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PhD in Pedagogy,
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OF SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The article deals with teachers' use of language assessment to guide students' language proficiency development and academic achievement, the positive benefits of formative assessment for guiding teaching and learning and its characteristics. It is specially noted that language assessment is a purposeful activity that gathers information about students' language development. Assessment can be intended to improve teaching and learning or to evaluate the outcomes of teaching and learning. Special attention is given to formative assessment that is described as assessment for learning, in contrast to assessment of learning, i.e. summative assessment. The article focuses on the analysis of formative assessment and its procedures in English classes such as questioning, quizzes, discussions, interviews, role plays, observations, teacher-made tests, checklists, self-reports, journals, projects. Various types of formative assessment, namely self-assessment, peer assessment and alternative assessment are highlighted in the paper. The characteristics of teacher-based assessment that distinguish it from other forms of assessment are described. Teachers assess their students' learning to determine the effectiveness of their teaching. It should be emphasized that the quality of formative assessment depends on its beneficial uses and value for teaching and learning and teachers' judgments and classroom uses of assessments have profound effects on the lives and opportunities of students.

Key words: language teaching, formative assessment, self-assessment, peer assessment, alternative assessment, teacher-based assessment.

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ЯК ОСНОВНИЙ КОМПОНЕНТ УСПІШНОГО НАВЧАННЯ МОВИ**

У статті розглянуто використання оцінювання для покращення знань та навчальних досягнень здобувачів знань, позитивні переваги формульованого оцінювання та його характеристики. Особливо зазначається, що оцінювання мовлення – це цілеспрямована діяльність, яка надає інформацію про розвиток мовлення учнів. Стаття зосереджена на аналізі формульованого оцінювання та його методах проведення на заняттях з англійської мови, таких як анкетування, вікторини, дискусії, інтерв'ю, рольові ігри, спостереження, тести, доповіді, журнали, проекти тощо. У статті висвітлено різні типи формульованого оцінювання, охарактеризовано характеристики оцінювання викладача, що відрізняє його від інших форм оцінювання. Слід підкреслити, що судження вчителів та використання оцінок у класі мають глибокий вплив на життя та можливості учнів.

Ключові слова: викладання мови, формульоване оцінювання, самооцінка, оцінка однолітків, альтернативне оцінювання, оцінювання викладачем.

Problem definition and its connection to important scientific and practical tasks. Assessment plays an important part in the lives of both learners and teachers. Teachers spend as much as a third or a half of their professional time involved in assessment-related procedures, although many do so without familiarity with principles of language assessment. Assessment has many different purposes. Assessment procedures help determine learners' needs, they place learners in the appropriate place in a language course, they help measure students' progress during a course, they provide information that can be used to fine-tune teaching and they enable the learning outcomes of a course to be measured. Hence, assessment provides the basis for many kinds of important decisions that involve teachers, learners and institutions. Their purposes may be decided by the teacher, by the school or by an organization external to the school. For example, a teacher may want to know how effective his or her teaching of reading skills has been. A school may want to know how effective their language programmes are, as part of a review of their curriculum. A learner may need to know what areas he or she needs to improve on in order to pass a test. A law company may want to know if an applicant for a job has the language skills needed to work as a lawyer. Assessment may be intended to improve teaching and learning or to evaluate the outcomes of teaching and learning, or to measure proficiency in relation to some external goal, such as entrance to a profession or admittance to university. They may use different forms of assessment for these purposes.

In English classes, teachers also need to assess their students' learning to determine the effectiveness of their teaching and the materials they are using. Assessment refers to any of the procedures teachers use to do this sort of evaluation, such as by making observations, interviewing students, administering questionnaires and reviewing students' work. Assessment covers a broader range of activities than testing and involves both formal and informal procedures. Assessment is an essential component of successful language teaching, and teachers need to be familiar with the necessary knowledge and skills that assessment entails.

A large amount of research has been conducted around the world regarding the impact of formative assessment on learning outcomes. In their seminal review of the research on classroom-based formative assessment, Black and William (1998) brought together evidence gathered from 250 international sources regarding the use and impact of formative assessment. The 250 sources reviewed for this purpose cover learners ranging pre-school to university. Evidence of impact was drawn from more than 40 studies conducted under ecologically valid circumstances (i.e. controlled experiments conducted in the student's usual classroom setting

and with their usual teacher). They included studies on effective feedback; questioning; comprehensive approaches to teaching and learning featuring formative assessment, and student self- and peer-assessment. Black and William concluded that the achievement gains associated with formative assessment were among the largest ever reported for educational interventions. The review also found that formative assessment methods were, in some cases, particularly effective for lower achieving students, thus reducing inequity of student outcomes and raising overall achievement. The 1998 Black and William review confirmed earlier reviews by Natriello (1987) and Crooks (1988), which had reached substantially the same conclusions. At the same time, the success of formative assessment policies depends very much on their effective implementation. The quality of formative assessment rests, in part, on strategies teachers use to elicit evidence of student learning related to goals, with the appropriate level of detail to shape subsequent instruction. But in some contexts, it is still more typical for teachers to develop only superficial questions to probe student learning, and provide only general feedback. Teachers may have difficulty in interpreting student responses or in formulating next steps for instruction. And while many teachers agree that formative assessment methods are an important element in high-quality teaching, they may also find that there are logistical barriers to making formative assessment a regular part of their teaching practice, such as large classes, extensive curriculum requirements, and the difficulty of meeting diverse and challenging student needs.

This article highlights the importance of firmly embedding formative assessment within the broader evaluation and assessment framework and the need to support teachers' capacity and professionalism in formative assessment.

Presenting the main material. Once a course is underway, the teacher may want to administer informal assessments from time to time to find out how well the students are mastering the content of the course and whether the course material is helping them with their learning difficulties. Information collected during teaching is 'formative', since it is collected while the student's language skills are being 'formed', and may be based on quizzes, discussions, observations, teacher-made tests, checklists and journals, as well as self-assessment by learners of their own progress. Assessments with this purpose are progress tests and are one of the most common forms of assessment used by teachers in their day-to-day teaching. Formative assessment only qualifies as 'formative' if it leads to feedback that is used by students to improve their learning. Computer software enables much of this monitoring to be carried out through the school's learning management system. The software facilitates learner-to-learner and learner-to-instructor communication, through such features as chat rooms and discussion boards, permits the tracking of user behaviour and allows both instructors and students to monitor progress.

Since the purpose of formative assessment is to monitor the students' learning throughout the course, it can help teachers to find out what students are learning, help them to evaluate whether the course materials are effective, encourage the learners and help teachers to decide if any adjustments need to be made while the course is being delivered. In other words, formative assessment is designed to improve learning and is sometimes described as assessment *for* learning, in contrast to assessment *of* learning, which takes place at the end of a period of learning [1]. (The latter approach is summative assessment). Feedback given during assessment for learning is descriptive, rather than evaluative, and it is intended to show students how they can improve their learning. Advocates of assessment for learning argue that traditional approaches to assessment typically serve to measure what students have learned in order to measure progress or for grading and reporting purposes, but the assessment does not help students improve or understand their learning. By giving students feedback that will improve their learning, assessment *for* learning, by contrast, seeks to link teaching and learning more closely. It is described as having these characteristics [4, c. 397]:

- [Assessment for learning] is embedded in a view of teaching and learning of which it is an essential part.
- Learning goals are shared with students.
- It aims to help pupils know and recognize the standards they are aiming for.
- Pupils are involved in self-assessment.
- It provides feedback which helps students recognize their next steps and how to take them.
- It is underpinned by confidence that every student can improve.
- Both teacher and student reflect on assessment data.

To summarize, the goal of assessment for learning is to gather information through formative assessment practices that can be used to modify teaching and to improve student learning, rather than to grade students' performance. Procedures used with this approach involve the strategic use of questioning, as a deliberate way for the teacher to find out what students are able to understand and do, and effective use of teacher feedback, focusing on establishing success criteria that tell the students what they have achieved and where improvement is necessary. Feedback provides specific suggestions to help achieve improvement; self-assessment encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning and incorporates self-monitoring, self-assessment and self-evaluation.

As feedback from assessment for learning may also make use of evaluation to improve learning, some advocates of this approach recommend it as an alternative to final grades and scores; however, as Fulcher [5, c. 69] points out, in many situations, there is an expectation that students will get a grade for a piece of work, and in large classes, such frequent grading hardly seems practical. While there are many benefits to formative assessment, doing effective formative assessment may require training.

The following are examples of procedures that can be used for formative assessment (or for assessment for learning). However, these procedures are not specific to formative assessment: it is their *purpose* that makes them appropriate for formative assessment:

- questioning;
- quizzes;
- discussions;
- interviews;
- role plays;
- observations;
- teacher-made tests (e.g. of reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary);
- checklists;
- self-reports;
- journals;

– projects.

Various types of formative assessment may include the following.

Self-assessment. Self-assessment refers to activities in which learners complete an evaluation of their own performance, usually soon after they have completed the activity. For example, a student may watch a video of his or her oral presentation and then use a checklist to note the positive or negative aspects of the performance. Many contemporary coursebooks provide regular self-assessment tasks, throughout the book, e.g. my Interchange series [8]. While some teachers are sceptical of the degree to which learners can accurately evaluate their own language skills, self-assessment can motivate learners and help develop learner autonomy. It is normally used combining other measures of student learning. However, for self-assessment to be effective, learners need training in how to assess their own work. Self-assessment can also make use of a digital or video diary, or, as Fulcher notes [5, c. 71]:

An online blog in which samples of work and a commentary are saved side by side. This naturally leads on to the use of portfolios, where students collect samples of writing, or digital copies of speech, into a collection of their work. However, it may also contain reading and listening texts, with an assessment of how well they were understood, and reactions to them.

Peer assessment. Peer assessment refers to activities in which students evaluate or give feedback on each other's performance on a task. It is often used in composition classes, where students read each other's draft compositions and give feedback and suggestions, perhaps using guidelines or checklists provided by the teacher. However, both self-assessment and peer assessment are normally used to complement, rather than replace, other forms of assessment.

Alternative assessment. Since the 1980s, the term 'alternative assessment' has referred to procedures, than those in formal tests, used as a way of better capturing real-language ability reflecting natural conditions for language use [3, c. 147]:

Alternative assessment is defined as the ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgements about the student's progress in using nonconventional strategies. Hamayan [6] describes alternative assessment procedures as those techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom.

Coombe et al. [3] suggest that a more suitable term would be 'additional assessment' since they recommend that alternative assessment should be used in conjunction with more traditional forms of assessment as part of a 'multiple-measures' assessment scheme. Alternative assessment uses the formative assessment procedures mentioned earlier, including self-assessment, interviews, portfolios, learner journals, student-teacher conversations or 'conferences', interviews and observation. Brown and Hudson [2, c. 654] summarize the characteristics of alternative assessment:

- 1) require students to perform, create, produce or do something;
- 2) use real-world contexts or simulations;
- 3) are non-intrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities;
- 4) allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day;
- 5) use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
- 6) focus on process as well as products;
- 7) tap into higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills;
- 8) provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students;
- 9) are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered;
- 10) ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgement;
- 11) encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria;
- 12) call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

The notion of alternative assessment has been expanded in recent years and included within a more general approach to classroom assessment known as *teacher-based assessment* (TBA). In many countries, language teachers increasingly are expected to make use of a variety of assessment procedures to monitor and evaluate their students' progress in their own classrooms. Davison and Leung [4, c. 395] describe the characteristics of TBA that distinguish it from other forms of assessment:

- It involves the teacher from the beginning to the end: from planning the assessment programme, through to identifying and/or developing appropriate assessment tasks, right through to making the assessment judgements.
- It allows for the collection of a number of samples of student work over a period of time, using a variety of different tasks and activities.
- It can be adapted and modified by the teacher to match the teaching and learning goals of the particular class that is being assessed.
- It is carried out in ordinary classrooms, not in a specialist assessment centre or examination hall.
- It is conducted by the students' own teacher, not an outsider.
- It involves students more actively in the assessment process, especially if self- and peer assessment is used in conjunction with teacher assessment.
- It opens up the possibility for teachers to support learner-led inquiry.
- It allows the teacher to give immediate and constructive feedback to students.
- It stimulates continuous evaluation and adjustment of the teaching and learning programme.
- It complements other forms of assessment, including external examinations.

Conclusion. Procedures used in assessment have tended to reflect changes in approaches to language teaching and, therefore, changes in practices associated with the movement from audiolingual to communicative approaches to teaching. Just as teaching methodologies have moved away from a primary focus on linguistic dimensions of communication (such as vocabulary and grammar) towards communicative orientations to language, likewise, have moved towards communicative approaches.

To sum up, teaching and assessment are closely connected aspects of a teacher's work, and effective assessment practices are essential in language programmes. Teachers need to be able to use effective informal classroom assessment procedures to monitor the success of teaching and learning.

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