

Language Testing in Second National Language Development among Sri Lankans: An Initial Review

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This paper aims to discuss the importance of second national language testing in Sri Lanka. Government has taken actions to teach Tamil or Sinhala as a second national language in different levels i.e. at school, university, and public administration and test them. Language testing at any level is a highly complex undertaking that must be based on theory as well as practice. Language testing in Sri Lanka, concentrates mostly on reading and writing, which are considered outdated and need to be improved, especially to meet the electronic era when the oral skills are dominating than other skills. In fact, there are no researches conducted to discuss the roles of second national language testing and its development in Sri Lanka even though there are various methods employed in language testing. In this initial studies, alignment studies of standards-based assessments have been applied. This methodology analyzes the alignment between the testing models and a set of content standards to provide evidence of testing validity and accountability which will help to achieve the essential goals of participants. For that, the selected content standards -curriculum and teachers' guide - followed by Sri Lankan institutions and assessment models-exam papers and the models - are collected and investigated. Discussing the importance of testing based on participants perspective which explores students' learning processes and exemplary performance. This review suggests that it is essential to examine not only final linguistic products of tests but also the entire test taking process to make language tests more communicatively relevant. The four-skill testing and alternative models are suggested to improve an alignment between the content standards and the assessments of Tamil or Sinhala for the sake of students. It also helps to identify that what actions can Sri Lankan institutions be taken to create a comprehensive testing system to develop students' communicative competence of second national language.

Keywords: Language Testing, Communicative Competence, Tamil, Sinhala, Second National Language Development