



Innovative language assessment: Promoting learners' motivation, autonomy, and long-term achievement

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Abstract

This paper explores the transformative role of innovative language assessment in promoting learners' motivation, autonomy, and long-term achievement. While traditional approaches often emphasize summative evaluation offering limited insight into the dynamic processes of language learning, new models of assessment—such as formative portfolio-based, peer, self, and technology-enhanced assessments—boldly assist to integrate assessment with the process of impulsive learning. Drawing on recent literature, practical classroom experiences, peer discussions and case studies, this article argues that innovative assessment not only measures performance, but also serves as a catalyst for learner empowerment, deeper engagement, and sustainable success in language acquisition. By encouraging learners' reflection, self-regulation, and authentic communication, these methods promote learner-centered practices that align with contemporary educational goals. The discussion reviews theoretical foundations and case-based evidence while addressing challenges of validity, reliability, and institutional adaptation and offering recommendations for educators and policymakers. Finally, it suggests that assessment, when innovatively designed, can evolve from a passive evaluative mechanism into an active driver of meaningful educational outcomes.

Keywords: Innovative language assessment, innovative pedagogy, learner motivation, learner autonomy, long-term achievement, technology-enhanced learning

Introduction

According to Fadilah *et al.*, (2023) ^[2] and other language researchers, language learning in the 21st century is undergoing constant and profound transformations. The processes, sources, and pace of acquiring a new language are rapidly evolving due to technological advancements, digital resources, and innovative teaching methodologies. Online platforms, interactive applications, and multimedia tools have expanded access to authentic language input and practice opportunities, reshaping the way learners engage with the target language. Social media, virtual classrooms, and AI-based language learning tools offer personalized pathways that accommodate different learning styles and proficiencies, enabling learners to practice beyond the traditional classroom setting (Chapelle & Voss, 2017) ^[8].

As language learning constantly evolves, traditional modes of assessment have struggled to keep pace. Conventional assessments, such as multiple-choice questions (MCQs), standard tests and rote memorization tasks, often fail to capture the complex and integrative skills required in real-world communication. They tend to prioritize accuracy over communicative competence, providing limited feedback to guide ongoing learning (Brown, 2004) ^[7]. Moreover, these assessments often promote extrinsic motivation, where learners focus on grades rather than genuine language acquisition, potentially undermining long-term engagement and learner autonomy (Ishaq *et al.*, 2020) ^[13].

In response, the field of language assessment is witnessing a shift toward innovative approaches that align evaluation with learning objectives and modern pedagogical practices. Innovative assessment emphasizes authenticity, formative feedback, and learner-centered approaches, integrating technology and performance-based evaluation to enhance both the assessment process and learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2009; O'Malley & Valdez, 1996) ^[5, 20]. By

fostering motivation, promoting autonomy, and supporting long-term achievement, these methods reconceptualize assessment as an active tool for learning rather than a static measure of proficiency (Alahmadi *et al.*, 2019) ^[1].

This article explores the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and challenges associated with innovative language assessment. It examines how formative assessment, portfolios, self- and peer-assessment, performance-based tasks, and technology-enhanced evaluation contribute to motivating learners, encouraging self-regulation, and sustaining achievement over time. The discussion also addresses potential obstacles, such as teacher readiness, time constraints, equity issues, and the reliability of subjective evaluation methods, and provides recommendations for effective integration in diverse educational contexts.

Objective of the Research

As contemporary lecturers of English language and literature, the researchers aim to review current related articles, case studies, peer discussions and classroom practices related to the effective use of innovative and meaningful language assessment. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To demonstrate the benefits of innovative language assessment in fostering meaningful learning outcomes.
- To explore and deliberate new ideas related to technology-based assessment in language learning.
- To identify and address the challenges associated with implementing innovative assessment practices.
- To recommend possible solutions and strategies for overcoming these challenges.

It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research will contribute to the development of more effective language

assessment strategies. Such strategies are expected to enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic learner motivation, foster autonomy, and encourage learners to take greater responsibility for their self-directed advancement.

Methodology

As this study is not based on primary empirical research, conventional methods of sampling and statistical data analysis were not employed. Instead, a qualitative and interpretative approach was adopted. The researchers drew upon a wide range of secondary sources, including related research papers published in reputable academic journals accessible online. Additionally, professional classroom experiences were integrated, providing practical insights into the implementation of innovative assessment strategies. Peer and group discussions with colleagues and students also enriched the analysis. Moreover, case studies emphatically established the demand of this paper ensuring that multiple perspectives were considered.

The study is structured thematically, presenting the discussion under the following major headings:

- Literature Review
- Innovative Assessment and Learner Motivation
- Innovative Assessment and Learner Autonomy
- Innovative Assessment and Long-term Achievement
- Technology in Innovative Assessment
- Comparison
- Challenges and Considerations
- Recommendations

This methodological approach enables a comprehensive review and critical analysis of existing scholarship while contextualizing findings within authentic classroom practices and in peer and group discussions.

Literature Review

Research over the past couple of decades has highlighted the limitations of traditional assessment and the benefits of innovative approaches. Traditionally long used standardized testing and summative assessments, while offering reliability and comparability, are often criticized for their narrow focus and failure to reflect authentic language use (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007) ^[12]. Learners exposed to these assessments may experience extreme anxiety, reduced engagement, and a focus on surface learning strategies aimed at grades rather than developing communicative competence (Dörnyei, 2001).

Formative assessment, as highlighted and emphasized by Black and Wiliam (1998, 2009) ^[5, 6], has emerged as a cornerstone of innovative language assessment. Formative approaches provide ongoing feedback that guides learning, identifies gaps, and informs instructional adjustments. Studies have shown that formative assessment positively impacts student motivation, self-efficacy, and achievement, particularly when feedback is timely, specific, and constructive. In language learning, this may include corrective feedback on pronunciation, body language (e.g. gestures), grammar, punctuation or vocabulary in spoken and written tasks, as well as comments on coherence and cohesion in extended writing (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019) ^[3].

Learner autonomy, mostly ignored in traditional summative assessment, is another critical dimension addressed by innovative assessment. Little (2005) ^[19] defines autonomy as

the capacity to take charge of one's learning through reflection, planning, and self-monitoring. Self-assessment and peer assessment are key strategies in fostering autonomy. Self-assessment encourages learners to identify strengths, weaknesses, and learning strategies, while peer assessment develops critical evaluation skills and collaborative learning. Research indicates that students engaged in self-regulated assessment demonstrate enhanced metacognitive skills, increased motivation, and improved learning outcomes (Zimmerman, 2002) ^[22].

Portfolio-based assessment represents a synthesis of formative evaluation and learner autonomy. Portfolios allow learners to compile and reflect on evidence of their development over time, encompassing written work, recordings, presentations, and multimedia projects (Genesee & Upshur, 1996) ^[15]. The reflective process embedded in portfolio assessment promotes both self-awareness and strategic planning, enabling learners to recognize progress, set goals, and take responsibility for their learning trajectory. Digital portfolios further enhance accessibility, interactivity, and multimodal representation of language skills, aligning with contemporary technological trends.

Performance-based assessment emphasizes authentic language use, often in communicative and collaborative contexts. Role-plays, debates, presentations, interviews, and project-based tasks simulate real-life scenarios, requiring learners to integrate linguistic, pragmatic, and strategic competencies (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996) ^[20]. By engaging learners in meaningful tasks, performance assessment increases intrinsic motivation and reinforces the relevance of language learning. Evidence from classroom studies suggests that students participating in performance-based assessments demonstrate improved speaking proficiency, pragmatic awareness, and confidence in communication (Fulcher & Davidson, 2007) ^[12].

Technology-enhanced assessment has revolutionized the ways in which language skills are measured and developed. Adaptive testing platforms, gamified quizzes, AI-driven pronunciation and grammar feedback, and online collaborative tasks provide immediate, individualized, and interactive assessment experiences (Chapelle & Voss, 2017; Reinhardt, 2019) ^[8, 21]. Such tools not only facilitate formative feedback but also increase engagement, reduce anxiety, and extend learning beyond the traditional classroom setting. The integration of technology in assessment aligns with the increasing digitalization of education and supports the development of 21st-century skills alongside language proficiency.

Despite the benefits, innovative assessment also presents challenges. Reliability and validity concerns arise in subjective evaluations, such as peer or performance-based assessment, requiring clear rubrics and criteria. Equity and access issues must be addressed, particularly in technology-enhanced assessments where students may have unequal access to digital devices and stable internet connection. Teacher preparedness and institutional support are also critical factors in successful implementation (Kunnan, 2018) ^[16].

Overall, the literature emphasizes that effective language assessment is multifaceted, integrating formative practices, learner-centered strategies, authentic tasks, and technological tools to promote motivation, autonomy, and sustainable achievement. This foundation sets the stage for exploring practical applications and strategies that educators

can adopt to implement innovative assessment in diverse language learning contexts.

Innovative Assessment and Learner Motivation

Motivation is a critical factor in successful language learning. According to Dörnyei (2001), learners' engagement, persistence, and effort are closely linked to both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational forces. Traditional assessment methods, often high-stakes exams and multiple-choice tests, can undermine motivation by emphasizing grades and penalizing errors rather than fostering growth. Anxiety and fear of failure associated with such assessments may lead learners to adopt surface-level strategies, such as rote memorization, rather than developing communicative competence (Ismail *et al.*, 2022)^[37].

Innovative assessment strategies, by contrast, prioritize meaningful, authentic, and learner-centered tasks. Formative assessment, with its focus on feedback and continuous improvement, has been shown to increase learners' confidence and persistence. Black and Wiliam (2009)^[5] demonstrated that learners who received ongoing, constructive feedback performed significantly better and exhibited higher motivation compared to those in traditional assessment settings. In practice, formative feedback can include corrective input on writing or speaking tasks, detailed comments on organization, coherence, and style, and guidance for self-directed learning.

Authentic, performance-based assessments also enhance motivation by connecting learning to real-world applications. Role-plays, debates, presentations, and project-based tasks engage learners in meaningful language use, allowing them to see the relevance of their learning beyond the classroom (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996)^[20]. For example, students creating podcasts or blogs in the target language not only practice linguistic skills but also gain a sense of achievement and public recognition, which enhances intrinsic motivation.

Choice and learner agency are central to motivation. Allowing learners to select topics for projects, choose formats for presenting their work, or determine which skills to focus on gives them a sense of control over their learning. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)^[9], autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key drivers of intrinsic motivation. Innovative assessments that embed these elements promote self-directed engagement, increasing effort, perseverance, and long-term learning outcomes.

Case Study: Enhancing Motivation Through Dialogue Writing

At a Saudi Arabian university English program of intermediate-level students, an innovative assessment activity was introduced in the form of dialogue writing and performance. Instead of completing a standard grammar test, students were asked to work in pairs or small groups to create short dialogues based on real-life situations, such as ordering food in a restaurant, interviewing for a part-time job, or making travel arrangements. Once written, these dialogues were rehearsed and performed in class.

Throughout the task, the teacher provided formative feedback, focusing on natural use of expressions, coherence, and communicative strategies rather than grammatical perfection alone. Students were also encouraged to incorporate humor, creativity, and personal experiences, which made the activity more enjoyable and meaningful.

The results were notable. Learners who were typically reluctant to speak in English demonstrated greater willingness to participate, as the dialogue format provided structure and reduced anxiety. Collaborative writing also fostered peer support, while the performance element gave students a sense of achievement and public recognition. Learners expressed that the task felt authentic and practical, as it prepared them for real-life communication.

This case study highlights that dialogue writing (Nation, 2009)^[25], when used as an assessment tool, can significantly enhance motivation by making learning interactive, purposeful, and learner-centered. It transforms assessment from a static measurement into a dynamic process that stimulates creativity and confidence in language use as dialogue writing and performance activities (Maley & Duff, 2005)^[26] promote authentic interaction and sustained learner engagement.

Innovative Assessment and Learner Autonomy

Autonomy, defined as the learner's capacity to take responsibility for their own learning, is both a goal and a mechanism in effective language education (Little, 1991)^[18]. Innovative assessment fosters autonomy by encouraging self-reflection, self-assessment, and strategic planning.

Self-assessment involves learners evaluating their own work against set criteria, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and strategies for improvement. This practice not only enhances metacognitive awareness but also develops learners' ability to monitor and regulate their own progress (Zimmerman, 2002)^[22]. For example, learners may rate their own oral presentations based on fluency, accuracy, and clarity, then create a personal action plan for improvement.

Peer assessment complements self-assessment by encouraging collaborative learning and critical reflection. Students evaluate each other's work using rubrics, provide constructive feedback, and compare their evaluations with their own performance. Research suggests that peer assessment can be as reliable as teacher assessment if structured carefully and guided by clear criteria (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000)^[11]. Additionally, peer interaction fosters communication skills, social competence, and a sense of responsibility.

Portfolio-based assessment integrates formative feedback and learner autonomy over time. Portfolios allow learners to compile written assignments, audio and video recordings, projects, and reflective entries. The longitudinal perspective enables learners to track progress, recognize patterns, and set personal learning goals (Genesee & Upshur, 1996)^[15]. Digital portfolios further enhance interactivity, enabling learners to include multimodal artifacts, link to online resources, and share work with peers and instructors. By taking an active role in assembling and evaluating their portfolios, learners develop self-regulation and independence, essential for lifelong learning.

Case Study: Fostering Autonomy Through Peer Assessment

In an undergraduate English communication course in a South Asian university, students engaged in a peer-assessment project as part of their speaking module. Each student recorded a short oral presentation on a chosen topic and then exchanged recordings with a classmate for evaluation. Using a clear rubric provided by the instructor—covering fluency, pronunciation, coherence, and content—

students provided written feedback and rated each other's performance.

The activity encouraged learners to critically evaluate both their peers' and their own presentations. Many students reported increased awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses, marking areas for improvement that they might have overlooked in traditional teacher-only assessment. Peer assessment also motivated learners to improve their work before submission, knowing it would be evaluated by classmates. Teachers observed that students demonstrated higher levels of self-regulation, responsibility, and engagement, and that collaborative discussions around feedback enhanced both learning and social interaction.

This case study illustrates that peer assessment (Topping, 2009) [29] can effectively cultivate learner autonomy, as students take active roles in evaluating, reflecting, and improving their own performance while supporting the development of their peers. In higher education through peer assessment, (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000) [11] student can evaluate their maturity by comparing peer and teacher marks.

Innovative Assessment and Long-term Achievement

Assessment practices play a decisive role in shaping learners' long-term achievement in language education. Enduring success in language learning requires strategies that foster sustainable growth and the ability to apply skills across contexts. Innovative assessment emphasizes process as well as product, encouraging learners to engage continuously and reflectively with the language.

Performance-based and project-based assessments simulate authentic communicative contexts, promoting transferable skills. Role-plays, debates, interviews, and presentations require learners to integrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, pragmatics, and strategic competence. Project-based tasks, such as producing a short film, writing a research report, or collaborating on a bilingual magazine, provide opportunities for extended language use, reflection, and feedback. These assessments cultivate creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking, all of which support long-term achievement (O'Malley & Valdez, 1996) [20].

Formative feedbacks are central to sustaining achievement. Continuous feedback informs learners of their progress, guides improvements, and encourages strategic learning behaviors. The iterative nature of formative assessment ensures that learning is not a one-off event but a continuous cycle of planning, monitoring, and reflection.

Technology-enhanced assessments further support long-term achievement. Adaptive platforms, online quizzes, and language apps provide instant feedback and track longitudinal progress. Gamified assessment systems, where learners earn badges or complete challenges, maintain motivation while reinforcing incremental improvement (Reinhardt, 2019) [21]. By integrating digital tools with authentic and reflective assessment practices, learners develop skills that endure beyond the classroom, preparing them for academic, professional, and social communication contexts.

Case Study: Sustaining Achievement Through Adaptive Technology

In a Saudi Arabian private language institute, instructors integrated an adaptive language learning platform into an intermediate-level English course. Students were asked to

complete weekly online tasks, including adaptive quizzes, vocabulary games, and short listening comprehension exercises. The platform tracked learners' progress over time automatically generating detailed performance analytics for both students and teachers.

This instant feedback was a key feature. Learners could immediately see which answers were correct, received hints for incorrect responses, and were provided with explanations to reinforce understanding. This adaptive nature of the software ensured that each learner was challenged at an appropriate level, preventing both boredom and frustration.

Teachers complemented the digital assessments with reflective classroom discussions, encouraging students to analyze their progress reports, identify weak areas, and set personal learning goals. Over the semester, students reported increased intrinsic motivation to sustain daily practice, as the gamified system awarded badges and progress milestones. Instructors also observed significant improvement in vocabulary retention and reading comprehension, attributing this to the continuous, personalized feedback cycle.

This case study demonstrates how technology-enhanced, adaptive assessment (Chapelle & Voss, 2016) [30] supports long-term achievement by reinforcing incremental progress, maintaining motivation, and cultivating self-regulated learning habits. Gamified system of the adaptive language assessment technology (Reinhardt & Fatma, 2024) [4] magnetizes the learners for repeated and sustainable language practice.

Technology in Innovative Assessment

The integration of technology has revolutionized assessment, offering flexibility, scalability, and personalization. Digital tools can support all stages of assessment, from task design to feedback delivery. Learning management systems (LMS) provide teachers with real-time data on learner engagement, progress, and performance, allowing for timely interventions. Automated speech recognition (ASR) and grammar-checking tools provide immediate corrective feedback for speaking and writing tasks, facilitating autonomous learning.

Adaptive testing adjusts the difficulty of questions based on learner responses, ensuring that assessments remain challenging yet achievable. Gamified assessment platforms enhance engagement by incorporating interactive elements, such as leaderboards, badges, and rewards, transforming evaluation into an enjoyable learning experience (Chapelle & Voss, 2017) [8].

Despite its benefits, technology-enhanced assessment requires careful implementation. Equity concerns must be addressed to ensure all learners have access to necessary devices and internet connectivity. Teachers need training to design meaningful digital assessments and interpret data effectively. Additionally, issues of data privacy and ethical use of AI tools must be considered to safeguard learners.

Comparison between Traditional & Innovative Assessment

This table of concise pedagogical comparison between traditional summative and innovative formative assessment clearly demonstrates their impacts in academic language learning.

Comparison Table		
Dimension	Traditional Summative Assessment	Innovative Formative Assessment
Purpose	To evaluate overall learning outcomes and achievement	To monitor, support and improve learning during the process
Timing	Conducted at the end of a course, unit, term, or academic year	Conducted continuously throughout instruction
Focus	Product-oriented	Process-oriented
Feedback	Limited or delayed feedback	Continuous, immediate, and constructive feedback
Learners' Role	Passive recipients of results	Active participants in learning and assessment
Strategy	Exam-oriented and result-driven	Growth-oriented and learning-centered
Motivational Impact	Often increases anxiety and fear of failure	Enhances motivation, confidence, and engagement
Skill	Emphasizes recall and accuracy	Emphasizes reflection, strategy use, and self-regulation
Examples	Final exams, standardized tests, end-term projects	Quizzes, drafts, peer review, portfolios, feedback sessions
Alignment	Limited alignment with innovative pedagogy	Strong alignment with innovative and learner-centered pedagogy
Impact on Autonomy	Low promotion of learner autonomy	Strong promotion of learner autonomy

Challenges and Considerations

While innovative assessment offers many benefits, the following practical and theoretical challenges remain there.

- **Reliability and validity:** Subjective assessments, such as portfolios or peer evaluations, require clear rubrics and standardization to ensure fairness.
- **Time constraints:** Designing, administering, and evaluating innovative assessments can be time-intensive for educators.
- **Teacher preparedness:** Successful implementation demands professional development in formative and alternative assessment practices.
- **Institutional constraints:** Curriculum policies, exam-oriented systems, and lack of administrative support may limit experimentation.
- **Equity and accessibility:** Digital assessments must consider learners' access to technology and internet connectivity (Kunnan, 2018)^[16].

Addressing these challenges requires systemic support, professional training, and thoughtful integration of assessment methods.

Recommendations

To maximize the impact of innovative assessment:

- Integrate a balanced mix of formative and summative assessment to maintain precision while promoting growth.
- Embed self- and peer-assessment practices to cultivate autonomy and critical thinking.
- Utilize authentic, performance-based, and project-based tasks to enhance relevance and motivation.
- Control digital tools judiciously, ensuring accessibility and meaningful feedback.
- Provide teacher training in alternative assessment methods and technological integration.
- Foster a reflective culture where assessment is viewed as an opportunity for learning rather than solely as evaluation.

Conclusion

Innovative language assessment transforms evaluation from a static measurement of knowledge into an active facilitator of learning. By integrating formative feedback, self- and peer-assessment, authentic tasks, and technology,

assessment can foster motivation, promote learner autonomy, and support long-term achievement. These approaches prepare learners for real-world language use, encourage self-regulation, and cultivate lifelong learning skills. Case studies highlight its impact and categorically establish the benefits of innovative language assessment. Although challenges remain—such as ensuring equity, reliability and teacher readiness—systemic support and professional development can address these issues. Ultimately, innovative assessment prepares learners for real-world communication, strengthens intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and promotes long-term achievement beyond the classroom.

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