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Book Review

Innovative Measures of Young Learners' English Language Proficiency: A Review of *English Language Proficiency Assessments for Young Learners*

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Amongst multifarious types of language assessments, English language proficiency (ELP) assessments, which are large-scale and standardized assessments, aim at consciously and systematically gathering information on students' general ELP. The book edited by Mikyung Kim Wolf and Yuko Goto Butler (2017a), a volume in the *Innovations in Language Learning and Assessment at ETS* series, documents development and validation of ELP assessments specifically designed for young learners aged between 5 and 13. Whilst ELP assessments presented in the book are theoretically grounded, evidence-driven, and practically applicable to ESL and EFL contexts all over the globe, they will unequivocally be more efficacious had stages of test development been followed more closely and notions of assessment for/as learning been taken into consideration.

The book comprises five sections and 14 chapters in total. Following Wolf and Butler's (2017b) introductory section and chapter, which provides an overview of ELP assessments for young learners by means of delineation of attributes of young learners as well as factors to be taken into consideration in design of ELP assessments for young learners, is a section outlining theoretical foundations as well as assessment frameworks of those assessments. Drawing upon several second language acquisition and linguistic theories, Bailey (2017) puts forward some suggestions on creation and use of ELP assessments for young learners in areas of language learning approaches, the ELP construct, and technology use; these suggestions lay the basis of design of ELP assessments for young students, three instances of which are presented in subsequent chapters, videlicet Cho et al.'s (2017) chapter on *TESOL Primary*, So et al.'s (2017) chapter on *TESOL Junior*, and Hauck et al.'s (2017) chapter on U.S. K-12 ELP assessments.

Having deliberated upon ELP assessments for young learners theoretically, the book proceeds to the third section, which is a collection of empirical studies investigating validity of the aforementioned concrete instances of ELP assessments conducted at distinct stages of the assessment process and with diverse research methods. In particular, Zu, Moulder, and Moergan (2017) and Gu and So (2017) conducted statistical analyses of the validity of test items in *TESOL Primary* and an exploratory study on strategies capitalized upon by test takers of the test respectively. Papageorgiou and Baron (2017) compared *TESOL Primary* and *TESOL Junior* against the Common European Framework of Reference whereas Gu, Lockwood, and Powers (2017) examine the extent to which *TESOL Junior* reflects developmental trajectories of young learners' language learning through nonexperimental longitudinal methodology. Last but surely not the least, Wolf et al. (2017) evaluate validity of U.S. K-12 ELP assessments via involvement of native English speakers as a control group.

With the advent of self-directed learning and technological advancements, three innovations in ELP assessments for young learners, videlicet Jang et al.'s (2017) Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment, Poehner, Zhang, and Lu's (2017) Dynamic Assessments, and Shore, Wolf, O'Reilly, and Sabatini's (2017) scenario-based assessment, are presented in the fourth section to illuminate future development of such assessments to revolutionize canonical standardized ELP assessments. Butler's (2017) concluding section and chapter summarizes predominant challenges confronted by educators in development of ELP assessment for young learners and provides suggestions on future research on young learners' ELP assessment.

The book undoubtedly possesses both theoretical and practical significance to both researchers in the field of second language instruction or assessments and second language educators working with young ESL as well as EFL learners. From a theoretical perspective, ELP assessments for young learners introduced in the volume constitute a novel and meaningful area of investigation subsumed under the field of second language instruction or assessments. Children disparate from adults in both cognitive and socioemotional respects, by no means should ELP of young learners and that of adults be assessed by identical means, so it is worth developing ELP assessments targeting specifically at young learners on the basis of one-of-a-kind attributes of those learners and treat these assessments as an independent area of research (Erickson, 1963; Piaget, 1970). From a practical perspective, the book provides ESL and EFL educators with useful assessment resources that can be readily put into practice. Being an integral component of teaching and learning, assessment is indispensable in the classroom (Berry, 2008); ELP assessments presented in the volume with conclusive evidence of validity are thereby profitable for educators in that they can be exploited to assess young learners' ELP.

For all theoretical and practical significance of the volume, ELP assessments presented appear to lack meticulous stages of test development. In accordance with Hughes (2003), there are altogether ten steps in development of a test, which embody statement of test problem, construction of test specifications, drafting of test items, trials of tests on native and non-native speakers, analysis of pilot test results, calibration of scales, validation, compilation of test handbooks, and training of relevant staff members. Some of the aforementioned stages are present in development of ELP assessments delineated in the book, videlicet *TESOL Primary* and *TESOL Junior*. For instance, conceptualization of the distinct constructs subsumed under ELP, such as the four language skills, is determined prior to construction of test items, and chief components of test specifications, videlicet content, structure, levels of performance, and scoring, are also offered (Alderson, n.d.). All the same, some procedures of test development, such as scale calibration, preparation for test handbooks, and manpower training, are kept out of consideration throughout the entirety of the book; this hinders administration of those ELP assessments in authentic educational contexts and can thereby be construed as one overriding caveat of the volume.

Not only complete procedures for test development but concepts of assessment for/as learning are also absent in the book. Assessment for learning (AfL) and assessment as learning (AaL), as complements of assessment of learning (AoL), play significant roles in supporting students' learning and nurturing autonomous learners respectively; the three are thereby suggested by Ng (2018) to coexist with one another for students' sake. Even though ELP assessments for young learners are claimed by Wolf and Butler (2017b) to be applicable to both AoL and AfL, being standardized, hardly do such assessments embrace the concept of AfL, let alone AaL. Meant to be formative in nature, AfL aims at assisting students in constructing knowledge in the course of assessment whilst AaL is intended to enable students to develop ownership of their own learning (Berry, 2008; Brown, 2004; Earl, 2013; Lee, 2016). ELP assessments for young learners can be administered amidst the learning process; that said, zeroing in on the product in lieu of process of learning, barely do they reflect concepts of AfL or AaL. For such a reason, even if such assessments provide valid measures of young learners' ELP, they are still far from flawless and ought to be complemented by alternative assessment practices so that AfL and AaL can be incorporated into instruction.

By and large, Wolf and Butler (2017a) have attempted to provide a comprehensive review of ELP assessments for young learners, which is significant both theoretically and practically, yet development of

such assessments fail to concur with canonical stages of test development strictly or take into consideration notions of assessment for/as learning. It is thereby suggested that ELP assessments be developed in accordance with standardized procedures and reflect the essence of AfL and AaL in the future so that both test administrators and test takers can benefit from those assessments.

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