

The Application of ALP Assessment in The Argumentative Essay of Chinese Tem-4

Yanhe Zhou¹, Mohamad Jafre Bin Zainol Abidin²

^{1,2}School of Education and Liberal Studies, City University Malaysia, Petaling Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia
Email: *1747470458@qq.com*

ABSTRACT

Since its implementation in China, Test for English Majors-Band 4 (TEM-4) has been used as an authoritative test to test the English ability performance of professional students. The writing part, as a subjective level test, shoulders the effective way of language expression and application of English level test. In this paper, argumentative essays from the fourth major are selected as texts, and their language features and structure are evaluated with the ALP assessment tool, so as to better improve English majors' ability to write in different genres in the language proficiency test.

Keywords: ALP Assessment, TEM-4, Writing

A. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that an English proficiency test is a valuable tool for evaluating students' ability to communicate in English, especially their ability to write. Test for English Majors-Band 4 (TEM-4) is a national examination for Chinese English majors who have completed their second year at university. Over the course of approximately twenty years of evolution, the TEM has evolved into a prominent English proficiency test in China, gaining widespread acknowledgment from test takers, relevant institutions, and society as a whole. It is progressively assuming a vital role in the teaching and learning of the English language at the tertiary level (Y. Jin and J. Fan, 2011). As a college-level test for college English majors of China, TEM-4 has been used to impart basic English knowledge to English majors, conduct comprehensive and strict basic skills training, cultivate practical language ability, logical thinking ability and independent work ability, and enrich social and cultural knowledge. Enhance the sensitivity to cultural differences and further expand the scope of knowledge. The emphasis should be placed on the task of cultivating comprehensive English skills, enriching cultural knowledge and improving communicative competence (R. Zhang, 2023). And this test means to check the quality of foreign language teaching, test the implementation of the syllabus, and promote the reform of foreign language teaching. Tem-4 writing is composed of two parts, one of which is argumentative writing or expository writing.

However, with the improvement of the teaching level of English majors, in recent years, the writing test of TEM-4 has been adopted in the traditional way, which shows a single type and obsolete proposition, resulting in the development and improvement of professional students' language application ability, language knowledge range, logical thinking ability and other aspects (X. Yinghong, 2019). Thus, a new assessment tool needs to be introduced to test whether the writing of the TEM-4 needs to be reformed.

It is essential that students are proficient in both conversational and academic language in order to engage in meaningful learning in both informal and formal settings (P. Gibbons, 2018). Then, an academic language proficiency (henceforth ALP) assessment tool is needed for calling to assess the students' academic writing performance. Students need to master a variety of skills in order to achieve mastery of language and curriculum contents, including vocabulary, grammar, discourse knowledge, and functional skills, which consists of the ALP assessment framework (E. E. Jang, 2014). In the context of academic writing, argumentative essay has grammatical features, textual features and logical causality, so it is more suitable for ALP assessment tool. Halliday and Hasan explain lexical cohesion in the argumentative essay as the cohesive effect that is achieved by selecting vocabulary (M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan,

2014). This paper aims to explore the language proficiency skills by conducting the ALP assessment tool in the context of argumentative essay in TEM-4.

B. METHOD

The text is the sample writing chosen from TEM4 (Test for English Majors Brand 4) in China which is the writing part of this test. TEM 4 is a test for English major students in Chinese college, so the proficiency level of the participants is particularly focused on the sophomore English major students in China. They have a high English proficiency level in writing and reading. The genre of TEM 4 writing is argumentation which consists of title, introduction, body and conclusion. The topic of the essay is about online friend making. The author support that making friends online has more advantages than disadvantages, then he gives a lot of supporting ideas and concludes the main idea in the end. The first step is to conduct the discourse analysis to analyze the argumentation. In McKee's view, the analysis of texts differs depending on variations influencing comprehension, encompassing distinctions in cultures, variations in value assessments, distinctions in the presence of obstructive elements, differences in the presence of tangible elements, variations in the connections between elements, distinctions in rationale and cognition, and variations in perceptual perspectives (A. McKee, 2003). Researchers engage in textual analysis for three main objectives: attributing meaning to the text, comprehending the impact of external variables on the text, and assessing or critiquing the text (R. Frey and K. N. Cissna, 2009). After this procedure, the study employed ALP assessment tool to deeply develop its language features.

Table 1. ALP Assessment Tool of Argumentative Essay in TEM-4

Component	Writing
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collocation between noun, verb and preposition. (e.g. popular / patient + with; yield / solution / adapt / transfer / access + to) • Using common phrasal expressions. (e.g. confess to / set about / be used to + doing; be supposed to / have / make sb + do) • Being familiar with phrases formed by the same verb like

Discourse(textual)

- The content is strongly related to the topic or prompt and abundant.
 - The flow is arranged well with clear expression.
 - The organization is reasonable and logical.
 - There are varieties of sentence structures which in a right syntax rationale.
 - Well vocabulary range which are appropriate and accurate.
 - No grammatical mistakes.
 - Good spelling and hand writing and there are no punctuational errors in the text.
-

Based on the framework of ALP assessment, the Table 1 gives the components of the argumentative essay of TEM-4 in terms of vocabulary and discourse elements. The vocabulary section mainly includes the collocation between nouns, verbs and phrases. For example, the phrases “broaden our knowledge” and “active social life” in the essay should be considered in the vocabulary component of ALP assessment tool. The more details will be explained on the next section.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This ALP assessment is for English major students who are going to take TEM4 exam in the writing section. This assessment offers an overview of the standard criteria and strategies which help students get a very good points in the exam. To be more specific, the point scale range and its criteria is shown on the Table 2:

Table 2. Criteria of TEM-4 Writing Based on ALP Assessment

Component	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Below Standard	Fail
Vocabulary	13-15pts	10-12 pts	7-9 pts	4-6 pts	0-3 pts
Discourse	13-15pts	10-12 pts	7-9 pts	4-6 pts	0-3 pts

According to the table, the total points are 15 points in the writing part. Students are valued as different levels based on ALP assessment. The point scale shows how much will students reach to their level. Then in order to make students a higher score, it is concluded with some strategies for them to be familiar with and make full use of the ALP assessment tool.

As for vocabulary component, if students do not come up with some accurate words to write, they are suggested to use synonyms to express themselves. For instance, “decades” could be replaced as “ten years”. “Increase” is also be replaced as “go up, rise, grow, jump, climb”. Many Chinese students like to use “think” in the writing. However, they are more suggested to use “agree, claim, maintain, argue, believe”.

In addition, the writing test is a subjective test, so its reliability is mainly focused on the reliability of the marking paper. Although in the marking process, each marker will evaluate the quality of an article according to the standards of language application ability, organizational ability, logical thinking ability and so on, under the overall marking system, because the essay proposition is stale and single, the marker will only look at the students' language application, and ignore other writing skills, such as logical thinking ability, under the conventional standards. It also reduces the reliability of the test.

D. CONCLUSION

To sum up, this ALP assessment tool is not only helpful and useful for students but also provides a standard and reference for teachers to teach academic writing for English major students in Chinese college. As a language level test, the writing test of TEM-4 shoulders the heavy responsibility of testing the language expression ability and language application ability of students. However, due to traditional reasons, the current writing test of TEM-4 shows its outdated and monotonous writing style, which affects the development of students' writing skills, language knowledge and logical thinking ability to a certain extent. However, the application of ALP assessment tool may strive to achieve scientific and fair testing while balancing the basic principles and considerations of testing. It can effectively achieve the purpose of writing test and improve the comprehensive language level of professional students.

From the results, the TEM-4 writing is also limited in the content and scope of the proposition, and is more confined to a circle, which cannot train the candidates' real language ability and logical thinking ability. The future research is expected to establish a variety of writing assessment tool and test on the reliability and validity of TEM-4 writing.

E. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this conference. In recognition of their support and the very efficient assistance they provided during the conference, we would like to thank several organizations: all the plenary conference staff and organizers of OCERI 2023, and the special thanks for one of the keynote speakers

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohamad Jafre Bin Zainol Abidin who is also the second author of this paper. Please accept my sincere thanks for recommending that I attend this conference and for encouraging me to do the presentation. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the coordinator Kasmairi, who has always provided me with a great deal of assistance in any time of need.

REFERENCES

- A. McKee. (2003). *Textual Analysis*. SAGE.
- E. E. Jang, (2014). *Focus on Assessment-Oxford Key Concepts for the Language Classroom*. Oxford University Press.
- M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan. (2014). *Cohesion in English*. Routledge.
- P. Gibbons. (2018). *Bridging Discourses in the ESL Classroom*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- R. Frey and K. N. (2009). *Handbook of Applied Communication Research*. Routledge.
- R. Zhang. (2023). Validating an EFL Summative Test in Business English Major at a Chinese University. *English Language Teaching and Linguistics Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, p. p167, doi: 10.22158/eltls.v5n3p167.
- X. Yinghong. (2009). Workplace English Teaching and College English Test Band 4. *Education Study*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 30–36, doi: 10.35534/es.0101003.
- Y. Jin and J. Fan. (2011). Test for English Majors (TEM) in China. *Language Testing*, vol. 28, no. 4, pp. 589–596, Oct. doi: 10.1177/0265532211414852.