Text Genre Analysis Evaluation. It contains two chapters. The first chapter, by Melliti, is an analysis of the body sections of 37 random articles from the journal, *Nature*, to identify the Create A Research Letter (CARL) Body model. It concludes that the body of any Research Letter published should include 49 obligatory sentences and nine optional sentences. The research was done in Tunisia; its purpose was

to increase the chances of scientists and researchers to publish their work in international journals. The second chapter in this section was a contrastive genre study investigating the differences and similarities between British and American personal statements (PS) written by undergraduate students from three different disciplines, Business, Physics, and Psychology. The major finding of the analysis was that the two main strategies were self-promotion and boosting and hedging strategies. The author also recommends that PS writing be included in writing courses because of the importance of PS writing in students' future academic careers.

Part IV of the book is on Assessment of Productive Skills. It contains three chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical one on "Learner Differences: A Trojan Horse Factor in Task-Based Oral Production Assessment." The researcher, from Tunisia, says that the rationale for the "chapter is to address how task-based assessment may capitalize on the role of individual differences as a constructive tributary rather than an impediment to the effort of capturing a principled image of the task-learner interaction." The next chapter describes the different phases as well as the administration of a test assessing both paraphrasing and note-taking skills of sixteen Egyptian undergraduate students. The researcher found that two of the students who usually perform poorly on other tasks, obtained the highest scores, and two of the best performers in class scored a lower grade than their language ability would seem to indicate. The third chapter of this part was a study to determine if repeated check-ups of what to assess in student writing

had helped to standardize the assessment criteria for writing at a large university in Saudi Arabia. Thirty-eight faculty participated in the study. Participants were given a questionnaire self-reporting their application of a criterion-referenced marking guide, and follow-up interviews were held with some questionnaire respondents. Findings indicated that participants used the ten marking rubrics included in the questionnaire and there was no statistically significant difference in the use of the marking rubrics according to the study variables.

Part V contains two chapters on Textbook and ICT Evaluation. The first chapter provides a detailed content analysis of eight textbooks and seven teacher guides used in Tunisian schools. The results indicated that Tunisian language policy-makers do not have any ideologically or religiously motivated a priori objections to culture in English language education and that it is not approached in a cultured systematic way. The author, Hermessi, points out that the cultural contents presented in the textbooks are “rather bland,” involve no evaluative comments, comparative reference frames, or critical thinking activities, and in fact “reveal a [sic] few feelings or opinions; students are almost never invited to relate practices and perspectives in Tunisian culture and ‘English’ culture in spite of the opportunities available.” The second chapter discusses how best to go about evaluating the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in language education and proposes future guidelines for doing this. It is a theoretical paper from Tunisia.

Part VI is an Evaluation of ELT Certificates and Programs. The first chapter evaluates the Certificate of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (CTEFL) program provided by the University of Khartoum. Thirteen students in the program participated in the study who were in cohort 5 of the program. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Results showed that overall the students were satisfied with the program but recommended that the time span should be increased, a native speaker was needed to teach some aspects of the course, real teaching situations (instead of theory and practice on course participants) should be included in the course. The second chapter is a qualitative exploratory study based on semi-structured interviews with two Sudanese PhD professor supervisors and three PhD candidates at the University of Khartoum. While a small-scale study, the findings on the necessity of supervisors with expertise and subject specialism suggest a correlation between good supervision and success and the sustainability of a high quality PhD thesis.

Part VII is on Quality Assurance and ESP Needs Analysis. The first chapter examines the design and implementation of quality assurance program at an English-medium university in Istanbul, Turkey. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using a case study approach. The second chapter in this section reports on one aspect of a research study done with an ESP needs analysis framework at a Tunisian higher school (*écolesupérieure*). Data was collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews from 153 students and three female English teachers. A further

sample of 50 employed alumni participated in the study as well as 28 content teachers. Overall results showed that students' perceptions of their linguistic proficiency were higher than their teachers' perceptions of their English, but both agreed that there was a need for both content specific and general English.

Part VIII is on Assessment Literacy and Dynamic Assessment. It contains two chapters. The first chapter deals with revisiting assessment literacy in Morocco. The author, Bouziane, proposes that because the limited research on assessment practices in Morocco shows that assessment is mostly unfair and harms students, more research needs to be done and teacher training in assessment literacy needs to be improved. In the final chapter, "Specs Validation of a Dynamic Reading Comprehension Test for EAP Learners in an EFL Context," Hidri talks about the importance of DA. Twenty-five students studying in an applied sciences college in Oman took part in the study. Students were exposed to classroom-mediated interaction with a mediator and two students on reading for the textbook. The second mediator graded the students' performances. The second part of the research involved a reading exam made up of 20 items, which was graded by a third mediator not involved in the first phase of the mediation. Data collected was both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data was an analysis of the joint interactions between the mediator and students done in class. Quantitative data was analyzed using *FACETS* and consisted of a reading progress test. Results showed "that there was not a substantial variation in the test takers' ability, i.e.,

they generally had the same ability in this test and that the test did not distinguish much between them in terms of the ability being measured." Results also showed that the "test items did not discriminate much in terms of difficulty."

The book contains six studies done in Tunisia, three from Saudi Arabia, two from Sudan, and one each from Iran, Syria, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, and Oman. Sixteen studies were done in higher education; two of these on tertiary vocational institutions. One study was done on K-12 education, and two studies were done on K through tertiary education. Four papers were theoretical, seven used a mixed methods approach, four used a quantitative approach, and four were qualitative. One theoretical paper was a review of the literature. The volume reveals the breadth and variety of current research in the MENA region on the state of evaluation of English as a Foreign or Second language.