

## LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT: 21ST CENTURY STRATEGIES AND SKILLS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*This paper examines language assessment within the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies and skills for teachers and students. It mentions the components and skills of language. It observes that traditional assessment practices fail to measure critically students' attainment. This study explores some 21st-century skills and strategies for teachers and students, such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, authentic tasks, performance and self-assessment in order to enhance language assessment in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. The utilization of these skills and strategies prove profitable in language assessment. It concludes that implementing these strategies would improve the students' engagement, and teachers' effectiveness in real-world language proficiency. It is expected to be employed by teachers while carrying out language assessment with the help of government. The strategies stand out as a useful tool in measuring language assessment in 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The paper recommends integrating technology, promoting collaborative learning, and fostering student autonomy to prepare learners for higher education and the global workforce.*

**Keywords:** *Language assessment, 21st-century skills, Formative assessment, Digital literacy, Collaborative learning critical thinking.*

### Introduction

The place of language cannot be over emphasized in teaching and learning. Language is any means of communication, this might be verbal or non-verbal. Many scholars have defined language among which are, Liu & Song (2021) stated that language serves as a fundamental tool for teaching and learning in classroom. Language facilitate instruction, comprehension, communication, critical thinking, self-expression, and assessment creating an enriching and interactive learning environment for students. Language is the faculty of articulating words. (Chin, 2022) defined language as purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of system of voluntarily produced symbols. This simply means that language belongs to only human beings. .

Language is not just a system of grammar, but also a social tool deeply tied to people's background and context. Ofodu (2012). This simply shows that language plays different roles in different situations within the education sector. To assess language, the social tools, that is, the components that make up the language and the skills that explained how language is used must be explored. Language is made up of certain key components that shape it, such as phonology, morphology, pragmatics among others.

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies the sound system of language. How sounds function, interact, and form patterns within a particular language. (Phonics Tutor, 2025). Phonology is helpful in teaching and learning. It helps in documentary as well as language

preservation and enhances reading and writing skills.

Morphology is the branch that studies the structure of words and how they are formed from smaller meaningful units, morpheme. Assessment can be done on the ability of students to recognize and manipulate meaningful part of words such as prefixes, suffixes and roots. This strongly predicts reading and vocabulary development. Also, Syntax, the study of rules and principles that govern arrangement of phrases, clauses and sentences can be used to assess students to know the level of understanding and production of correct grammatical structures that is, the word order and agreement. Semantic, in another way round in language deals with meaning. Students can be assessed on how they can interpret a passage by summarizing and stating actual meaning.

Another component of language is pragmatics. Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics. The study of language that focuses on implied and inferred meaning. (Ken Burns, 2025). This comes in the assessment of critical thinking through students which should be able to think deep and give more than literary meaning, Also, students' sound production, recognition could be assessed. Likewise words/phrases/clause formation, assess sentence structure, in paraphrasing or summarizing and lastly, ability to use language appropriately in social situation.

Skills in language explains how language is used. English language skills refers to core abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are referred to as receptive skills. While speaking and writing are considered as productive skills. The skills should be mastered in order to be competent in a language. According to Babalola and Ayodele (2022), they asserted that language skills in English and other languages are crucial for academic success. Thus, the need to examine language skills in this

study to be aligned with the 21<sup>st</sup> century language assessment is important. Listening, speaking, reading, writing are essential in language skills.

Listening skill, as asserted by Mary et al, (2020) in Thaer, (2024) is critical for exchanging information between the speaker and the listener. It promotes openness between the interlocutors and aid acquiring and learning from others while Speaking enables students to express ideas and participate in collaboration with others. Teacher relies on speaking to instruct and assess students. Also, reading remains the gate way to knowledge. Students should be able to read printed texts, digital texts, websites, and multimedia information. Kassaye (2023) research shows that digital reading skills are now central to academic success as students navigate multimodal online text.

Writing is one of the language skills that learners use to expresses their thought, ideas and opinion. Students will be able to participate in digital with platform such as email and social media. It is a productive skill just like speaking. Overall, establishing a clear understanding component that shape the skills the complexity of supporting learners in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. Teacher must apply appropriate strategies to monitor teaching and learning instruction.

A language classroom represents a place of teaching, researching and examining within the education sector. This evaluation is called variously either as evaluation or assessment. Language assessment refers to the systematic process of evaluating learners' ability in meaningful context through tools, strategies and skills. Language assessment involves collecting evidence about learners' communicative competence and use the evidence to make decisions about learning such as diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. Fulcher (2022) describes language assessment as an evidence-driven instruction and supporting

learners' growth. This implies that language should be based on systematic and reliable evidence from learners' use. It helps the teachers to understand what learners can do. It identifies gaps and strength to make decisions.

According to research, diagnostic is to gauge prior knowledge, (pre-test) so as to know what teaching and methods to plan for the students. It is used to discover existing knowledge. Fulcher, (2022) stated that diagnostic assessment is not to be used for grading but for guiding instruction. This implies that, when teacher is able to identify difficult areas of learning in a student, he will be able to plan and execute the possible solutions to those problematic areas.

Moreover, formative assessment is that type of assessment that takes place during teaching and learning focusing on monitoring learners' progress and providing timely feedback to improve language performance. The following are some of the formative assessment tools popularly used in schools: quizzes, classroom questions and story-telling. Research shows that formative improves learners' engagement, self-regulation and language development while summative assessment is always conducted at the end of a course, term or program to evaluate learners' overall language use and achievement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that despite the growing need for modern and effective ways to assess students' language skills, many teachers in many schools still rely mainly on the old traditional pen-and-paper assessment practices. This old method often measures only memory and writing ability, it does not fully develop the 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies and skills like, communication, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy and critical thinking in learners. As a result of this, many students are not fully assessed in the ways that reflect the real life demands of today's world. The problem is made

worse by the large class sizes found in many schools, where a teacher handles eighty (80) students in a classroom, it becomes difficult to give individual feedback, use interactive assessment strategies, or monitor students' progress effectively. Teachers are forced to use quick and easy tests rather than meaningful assessments that show deeper understanding.

It appears that many schools do not have enough computers, projectors, internet access, or digital tools that support 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning and assessment. Even when some resources exist, teachers may lack the skills to use them. This limits the use of digital assessments, interactive tasks, and technology-supported learning activities. Also, authentic assessment still lag behind in language assessment which involves application of knowledge and skills acquired into real-world situation.

It also seems there are gaps in the implementation of the curriculum. Current discussions in education highlight a growing connection between language assessment practices and key 21<sup>st</sup>- century competences such as collaboration critical thinking, communication, digital literacy and self -assessment.

### **Literature Review**

Language assessment is the process of measuring learner's ability to use language in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students learn about what it means to be effective language users. Students acquire the tools they needed to reflect on and evaluate their own language. Recently, applied linguistic field has examined the knowledge, skills, and principle needed for assessment, defined as language assessment literacy. Integration of 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies and skills have played a vital role in English language learning assessment.

Teachers integrate technology into their classes to teach receptive and productive skills. (Hayriye, 2023). He

added that cooperation and collaboration with one another to share their production in pairs, groups or as a whole class depends on the class management and arrangement of the teacher who arranges a debate to discuss a topic in the classroom. Similarly, Harding (2022) argues that modern language assessment must capture higher-order skills such as problem-solving, creativity, and authentic communication rather than focusing solely on grammar and rote recall. These perspectives show that effective assessment in the 21st century requires strategies like performance tasks, projects, peer and self-assessment, and technology-enhanced evaluation tools that reflect real language use.

Studies highlight the importance of teacher skills and classroom practices that inherently support communicative and skill-based learning in language classrooms. Akomolafe and Obateru (2025) found that teachers' soft skills, such as effective communication and classroom interaction, significantly relate to students' attitudes toward English language learning, suggesting that assessment processes should account for effective and interactional aspects of language learning. In other words, assessment in the classroom should capture not only test scores but also learners' engagement, collaboration, and communicative performance. Other researches in Ekiti State also point to assessment-related classroom strategies that support skill development. Scaffolding teaching strategies, which involve breaking tasks into manageable parts and supporting learners as they build competence have been shown to enhance students' achievement in English language tasks as opined by Adetunji, (2025). This finding corresponds with 21st-century assessment strategies that emphasize formative feedback and support for learner progress rather than one-off summative tests.

In addition, studies on language teaching factors in Ekiti State reveal that

communicative activities and instructional time allocation affect learning outcomes in English grammar, which is fundamental to functional language use. According to Akinyede and Alonge (2025). These findings underscore the need for assessments that measure learners' ability to participate in communicative activities and apply language skills in real contexts, a core objective of 21st-century assessment frameworks.

In language assessment, the 21st century should be learner-centered, skill-oriented, and continuous rather than purely exam-based. Teachers require assessment literacy to design and interpret authentic tasks, and students benefit when assessment promotes reflection, collaboration, and meaningful skill development. Therefore, language assessment should not only measure what learners know but also how they use language and skills to interact meaningfully in real and digital environments.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Strategies and Skills for Teachers and Students that Emphasize Language Assessment**

- \* Critical thinking
- \* Collaboration skill
- \* Communication skill
- \* Authentic assessment
- \* Performance
- \* Self-assessment

In the era of rapid globalization and digitalization, Educational system faces increasingly complex challenges ensuring that students are well prepared for rapid evolving world (Mohammad and Fariza 2025). A cursory look at some 21<sup>st</sup> century language assessments could lead to the submission that they are inevitable. Several authors have written on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in education. Among such authors are Bolat and Denemer, (2024) who stated that 21<sup>st</sup> century skills are now crucial to a well-functioning society and economy, and nation with individuals with these skills have paved way for economic progress.

Despite this, employers are still dissatisfied with employees lacking the skills. These shifts have emphasized the need for education reform. Education and economic development are closely related and education is essential for economic growth. This implies that only educated people will have knowledge and a better skills to increase productivity with innovation and efficiency in industries. Good economy contributes to government and families spending on schools, teachers and students.

Critical thinking is one of the crucial strategies in 21<sup>st</sup> century language assessment, it involves evaluating, analyzing, interpreting and forming reasonable judgments from language input going beyond simple comprehension. This is important because students will be able to solve problems and improve communication. Jabaker (2023) stated that critical thinking encourages innovative and outside the box problem-solving skills. For instance, in reading assessment, students might be asked to read a given passage always and justify their opinion on what they have read. Students employ Critical thinking by responding logically in writing and speaking. Creativity task such as digital story-telling and creative writing stimulate learners' creative thinking and expression (Lee and Carpenter, 2023). In creativity students also combine the use of bottom top and top bottom ideas while assessing language.

Collaboration is working together with other students. This helps students to work in peers, such as group project, task sharing and helping each other to solve problems. Pair feedback session not only improve language skills but also teach students how to collaborate productively with peers. In fact, collaboration is about joint efforts that enhance learning. Teachers assess individual efforts and award mark collectively. Collaboration increases learning outcomes in class room and helps in mental development. Outside the scope of policy, teachers need to bring

collaboration skills into classroom. Luckily, teaching text book of nowadays are full of activities that give room for students' collaboration but unfortunately most teachers find it difficult to go along with these strategies.

In recent development interaction is important in learning process and assessment. Communication in learning takes the form of media that convey messages from students to teachers, teachers to students. (Ayni et al 2023). This implies that communication is a process of exchanging information, idea, thoughts and feelings between individual or group. It is very important in language assessment for it enhances collaboration. It should be done vice versa. In 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies, language assessment in communication aspect must be improved upon because it is the most essential skill in learning and assessment. It helps students to show proficiency in communication skill. Communication is germane in teachers and students language assessment.

Authentic assessment in 21<sup>st</sup> century is the real activities that take place in classroom such as portfolios, story-telling, debates and quizzes. It is important because it moves beyond theoretical knowledge. Research in frontiers Education confirms that authentic materials like (podcasts and films) significantly benefits English as a foreign language (EFL) learners by boosting motivation, real-life communication, and skills, but poses challenges like high cognitive load, cultural gaps and speed, requiring careful scaffolding by teachers for successful integration.(Alamri, W.'S 2025). This implies that authentic assessment focuses on applying knowledge. It promotes self-assessment and feedback, enhances engagement but the task can overwhelm students with much demands and problems solving. Critical thinking also prepare students for future careers. It improves understanding rather than memorization.

Self -assessment is when you examine yourself to evaluate skills, abilities, traits personality or how proficient you are while peer assessment is when students assess one another's work, performance or participation using the given guild lines by the teacher. This is important because it helps students give useful feedback, improve learning, develop critical thinking skill and take responsibility for self -learning. This serves as both formative and summative for teachers and students.

Teaching and learning in 21<sup>st</sup> century have undergone rapid change due to the influence of teachers as well as students is changing due to the use of technology in language process. (Sunmonu, 2025).The integration of technology in language assessment enhances learning. It makes assessment interesting and interactive through the use of videos. Part of the integration of technology is the use of AI. Researchers assert that AI can power a tutoring system that offer one-on-one-assistance outside the traditional classroom setting. It streamlines the grading process by automatically scoring assignment and exams, saving educator valuable time beyond just grading. Integration of technology provide details feedback on students work, highlighting areas of improvement and suggest resources for further studies Thus, assessment is made easy (Olusola, 2024).The use of this new innovation might pose problem on the part of teachers and students who are novice in their usage of technology in schools. (Raynault et al, 2022) also advocated for using digital technology to create engaging and meaningful assessments. It was also asserted that, digital literacy navigate privacy and security.it improves communication connecting with people globally accessing information. Teacher use digital literacy to improve teaching and learning, they develop online content and use educational apps (Frontiers, 2025).

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that language assessment is guided by 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies and skills. It improves and enhances language learning and assessment for teachers and students. These are expected to be employed by teachers while carrying out language assessment with the help of government implementing it in school curriculum. The traditional assessments are expected to be replace by the 21<sup>st</sup> century strategies and skills for teachers and students.

## Recommendations

Base on the foregoing, these recommendation recommendations are made.

1. Schools should invest in ICT infrastructure and provide teachers with training digital assessment tools.
2. Teachers should include debates, role-plays, story- telling and project-based tasks to measure practical language skills.
3. Peer review, group projects, and teamwork activities should collaborate regularly to foster social and cognitive skills.
4. Continuous training on 21st-century strategies is necessary to ensure effective implementation.

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