Test Development Processes Followed in Testing Learners in Writing and Reading in English as a Second Language Classroom in the Rathnapura Education Zone

K.D.M. Jayathissa

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya
dinushika.jayathissa93@gmail.com

In Sri Lanka, English is taught as a second language in schools, where testing in English as a Second language (ESL) has become important to measure learners' knowledge. This study examines the test development processes used in testing students in reading and writing in ESL classrooms in the Rathnapura education zone. This study investigates the ways in which test papers are designed to evaluate students' knowledge, the validity of the test development processes and the possible reasons to follow them, teachers' perception toward the current test development process, and whether the intended learning outcomes are achieved with the current test development methods. This research follows a diagnostic research design, while a mixed research methodology has been used to collect data. The research sample includes 32 English teachers from three schools, 3 in-service advisors (ISAs) from three different areas, and 32 students of grade 9 from one of the selected schools. As the pilot test, a questionnaire was given to 5 teachers to gather initial data, followed by the provision of a revised questionnaire to all selected teachers and ISAs. All ISAs as well as 4 teachers from each school were interviewed according to a semi-structured interview method, to gather further details on the processes followed to assess ESL learners. Following the standard test development methods, a test paper was designed and given to the students. The results of this study depicted that most of the teachers lack knowledge in test paper designing and neither the teachers nor the ISAs follow a standard method of test development due to the lack of practical knowledge and a standard model. Hence, this study concludes that the current test development process should be changed and recommends that standard test/assessment development courses should be conducted for all the ESL teachers and ISAs, and a standard test development model should be introduced in order to design a standard ESL paper that assesses students' knowledge.

Keywords: English as a Second language, Testing, Standard test development process, English language teachers, Rathnapura education zone.