INTRODUCTION

The present study entitled "A Linguistic Approach for Testing Urdu Language Skills" deals with the theoretical application of the knowledge of linguistics to constructing tests for testing the language skills of Urdu. Attempt has also been made in this study to examine the present method of testing the Urdu language. There is enough evidence to prove that the existing method of Urdu language testing is traditional and outdated and the examiners and evaluators have very little or no knowledge of linguistics. Hence, there is very little scope of the application of linguistic knowledge to testing Urdu language skills.

A linguistic approach to language testing is a scientific and objective approach and is based on the theoretical knowledge of linguistics. Since language testing involves language, one cannot ignore the assumptions of linguistics. Linguistics has to offer many things to the teaching of a native and foreign language. Similarly it is recognised that linguistics can also be of great help in evolving the methodology of the construction of language tests.

During the critical analysis of the Urdu question papers of various classes, it was found that the questions
set in these papers are not based on the standardized test. They show a clear lack of standardized measures of testing language proficiency at various levels. Besides, these question papers also lack in reliability and validity. The question papers also lack in the linguistic content. They are mainly based on content oriented questions.

In this study, efforts have been made to look at Urdu language testing from the linguistic viewpoint and evolving a methodology for testing which is based on the linguistic approaches. For this purpose language proficiency or language skills which are to be tested have been categorized into various domains, such as reading comprehension, lexical skills, structure of language, writing and composition, besides testing the listening and speaking skills. In testing of all these elements, the linguistic approaches are involved.

While conducting the present research study, we have critically examined the Urdu question papers of various classes obtained from the schools of Aligarh where Urdu is taught as mother tongue and as a second language. These schools are S.T. High School, Zakir Hussain Higher Secondary School, and Aligarh Public School. The question papers which
were examined for the purpose of this study belong to class I to class VIII and they are spread over various semesters. As pointed out earlier the language tests conducted in these schools are not basically linguistically oriented. They are primarily based on textbooks material consisting of prose and poetry. Hence, there is more weightage on content oriented questions. Moreover, they contain largely the subjective type questions.

The present study is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter some basic techniques and problems in the phonological and grammatical analysis of the language have been discussed. The concept of tests, their types and importance has also been discussed in this chapter. The role of linguistics in teaching language has also been emphasized.

The second chapter deals with the present state of Urdu language testing and its criticism. In the following four chapters the various techniques of language testing and their linguistic approaches have been discussed.

Third chapter deals with testing listening comprehension. In this chapter various techniques for testing listening comprehension are discussed in detail. Since listening comprehension is an important language skill, it should be tested separately.
The fourth chapter comprises testing speaking skill. In this section efforts have been made to present models identifying and differentiating various sounds, grammatical structures, meaning, etc. of the target language and some other features of speech.

Fifth chapter deals with testing reading skill. In this chapter the importance of reading comprehension has been emphasized. Reading comprehension is an important skill which has to be tested with great care. In traditional approach no much attention is paid to this skill. In the existing system of Urdu language testing the questions are generally asked about the central theme of the poem or lesson which the learners have read long back. Sometimes questions are also given relating to the theme of the paragraph, but the paragraph is not mentioned in the question papers. The correct procedure is to give the passage in the question paper and then ask questions based on it. The answer to the questions must be given in multiple-choice form. The effort has been made to provide models for reading comprehension based on multiple-choice tests and 'Cloze' tests.

Sixth and last chapter deals with testing writing skill. In this chapter various techniques and approaches for testing writing skill of a target language has been discussed.