

**ENHANCING LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT FOR ADULT ESOL REFUGEE STUDENTS
THROUGH PERFORMANCE-BASED APPROACHES**

by

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the efficacy of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in adult ESOL programs for refugees at the Refugee Development Center in Lansing, Michigan, where I work with a diverse population of adult learners. This study delves into the realm of language proficiency challenges faced by adult ESOL refugee students, a demographic that often grapples with significant barriers to English language acquisition. Grounded in the broader context of global educational trends and drawing upon the inclusive teaching methodologies and responsive assessment techniques advocated by Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow (2014), this research aims to contribute valuable insights to the field of language education. Specifically, it addresses the need for practical, participatory approaches in teaching language, resonating with my professional role and aligning with the educational objectives of my organization. The study not only reflects my commitment to enhancing language education for adult refugees but also seeks to offer empirically based strategies to improve their educational experiences and outcomes.

Context

At the Refugee Development Center, we provide essential educational services to refugees in Michigan, many of whom face substantial language barriers. The learner context is complex, marked by diverse educational backgrounds, trauma, and cultural dissonance. Traditional language assessments often fall short in addressing these multifaceted needs, highlighting the necessity for more adaptable and empathetic educational approaches (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

The central problem of this study is the potential inadequacy of traditional language assessment methods in effectively evaluating and supporting the language acquisition of adult ESOL refugee students. Conventional assessments, with their focus on rote memorization and theoretical knowledge, often fail to capture practical language skills and may not accommodate learners with non-linear educational histories and trauma (Alrubail, 2016).

Rationale

The rationale for this study hinges on the necessity for innovative and context-sensitive assessment approaches in language education. Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) are pivotal in this regard, offering a practical and applicable method for language learning, especially beneficial for learners from diverse backgrounds like refugees. Drawing upon the experience from Tanzanian EFL teaching, PBAs are seen as effective tools to enhance interaction, encourage participation, and develop critical thinking skills. This approach is aligned with the current educational trend towards more inclusive and practical methodologies, which is particularly relevant in the dynamic and varied context of refugee education (Norris, 2016).

Prior Interventions

In the Tanzanian EFL context, teachers faced challenges in fostering speaking skills due to an overemphasis on standardized tests. By shifting towards performance-based activities, there was a noticeable improvement in students' language proficiency and confidence. In the Refugee Development Center, similar attempts, including interactive exercises and context-based learning, have been made, but without a structured PBA framework. This study seeks to bridge that gap by methodically evaluating PBAs in a refugee education setting.

Research Questions

In the realm of applied research, the articulation of research questions is crucial for delineating the study's focus and guiding its methodological framework. This investigation is centered on exploring the efficacy and impact of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) within the context of adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs designed for refugees. By examining PBAs through a dual-faceted lens, this study aims to unearth both the subjective experiences of learners and the objective advancements in their language proficiency, thus offering a comprehensive evaluation of PBAs in this specialized educational setting.

Research Question 1 (RQ1):

What are the perceived benefits and challenges of Performance-Based Assessments from the perspectives of adult ESOL refugee students?

This inquiry seeks to delve into the subjective experiences of ESOL learners, aiming to understand their perceptions regarding the advantages and potential hurdles of PBAs in their language learning journey. It endeavors to grasp a detailed comprehension of the students' perspectives on how PBA strategies dovetail with their individual learning preferences, prior educational backgrounds, and current linguistic objectives.

Research Question 2 (RQ2):

How does the implementation of Performance-Based Assessment affect the English language proficiency of adult ESOL refugee students?

This question is aimed at quantifying the direct effects of PBA on learners' English language capabilities, exploring how PBAs influence key competencies such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Moreover, it seeks to examine the wider ramifications of

enhanced language proficiency, including boosted confidence in communication and a more active participation in both community and professional realms.

Through these inquiries, the study aspires to contribute a deepened understanding of PBAs' effectiveness within ESOL programs, offering critical insights into language assessment and pedagogical approaches that cater to the unique needs of adult refugees. The anticipated outcomes are expected to provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum design, teaching strategies, and educational policy formulation in the domain of adult language learning.

Significance of the Study

This study holds substantial significance in the realm of language education, particularly in its potential to revolutionize language assessment practices for adult ESOL refugee students. By delving into Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs), the research is poised to significantly contribute to the development of more inclusive and practical assessment methodologies. This approach is not just limited to the context of refugee education in the United States but also draws parallels with global educational trends and findings from diverse contexts, such as the Tanzanian EFL teaching experience (Batalova & Fix, 2017).

The integration of PBAs within refugee education presents a unique set of opportunities and challenges. Given the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of refugees, traditional standardized assessments often fall short in providing a comprehensive evaluation of their language skills. PBAs, in contrast, offer a more holistic approach by assessing language skills within practical, real-life contexts. This method allows for the assessments to be tailored to individual learner profiles, thereby accommodating their cultural backgrounds, prior educational experiences, and specific language needs. Such customization ensures that the language

assessment is not only relevant but also effective in meeting the learners' real-world requirements.

Drawing insights from the Tanzanian EFL project I completed last summer, it is evident that PBAs have the potential to significantly enhance language learning outcomes. The project highlighted the importance of active participation, critical thinking, and the practical application of language skills—aspects that are crucial for adult ESOL refugee students. The need for these students to acquire language skills that are immediately applicable in their everyday interactions makes the case for PBAs even stronger. By adopting strategies that promote engagement and motivation, PBAs in refugee education are likely to lead to improved language acquisition and greater learner confidence.

However, implementing PBAs in the context of refugee education is not without its challenges. These include addressing resource limitations, accommodating varying levels of language proficiency among students, and the necessity for specialized teacher training in PBA methodologies. To tackle these issues, the study proposes to explore various strategies. These include the development of teacher training programs focused on PBA techniques, creating context-appropriate assessment tasks, and leveraging technology to facilitate the assessment process. Addressing these challenges head-on is crucial for the successful integration and effectiveness of PBAs in refugee education settings.

In summary, this study is poised to make a significant impact not only on the educational experiences of adult ESOL refugee students but also on the broader field of language education. By implementing and refining PBAs, it aims to pave the way for more effective, engaging, and relevant language learning and assessment, thus resonating with the global need for educational practices that are both participatory and practical.

LITERATURE REVIEW: ENHANCING LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT FOR ADULT ESOL REFUGEE STUDENTS THROUGH PERFORMANCE-BASED APPROACHES

Introduction to Refugee Language Education Challenges

The recent global displacement crisis has resulted in refugees facing significant language barriers in new environments, particularly in the United States. English language proficiency is pivotal for effective communication and societal integration in the U.S. (Batalova & Fix, 2017). The unique challenges faced by refugees, including trauma and disrupted education, necessitate the exploration of innovative assessment methods in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs, leading to the growing interest in Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) as a holistic approach (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019).

Effectiveness of Performance-Based Assessments

Extensive research underscores the efficacy of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in enhancing language proficiency, particularly for learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Tshabangu-Soko & Caron (2011) spotlight the unique barriers African refugees encounter in ESOL programs, advocating for PBAs as a pivotal solution. Ross (2005) provides a compelling contrast between traditional assessments and PBAs, demonstrating PBAs' significant role in fostering language skill development. Drawing from my study's findings, PBAs not only augmented language proficiency among Tanzanian EFL students but also catalyzed improvements in confidence, communicative competence, and engagement in English. These outcomes echo the broader educational imperative for assessments that resonate with real-world language use, affirming PBAs' critical contribution to language learning in multicultural and multilingual contexts.

Challenges and Benefits of PBAs in Practice

The implementation of PBAs unveils a spectrum of challenges and benefits within the context of language education. Salma & Prastikawati (2021) delve into the positive impacts and practical obstacles of PBAs, articulating a nuanced view of their application in English language learning environments. Alrubail (2016) emphasizes the necessity for inclusive assessment strategies, highlighting the imperative to navigate these challenges for PBAs' successful application. Reflecting on experiences from Tanzania, the adoption of PBAs was met with enthusiasm for their ability to engage students actively and personalize learning experiences. Despite facing hurdles such as resource constraints and varied English proficiency levels, the benefits, including enhanced motivation, practical language application, and speaking confidence, significantly outweighed the challenges. This alignment with global educational trends towards more authentic and learner-centered assessment methodologies reinforces the importance of PBAs in addressing the diverse needs of language learners, including adult ESOL refugee students.

Wider Implications in Adult Refugee Education

The application of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in adult refugee education extends beyond language proficiency, touching upon the critical development of analytical and critical thinking skills. Makmuroh, Pratama, and Astuti (2022) highlight the transformative potential of PBAs in English learning, where the focus on process-oriented assessments fosters not just linguistic capabilities but also enhances students' ability to analyze and critically engage with content. This approach aligns with broader educational objectives, aiming to equip learners with the skills necessary for successful integration and participation in their new communities. By emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving in language education, PBAs contribute to

a more holistic educational experience for refugees, addressing both immediate communication needs and long-term personal and professional development goals. This perspective underscores the vital role of PBAs in creating more inclusive, adaptive, and impactful educational practices within the context of refugee education.

The Role of PBAs in Developing Critical Thinking Skills

Studies by Chamorro et al. (2023) and Koné (2015) delve into the nuanced impacts of PBAs within the realm of adult ESOL refugee education, underscoring the importance of tailoring educational approaches to meet the specific needs of this diverse learner population. These researchers illuminate how PBAs, when thoughtfully implemented, can significantly enhance student motivation and positively influence emotional well-being. By fostering a learning environment that recognizes and respects the unique backgrounds and experiences of refugee students, PBAs encourage active engagement and investment in the learning process. This personalized approach not only aids in language acquisition but also supports the overall mental and emotional health of students, contributing to a more effective and humane educational experience. Chamorro et al. and Koné's findings advocate for the development of context-specific strategies that leverage the strengths of PBAs to meet the distinct challenges faced by adult ESOL refugee learners.

Global Trends and Refugee Language Education

The integration of PBAs in adult refugee language education aligns with global educational trends towards practical and participatory approaches, emphasizing the need for effective, engaging, and relevant language education tailored to the needs of adult refugees.

Summary

This review has illuminated the transformative role of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in advancing language proficiency within adult ESOL programs for refugees. Drawing upon a diverse array of studies, I have seen PBAs distinguished not only for their effectiveness in fostering linguistic skills but also for their capacity to engage learners on multiple levels—emotionally, cognitively, and socially. The insights reveal a complex landscape of challenges and benefits, emphasizing the necessity for contextually adapted strategies that resonate with the unique experiences of refugees. The evidence underscores PBAs' potential to reshape language assessment practices, advocating for a shift towards more practical, inclusive, and student-centered approaches. This synthesis suggests that PBAs represent a pivotal avenue for innovation in language education, promising to enhance both the efficacy and the humaneness of teaching practices in ESOL contexts.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in enhancing language proficiency among adult ESOL refugee students. This research aims to align with inclusive teaching methodologies and responsive assessment techniques, reflecting global trends in practical and participatory language learning.

Research Questions

1. What are perceived benefits and challenges of implementing Performance-Based Assessments in ESOL programs for refugees?
2. How does the implementation of Performance-Based Assessment affect the English language proficiency of adult ESOL refugee students?

Study Population

The study population comprises adult ESOL refugee students enrolled in language programs at the Refugee Development Center in Lansing, Michigan. This population is characterized by a diverse range of educational backgrounds, ages, socio-economic statuses, and varied levels of language proficiency.

Population Justification

The selection of this population is informed by their distinct linguistic diversity and educational needs. Adult ESOL refugee students embody a rich tapestry of language backgrounds, including Haitian Creole, Arabic, Pashto, Dari, Spanish, Kinyarwanda, Swahili, and Russian, among others. This diversity not only presents unique challenges in language acquisition but also mirrors the linguistic landscape of Tanzania, where students navigate learning in English amidst a multitude of local languages. The necessity for intentional language

use in educational settings is critical; without active encouragement and opportunities to practice English, students may remain reticent to communicate. This study aims to explore how Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) can address these challenges by fostering an environment that promotes active English usage, drawing parallels to the context in Tanzania where the lack of language practice opportunities hinders proficiency. This approach is supported by the insights of Brown & Abeywickrama (2019), who highlight the complexities of language education in multicultural and multilingual settings.

Intervention

The intervention in this study involves the implementation of PBAs in the language curriculum of the ESOL program. PBAs include various activities and strategies focused on practical language use rather than traditional rote memorization and theoretical knowledge assessment methods.

Intervention Plan

The intervention, spanning four weeks, focused on pyramid small group discussion activities, a dynamic approach tailored to enhance language proficiency among adult ESOL refugee students. In these sessions, students engaged in structured discussions where they are given scenarios to deliberate, share opinions, and navigate through agreement or disagreement, culminating in a group consensus. Each student then presented their group's conclusions and insights to another group, fostering active participation and the use of English in formulating and articulating thoughts. These activities are designed not only to encourage students to contribute actively but also to develop their ability to construct and present ideas logically in English while responding to questions. To assess the effectiveness of this approach, rubrics were used for self, peer, and teacher evaluations, focusing on criteria such as speaking participation, confidence, and

the construction of well-structured English sentences. This intensive intervention model aims to create a concentrated and interactive learning environment, maximizing the opportunity to observe significant changes in language proficiency and attitudes towards Performance-Based Assessments within the condensed research timeframe.

Sources of Data

To capture the comprehensive impact of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in adult ESOL refugee education, this study employed three primary sources of data: pre- and post-intervention surveys, semi-structured interviews, and assessments based on rubrics. These sources are chosen for their ability to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the effectiveness of PBAs.

1. **Pre and Post-Intervention Surveys:** These surveys were critical in collecting quantitative data that reflects changes in perceptions and attitudes towards PBAs among students over time. The surveys are designed to assess familiarity with and opinions on implementing PBAs in the classroom, providing baseline and follow-up data essential for evaluating the intervention's impact (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** These interviews provided qualitative insights into individual experiences, challenges, and opinions related to PBAs. The interactive format allows for in-depth exploration of subjective experiences and perceptions, essential for understanding the nuanced impacts of PBAs in the ESOL program (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Instrumentation

The study utilized several instruments to assess the impact of PBAs on language proficiency and learning outcomes:

1. **Small Group Speaking Activities and Rubrics:** To foster interaction and speaking skills, pyramid group discussion activities were used as PBA speaking activities. These activities are designed to provide students with opportunities to practice speaking in smaller groups before engaging with the entire class. The rubrics for these activities are created to assess both instructor and student evaluations, offering a structured yet adaptable means of evaluating language proficiency (Scrivener, 2009).
2. **Survey Instruments:** The pre-workshop survey collected background data, such as contact information and language learning experience, along with participants' knowledge and prior experiences with PBAs. The post-piloting survey gauged participants' opinions on learning through PBAs. The survey questions ranged from practical aspects of PBA to gaining participants' insights on PBA effectiveness in improving spoken skills.

Research Procedure

The researcher acquired permission to conduct the study at the Refugee Development Center in Lansing, Michigan. This involved submitting a detailed research proposal to the campus leader, outlining the study's aims, methods, and ethical considerations. The researcher ensured that the study aligned with the center's guidelines and policies regarding research involving human participants. After receiving approval, the researcher proceeded with the study, adhering to the established research protocol.

Soliciting Participants

To recruit participants for the study, the researcher leveraged his position as an ESOL instructor at the Refugee Development Center. The recruitment process involved presenting the research study to adult ESOL refugee students enrolled in level three classes, whose English proficiency was considered low to mid-intermediate. Information sessions were held to explain

the study's purpose, procedures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Interested students were provided with additional details and given the opportunity to ask questions.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participating students. The researcher explained the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits in understandable terms. Participants were informed of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A digital consent form, connected to the pre-intervention survey, was used for participants to indicate their consent. This form was distributed via a Google Form link, ensuring convenience and accessibility for participants. The Google Form recorded the date and time of consent, serving as a digital record. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in handling their responses.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected using pre and post-intervention surveys, semi-structured interviews, and rubrics for evaluating speaking skills and confidence.

Pre and Post-Intervention Surveys: These surveys collected quantitative data on participants' English proficiency, confidence, and perceptions of PBAs. The pre-intervention survey assessed participants' baseline language skills and experiences with language learning, while the post-intervention survey measured changes post-PBAs implementation. Surveys were administered online using a secure platform to ensure confidentiality and ease of access for participants.

Semi-structured Interviews: These interviews provided qualitative insights into participants' experiences with PBAs. The interviews were conducted in a group setting, allowing participants to share their experiences and perspectives. The researcher guided the discussion using pre-determined open-ended questions, ensuring that all relevant topics were covered. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis with participants' consent (Kostere & Kostere, 2021).

Rubrics for Evaluation: Rubrics were used to assess participants' speaking skills and confidence. These included criteria for evaluating language proficiency and participation in PBA activities. The rubrics were applied to speaking activities and presentations conducted as part of the ESOL curriculum (Scrivener, 2009).

In conclusion, this methodology aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of PBAs on adult ESOL refugee students' language proficiency and learning experiences. The combination of surveys, interviews, and rubrics enabled a holistic assessment of PBAs' effectiveness, contributing valuable insights to the field of language education for refugees.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in social science research, particularly studies involving human participants, are crucial to upholding the integrity and protecting the well-being of those involved. In this study on Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) in adult ESOL refugee programs, ethical considerations take precedence to prevent any potential emotional or targeted harm to participants. The principles of respect, beneficence, and justice, as outlined in the Belmont Report (1979), along with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (2010), form the foundation of this research. These guidelines ensure that participants are treated with dignity and respect, their autonomy is honored, and any potential risks are minimized.

Considerations During Intervention

The intervention phase of the study was handled with sensitivity and transparency. Participants were informed that their identities, personal information, and responses remained confidential and anonymous in the study's findings. This assurance of confidentiality aims to foster trust between the researcher and participants, encouraging open and honest participation.

This process aligns with Creswell and Poth's (2018) guidelines on ethical research practices and respects the participants' rights to privacy.

Considerations During Data Collection

In the data collection phase, the safety and well-being of participants are of paramount importance. Measures were put in place to ensure a non-intrusive and respectful data collection process, taking into account the cultural and personal backgrounds of the participants. Interviews, surveys, and observations were conducted in a manner that minimized stress or discomfort. The study employed data anonymization techniques to ensure participants' confidentiality, adhering to the ethical guidelines proposed by Kostere and Kostere (2021).

Considerations of Researcher Bias

To address and mitigate potential researcher bias, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach and incorporated peer analysis during the data interpretation phase. This approach reduces the likelihood of subjective biases influencing the findings and enhances the study's objectivity and credibility. Triangulation of data sources – including surveys, interviews, and rubrics – ensured a comprehensive understanding of the impact of PBAs, as recommended by Scrivener (2009).

Summary

This Applied Research Proposal places a strong emphasis on ethical considerations throughout the research process. From obtaining permission from the Refugee Development Center to the careful handling of participant data, every step of the study underscores a commitment to ethical research practices. The methodologies employed, such as digital consent forms and objective assessment tools, ensure the protection and respectful treatment of participants. This approach not only aims to yield valuable insights into the effectiveness of PBAs but also serves as a testament to the ethical rigor applied in social science research. By

adhering to these ethical standards, the study aims to contribute meaningful knowledge to the field of language education while upholding the highest standards of research ethics.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In these sections, I present a detailed examination of the study's findings in response to my research questions regarding the impact of Performance-Based Assessments (PBAs) on adult ESOL refugee students. This section begins with an overview of the qualitative analysis approach adopted, following the theoretical coding guide by Kostere & Kostere (2021), highlighting the process of thematic analysis through deductive and inductive coding. I then transition to presenting the results, structured around the central themes that emerged from the data, such as the benefits and challenges of PBAs and their influence on language proficiency. This narrative synthesizes the subjective experiences and objective outcomes observed, offering a comprehensive understanding of PBA's role in enhancing educational and language acquisition outcomes for refugee students in ESOL programs.

Data Analysis Procedure: Validity and Reliability

In ensuring the validity and reliability of this study's findings, a qualitative method following Kostere & Kostere's (2021) theoretical coding guide was employed. This section outlines the meticulous process undertaken to analyze the collected data, aiming to accurately represent participants' experiences and maintain a consistent analytical approach. The methodological rigor applied in thematic analysis, combined with systematic coding and categorization using Microsoft Word and Excel (De Felice & Janesick, 2015), underscores the study's commitment to producing credible and reliable insights into the impact of Performance-Based Assessments on adult ESOL refugee students.

After being transcribed, the interview and survey data were exported to a Microsoft Excel sheet, where each data source was examined separately using in vivo coding (pre-workshop survey, post-piloting survey, and interview). As shown in Table 1, I first created labels for each analytical stage and assigned colors to the categories. Then, I attempted to match

the data meaning units to the predetermined themes (i.e., benefits of using PBAs, challenges and possible solutions to identified challenges), as indicated in steps 1-4 below, and finished the analyses, as shown in steps 5-11. Following steps 5–11 once more, I returned to the data in phase two and worked with data units and patterns that didn't seem to fit the preset categories. The themes discovered in the second phase of analysis were not present in the current study but contributed to understanding participants' teaching experiences. Below, I have included the interpretive coding in accordance with Kostere & Kostere's (2021) theoretical coding guide.

Step by Step: Theoretical Analysis by Kestere & Kostere (2022), p.59.

Steps	Description
Step 1	Review each participant's data (interviews, journals, field notes, records, documents, etc.). Reread the text with the predetermined categories (themes) and the research question in mind. Highlight any sentences, phrases, or paragraphs that seem meaningful, and remain open to any new patterns and themes that have developed from the data analysis. The researcher examines each participant's data separately.
Step 2	Review the highlighted data for each participant using your research question to determine relevance. Some of the transcript's material may be intriguing, but not relevant.
Step 3	Remove highlighted data not pertinent to your topic; establish a separate file. You may want to revisit these numbers later.
Step 4	Code or describe each data item. Descriptors or names are often data-specific.
Step 5	Cluster related data and generate patterns.
Step 6	Patterns connected to a previous theme are paired among additional patterns that coincide with the subject, along with direct quotes from the data (transcribed interviews, field notes, papers, etc.) to illustrate the pattern.
Step 7	Patterns that don't fit pre existing themes should be retained in a separate file for future review. - Repeat Steps 1–7 for each participant.
Step 8	Revisit the patterns that didn't fit the preexisting categories and be open to new research-related patterns and topics.
Step 9	Each pattern should be explained with data quotes.

Step 10	Write a detailed analysis of each theme's breadth and substance.
Step 11	The facts are combined to generate a composite synthesis of the question.

	B	C	D	E	F	G
3	PBA Overall Experience	Perceived impact	Specific PBA Activity Enjoyed	Challenges and Solutions	Confidence in Speaking	Suggestions for Improvements
4	I like speaking English BUT VERY DIFFICULT GRAMMAR	I Feel better	I like talk to class as a whole group discussion	I can't answer	9	no
5	I like to talk with people Help full to Improve my English and the people is talk so fast it is hard for me.	It is a good effect for me speaking is better. NO FEAR OF SPEAKING	Conversation and debate activities	Finding words to express my ideas, solution I use google translate or ask the teacher	8	I want to see more of speaking activities. I want to see the forms to evaluate my speaking. I improve with that
6		When I am speaking I am learning new word and its so helpful to speak with other people Make me confidence and I am thinking you can do it just start talking .	The most helpful listening when Teacher talking and participate in class and make a note for the all vocabulary and practice at home.	other people talk so fast. it's hard to use correct grammar	9	It is helpful when discusses with people and the conversation is so helpful for me
7	I like grammar, reading, speaking. Challenge for me are listening and understanding video, songs.	I still don't understand people on the street very well, but I think my vocabulary is bigger now, and my confidence is better	Helpful for me were activity as speaking in small group, listening video and songs, learning grammar and pronunciation	For me is difficult to make my assessment	8	no

Figure 1: Coding Sample

	A	B	C	D	E	F
37		Specific Challenges:	Language Skills:	Rubric Evaluations: 2	Suggested Solutions: 4	4-7 Medium - 2
38						8-10 High -6
39						
40	Comparison Pre & Post	PBA Overall Experience:	Perceived Impact on Confidence and Skills:	Enjoyment of Specific PBA Activities:	Challenges and Solutions:	Suggestions for Improvement:
41		-Pre-intervention: Some students had reservations about PBA, with concerns over grammar and speaking speed. -Post-intervention: A notable shift towards positive feedback, with 7 out of 9 responses indicating an improved experience with PBA, despite ongoing challenges with grammar and speaking speed.	-Pre-intervention: The confidence ratings were more in the medium range (4-7), with no students in the high category. -Post-intervention: Confidence in speaking has generally increased, with 6 students now rating their confidence as high (8-10).	-Pre-intervention: Preferences included more practice and conversational activities. -Post-intervention: Students expressed enjoyment of interactive activities such as whole group discussions, debates, and small group activities.	-Pre-intervention: Challenges centered around speaking too fast and grammar. -Post-intervention: Some challenges persist (fast speaking, finding words), but there are indications of developing strategies to overcome them, such as using Google Translate or asking for teacher assistance.	-Pre-intervention: Students expressed a desire for more speaking activities and forms for evaluation. -Post-intervention: Suggestions include a continued desire for more to improve English and specific forms to evaluate speaking.
42						
43						

Figure 2: Coding Sample

Research Positionality

The author, with a robust academic and professional background in language education, including a Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), brings a comprehensive and informed perspective to this study. This author's expertise is rooted in a decade of diverse teaching experiences, ranging from local language instruction to ESOL at various levels. These experiences, coupled with a deep understanding of curriculum design and development, particularly in the context of refugee and immigrant education, provide the study with a rich insight into the practical and theoretical aspects of language teaching and assessment. The author's involvement in curriculum feedback, course development, and direct teaching roles, especially within multicultural and multilingual settings, lends invaluable depth to the research, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities in language education for adult refugees.

Results/Findings

In this section, I unveil the findings that emerged from my qualitative analysis, addressing my research questions on the perceived benefits and challenges of PBAs in ESOL programs for refugees, and their impact on the English language proficiency of adult ESOL refugee students. Through a systematic theoretical analysis of the rich qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and surveys, I have distilled coherent themes that not only reflect the voices and experiences of my participants but also provide critical insights into the effectiveness and reception of PBA in a real-world educational context. These findings are structured to first explore the multifaceted perspectives of participants on the benefits and challenges of PBA, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of their experiences. Subsequently, I delve into the tangible impact of PBA on language proficiency, illuminating the transformative power of these assessments through the participants' narratives. This section serves as a convergence of diverse stories, struggles, and triumphs, highlighting the evolution of language proficiency and confidence among refugee students in an ESOL setting and inviting readers to engage with the transformative journey of learning and growth facilitated by PBA.

Description of Findings

RQ1: Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Performance-Based Assessments (PBA) from Students' Perspectives

This section addresses the first research question by delving into students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of PBAs in their ESOL language learning journey. Through a qualitative analysis of both pre- and post-intervention survey data and semi-structured interviews, I uncover the diverse experiences of adult ESOL refugee students engaging with

PBA. This analysis offers a comprehensive view of how PBA impacts their quest for English proficiency.

Benefits of PBA

Increased Confidence and Participation (Approximately 70% of Participants):

Increased confidence in language use was a recurrent theme, particularly highlighted in post-intervention responses. One participant's statement in the post-intervention survey, "I feel better," succinctly captures a sentiment of empowerment echoed by many others. A similar view is expressed by another participant, "It is a good effect for me speaking is better. NO FEAR OF SPEAKING," illustrating PBA's transformative impact on overcoming psychological barriers to language acquisition.

Enhanced Motivation and Engagement (Approximately 65% of Participants):

The interactive nature of PBA was repeatedly noted as a significant motivator. A student's reflection from the post-intervention survey, "I like it because it is motivating me to improve my English," shows the enjoyment derived from PBA activities. This shift from passive learning to an active, hands-on approach was pivotal in enhancing students' involvement in the learning process.

Practical Language Application (Approximately 60% of Participants):

The PBA model's encouragement of practical language application resonated with students' desires to use English in real-world contexts. As captured in the post-intervention survey, a student mentioned, "I like talk to class as a whole group discussion," demonstrating a preference for practical language use and the value of cooperative learning environments.

Challenges of PBA

Linguistic Hurdles (Approximately 55% of Participants):

Despite the benefits, students still faced linguistic challenges, particularly with complex grammar and pronunciation. A participant's disclosure in the interview, "I like speaking English BUT VERY DIFFICULT GRAMMAR," points to the struggle with language rules. Another remarked, "I like learn speaking and grammar," indicating both enjoyment and difficulty in mastering these aspects.

Cultural and Emotional Barriers (Approximately 50% of Participants):

Cultural and emotional factors emerged as significant obstacles. The semi-structured interviews revealed personal narratives that showcased these challenges, with a participant sharing, "I like to speak in English but sometimes I am ashamed because of poor pronunciation," highlighting the emotional vulnerability in speaking a non-native language.

Navigating Fast-Paced Conversations (Approximately 45% of Participants):

Students found it difficult to keep up with native speakers, a sentiment encapsulated by one student's reflection: "When I am speaking I am learning new word and its so helpful to speakig with other people Make me confidence andI am thinking you can do it just start talking." The speed of dialogue in English posed a significant barrier, yet the support provided through PBA activities appeared to mitigate some of these concerns.

Synthesis of Perceived Benefits and Challenges

The data synthesizes into a narrative of progression, where the initial apprehension surrounding English speaking shifts towards a more confident and proactive engagement with the language. The benefits of PBA, as perceived by the students, lie primarily in its ability to foster confidence, motivate learners, and provide opportunities for practical language

application. However, these benefits are tempered by challenges such as linguistic hurdles, cultural and emotional barriers, and the speed of native English communication.

In balancing the benefits and challenges of PBA, it is clear that while PBA has been instrumental in advancing students' language proficiency, there remains room for refining the approach to better address the specific challenges faced by adult ESOL refugee students. The insights from the participants highlight the need for continued support in areas such as grammar and pronunciation and for creating learning environments that are sensitive to the cultural and emotional complexities of language learning.

RQ2: Impact of Performance-Based Assessment on Language Proficiency

Following the exploration of perceived benefits and challenges, this section delves into the second research question, examining the tangible effects of PBAs observed in the participants' English language abilities. The analysis, drawn from post-intervention surveys and reflective interviews, offers detailed insights into the lived experiences of adult ESOL refugee students under the PBA model.

Improvement in Communicative Skills

Speaking and Understanding (Highlighted by Approximately 70% of Participants):

Effective communication is a crucial component of language proficiency. A significant number of participants reported marked improvements in this area. For instance, one student in the post-intervention survey captured their advancement: “It makes me more confident, helps me to speak Easily and helps me to think in English.” This statement is a testament to the broader enhancement in speaking and cognitive linguistic abilities experienced by many. Another participant, during an interview, emphasized their improved ability to understand native

speakers: “I can speak fluently through discussions done in this class that are for everyone,” illustrating how PBA has positively impacted both language output and comprehension.

Grammar and Vocabulary Expansion (Noted by Approximately 60% of Participants):

The data indicated significant strides in participants' grammatical competence and vocabulary expansion. A participant reflected in their post-intervention comments, “I still don't understand people on the street very well, but I think my vocabulary is bigger now, and my confidence is better.” This observation highlights an essential aspect of language learning: while conversational fluency is advancing, there is recognition of an ongoing journey toward full comprehension, especially in more casual, everyday interactions.

Enhanced Confidence in Practical Language Use

Real-World Application (Emphasized by Approximately 65% of Participants):

PBA's task-based, real-world activities found resonance with the students, leading to a marked increase in confidence in practical language use. “I like discussing with group talking; it helps my hearing a lot, small group,” noted one student in their survey response. This feedback exemplifies the progression from acquiring theoretical knowledge to applying practical, usable skills in everyday scenarios.

Classroom to Community (Reported by Approximately 55% of Participants):

The confidence gained through PBA activities extended beyond the classroom setting into community interactions, as revealed in interviews. A participant shared, “I feel more confident speaking in English here,” suggesting that the experiences in the classroom were effectively translating into enhanced linguistic self-assurance in real-life settings.

Reflective and Self-Directed Learning

Self-Assessment and Peer Feedback (Mentioned by Approximately 50% of Participants):

The inclusion of self-assessment and peer feedback in the PBA model was instrumental in cultivating a reflective approach to language learning. One student's introspection highlights this: "I can do it. I don't show it for the discussion. Uh, with other people to you, trying to communicate with other people." This comment underlines the significance of self-assessment in fostering learner autonomy and self-directed language acquisition.

Teacher Feedback and Guidance (Valued by Approximately 60% of Participants):

Teacher-led assessments were highly regarded for providing constructive direction and measurable progress in language learning. As expressed by a student, "The most helpful [was] listening when [the] Teacher [was] talking and participate in class and make a note for all vocabulary and practice at home." While using PBAs, students frequently asked for the teacher's evaluation and comments on their work, proving that feedback from teachers is crucial in validating students' efforts and guiding their learning trajectory.

Synthesis of the Impact on Language Proficiency

The data collected post-intervention suggests that PBA has positively influenced the English language proficiency of adult ESOL refugee students. By integrating speaking, listening, and grammatical practice into meaningful and contextual tasks, students have not only honed their language skills but also gained a deeper understanding of their application in real-world settings.

The enhancement in communicative skills, coupled with the nurtured confidence and reflective learning practices, highlights the comprehensive impact of PBA. The journey from

structured classroom learning to assure, real-world language usage signifies a crucial development in the students' language learning path.

The narrative emerging from the data is one of growth, resilience, and the pursuit of linguistic mastery. The students' accounts, as captured in surveys and interviews, provide robust evidence of PBA's transformative role in language education for refugees, showcasing its effectiveness in not just improving language proficiency but also empowering students with the confidence and skills necessary for practical communication in various contexts.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study's findings offer rich insights into the efficacy of PBAs in enhancing the English language proficiency of adult ESOL refugee students. This discussion synthesizes the implications of these findings for educational practice, policy, and future research.

Discussion

The reported increase in confidence and communicative competence aligns with previous research suggesting that PBA can lead to significant gains in language proficiency (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). The students' narratives highlight the importance of interactive, task-based learning, which has been shown to foster engagement and deeper language processing (Nunan, 2004). Furthermore, the emphasis on practical language application corroborates findings by Larsen-Freeman (2000), who argues that task-based instruction supports the development of communicative abilities that are transferable to real-world settings.

The challenges identified, particularly concerning grammar and fast-paced conversations, suggest a need for ongoing support and scaffolding within PBA frameworks. These findings echo the work of Ferris (2006), who emphasizes the importance of addressing grammatical accuracy in second language acquisition. The cultural and emotional barriers reported by students also resonate with the literature on the affective factors influencing language learning (Krashen, 1982), underscoring the need for culturally responsive teaching approaches.

Learning Themes

This study, while providing valuable insights into the use of PBAs in adult ESOL refugee programs, is subject to several limitations. First and foremost, the relatively small sample size and the specific demographic profile of the participants limit the generalizability of the findings.

The experiences and perceptions captured here may not fully represent the broader population of ESOL students, particularly those from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data, primarily from surveys and interviews, introduces a degree of subjectivity. Participants' responses are influenced by personal biases, language proficiency, and cultural nuances, which could affect the interpretation of their experiences with PBA. While qualitative methods offer depth and richness in data, they are inherently subjective and dependent on the participants' perspectives and the researcher's interpretation.

Another significant limitation is the absence of a longitudinal perspective. The study captures a specific moment in the participants' language learning journey, providing a snapshot rather than a continuous picture of their progress. This temporal limitation means that the long-term effects of PBA on language proficiency and confidence are not addressed.

The lack of a control group also presents a limitation. Without comparing the experiences of students not participating in PBA, it is difficult to conclusively attribute the observed improvements in language skills and confidence directly to the PBA approach. This makes it challenging to isolate the impact of PBA from other factors that may influence language learning.

Lastly, researcher bias in the interpretation of qualitative data cannot be overlooked. Despite efforts to approach data analysis systematically, interpretations are inevitably influenced by the researcher's perspectives and understanding, which may differ from other interpretations. These limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the study's findings and suggest areas for further research. Future studies could benefit from larger and more diverse participant

groups, longitudinal data collection, and the inclusion of control groups to strengthen the evidence base for the effectiveness of PBA in language education for refugees.

Implications

For Educational Practice: Educators should consider integrating more interactive and communicative tasks that reflect real-world language use. Tailoring PBA activities to students' specific linguistic needs and preferences can enhance engagement and language acquisition. Additionally, providing structured support for grammatical development within PBA activities could help address the linguistic challenges highlighted by participants.

For Policy: Language education policies should support the implementation of PBA in ESOL programs, recognizing its potential to improve language proficiency and learner confidence. Funding and resources should be allocated to develop materials and train teachers in effective PBA methodologies, especially those that incorporate culturally and emotionally supportive practices.

For Future Research: Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of PBA on language proficiency across diverse ESOL populations. Studies could investigate the role of PBA in promoting not only linguistic development but also integration into the host society. Additionally, research could examine the effectiveness of various PBA activities in addressing the grammatical and conversational challenges faced by learners.

Conclusion

The findings from this study make a significant contribution to the field of language education, particularly in the context of PBAs for adult ESOL refugee students. The study underscores the effectiveness of PBA in enhancing language proficiency through interactive learning and practical application. The notable improvements in students' confidence, communicative competence, and engagement, as evidenced by this study, attest to the potential of PBA in language acquisition. However, these benefits are not without challenges. Language barriers, cultural differences, and adapting to the pace of native English communication are significant hurdles that require strategic educational interventions. Addressing these challenges through tailored support is crucial for maximizing the efficacy of PBA. The broader implications of my findings extend to policy formulation and educational practice, advocating for the integration of PBA into language curricula and emphasizing the need for specialized training for educators in these methodologies.

As I consider the future of language education for refugee populations, my study encourages several avenues for further research. The limitations inherent in my study, particularly the small sample size and qualitative focus, highlight the need for more extensive, possibly mixed-methods research to deepen the understanding of PBA's impact. Future studies could explore the long-term effects of PBA, its adaptability across various language backgrounds and proficiency levels, and its scalability in diverse educational settings. Such research would offer invaluable insights into the versatility and effectiveness of PBA, contributing to the development of more inclusive and robust educational practices. Ultimately, this study serves as a stepping stone towards enhancing language education for refugees, emphasizing the pivotal role of educators and policymakers in creating effective learning environments. It is my

aspiration that the insights gained will foster continued innovation in the field, leading to enhanced educational opportunities for these communities.

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Appendixes:

- Appendix 1: [Pyramid Discussion Activities Samples](#)
- Appendix 2: [Instructions on how to run pyramid activities](#)
- Appendix 3: [Sample rubrics](#)
- Appendix 4: [Surveys and Interview Questions](#)