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THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes deep explanation of the role of assessment in teaching EFL. Practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instruction that are likely to be better, or better founded, than the decisions they would have taken in the absence of the evidence that was elicited.

ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqola EFL o'qitishda baholashning rolini chuqur tushuntirishni taklif qiladi. Sinfdagi amaliyot o'quvchilarning yutuqlari to'g'risidagi dalillar o'qituvchilar, o'quvchilar yoki ularning tengdoshlari tomonidan to'planishi, talqin qilinishi va

ta'limning keyingi bosqichlari to'g'risida yaxshiroq yoki asosliroq qaror qabul qilish uchun foydalaniladigan darajada shakllantiruvchi hisoblanadi. dalillar yo'qligida ular qabul qilgan qarorlardan ko'ra.

Key words: Gaps, critically, learning, assessment, content, purpose

Kalit so'zlar: bo'shliqlar, tanqidiy, o'rganish, baholash, mazmun, maqsad

Why Is Assessment Important? Assessment is an integral part of instruction, as it determines whether or not the goals of education are being met. Assessment affects decisions about grades, placement, advancement, instructional needs, curriculum, and, in some cases, funding.

Today's students need to know not only the basic reading and arithmetic skills, but also skills that will allow them to face a world that is continually changing. They must be able to think critically, to analyze, and to make inferences. Changes in the skills base and knowledge our students need require new learning goals; these new learning goals change the relationship between assessment and instruction. Teachers need to take an active role in making decisions about the purpose of assessment and the content that is being assessed.

Assessment

In classrooms where assessment for learning is practised, students are encouraged to be more active in their learning and associated assessment. The ultimate purpose of assessment for learning is to create self-regulated learners who can leave school able and confident to continue learning throughout their lives. Teachers need to know at the outset of a unit of study where their students are in terms of their learning and then continually check on how they are progressing through strengthening the feedback they get from their learners. Students are guided on what they are expected to learn and what quality work looks like. The teacher will work with the student to understand and identify any gaps or misconceptions (initial/diagnostic assessment). As the unit progresses, the teacher and student work together to assess the student's knowledge, what she or he needs to learn to improve and extend this knowledge, and

how the student can best get to that point (formative assessment). Assessment for learning occurs at all stages of the learning process.

There are a number of assessment terms that will appear in any discussion of assessment. Listed below are common interpretations of some of these terms:

the term 'assessment' refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Since this seminal article, educators have differentiated assessment according to its purpose:

Assessment for learning

comprises two phases—initial or diagnostic assessment and formative assessment. assessment can be based on a variety of information sources (e.g., portfolios, works in progress, teacher observation, conversation) verbal or written feedback to the student is primarily descriptive and emphasizes strengths, identifies challenges, and points to next steps as teachers check on understanding they adjust their instruction to keep students on track no grades or scores are given - record-keeping is primarily anecdotal and descriptive occurs throughout the learning process, from the outset of the course of study to the time of summative assessment

Assessment as learning

- begins as students become aware of the goals of instruction and the criteria for performance
- involves goal-setting, monitoring progress, and reflecting on results
- implies student ownership and responsibility for moving his or her thinking forward (metacognition)
- occurs throughout the learning process

Assessment of learning

- assessment that is accompanied by a number or letter grade (summative)
- compares one student's achievement with standards
- results can be communicated to the student and parents
- occurs at the end of the learning unit

Evaluation

judgment made on the basis of a student's performance.

Diagnostic assessment (now referred to more often as "pre-assessment")

- assessment made to determine what a student does and does not know about a topic
- assessment made to determine a student's learning style or preferences
- used to determine how well a student can perform a certain set of skills related to a particular subject or group of subjects
- occurs at the beginning of a unit of study
- used to inform instruction:makes up the initial phase of assessment for learning

Formative assessment

- assessment made to determine a student's knowledge and skills, including learning gaps as they progress through a unit of study
- used to inform instruction and guide learning
- occurs during the course of a unit of study
- makes up the subsequent phase of assessment for learning

Summative assessment

- assessment that is made at the end of a unit of study to determine the level of understanding the student has achieved
- includes a mark or grade against an expected standard

Principles of Assessment

Among the most comprehensive listing of principles of assessment for learning are those written by the QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority). The authority, which is sponsored by England's Department for Children, Schools and Families, is responsible for national curriculum, assessment, and examinations. Their principal focus is on crucial aspects of assessment for learning, including how such assessment should be seen as central to classroom practice, and that all teachers should regard assessment for learning as a key professional skill.

The UK Assessment Reform Group (1999) identifies "The big 5 principles of assessment for learning

- The provision of effective feedback to students.
- The active involvement of students in their own learning.
- Adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment.
- Recognition of the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which are critical influences on learning.
- The need for students to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

Feedback

The purpose of an Assessment for Learning (AFL) task is to provide feedback to both the teacher and learner regarding the learner's progress towards achieving the learning objective(s). This feedback should be used by the teacher to revise and develop further instruction. An effective AFL method is to use a performance task coupled with a rubric. This type of assessment is fundamental in illustrating how and why such principles need to be adhered to.

Assessment for Language Teaching

So, what is AfL and why is it important? Can it improve students' results? What does it involve?

What is AfL?

To understand what AfL is, it is useful to start with what it is not. Traditional approaches to assessment are generally based on assessment of learning. Assessment of learning is generally carried out by the teacher to collect information about attainment. It is usually done at the end of a course or school year and takes the form of an exam or test which is used to assign grades and report achievement or failure. Assessment for learning, on the other hand, occurs at all stages of the learning process. Students are encouraged to take an active role, become self-regulated learners and leave school able and confident to continue learning throughout their lives. Assessment for learning is also referred to as formative assessment, i.e. the

process of collecting and interpreting evidence for use by teachers and learners to decide where they are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). It is a process by which assessment information is used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies and by students to adjust their learning strategies. AfL encourages learning and promotes motivation by emphasising progress and achievement rather than failure.

Where did AfL come from and why is it important?

AfL originates in the research of UK professors, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. Black and Wiliam recognised that what teachers and learners do in the classroom is complicated and little is understood about what happens. They likened the classroom to a black box (an object which can be viewed in terms of its inputs and outputs without any knowledge of its internal workings) and set out to investigate what was happening inside. What they discovered was that students who learn in a formative way achieve much more and obtain better results than other students. In 1998, they published their findings in an important booklet for practitioners *Inside The Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment* and in it they showed that:

- formative assessment is at the heart of effective teaching
- formative assessment has a strong positive effect on achievement
- improving formative assessment raises standards.
- As a result of these and other research findings, AfL is now established as one of the most powerful ways of improving learning and raising standards and current research is adding further evidence in support of this claim.

What are the key principles of AfL?

The key underlying principles of AfL which are used to guide classroom practice are as follows:

Communicate confidence that every learner can improve

Above all, AfL must be underpinned by the utmost confidence that every student can improve. We can help learners believe they can improve by giving specific feedback on what they need to do to and how they can do it.

Empower learners to take an active part in their own learning

The AfL process can unlock the approaches used by students and help them to become more aware of what they are learning and how they are learning it. This empowers students to take control of their own learning by developing their skills of self-regulation. As they begin to assess their own work and set goals, they also become more independent.

Develop learners' confidence in peer and self-assessment

These are skills that learners need time and practice in. The more they do it, the more confident and accurate they will be in their assessment.

What does this mean for teaching and learning?

As teachers we can:

Collect information about individual learners to better understand their needs

We can do this in a variety of ways such as finding out what they already know, noticing who answers questions, circulating and observing learners during activities, taking feedback on how interesting or difficult they found the topic or tasks, etc.

Adjust our teaching in response to our observations or assessment results

A central part of teaching and learning is reflecting on how successful the lesson and learning was and judging whether the topic needs to be reviewed, or re-taught using a different approach or activity. As teachers we are constantly making judgments and decisions in response to our learners' needs.

Interim/Benchmark Assessment

One way to think about it: Evaluates student performance at periodic intervals, frequently at the end of a grading period. Can predict student performance on end-of-the-year summative assessments.

For educators, assessing students' progress is as necessary as planning engaging activities or building lessons around core themes. Without assessment teachers have no way of knowing what types of help their students need, and assessing students can also gauge their progress through a course of study. This is true in ESL classrooms as well as in single-language settings. There are a wide range of options

for ESL educators to choose from when assessing their students' grasp of the English language.

Needs Assessment

In order to plan curricula and design activities that will be useful and beneficial for ESL students, it is necessary, first, to know what the students' goals are for learning English and what their current linguistic capabilities are -- needs assessment fills in these blanks. According to the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, needs assessment is a tool educators can use to understand the language and literacy abilities students may already have, the skills and proficiencies they want to develop and the contexts in which students generally use English language skills. Needs assessments are ongoing throughout a course of study and inform the development of curricula and activities as the students continue to expand their capabilities.

Portfolio Assessment

According to the Education Alliance LAB at Brown University, assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Portfolio assessment, which the Alliance endorses, involves analyzing and evaluating multiple examples of a student's work and assessing that student's proficiencies and problem areas. English language learners are sometimes left out of portfolio assessments because of their perceived limited abilities in English, but, the Alliance says, because portfolio involves scoring a wide range of student work based on predetermined criteria, all students can benefit from this type of assessment.

Cloze Tests

There are many different ways of assessing an individual English language learner's capabilities. Cloze tests provide a good way of gauging a student's written, reading and vocabulary proficiencies. A Cloze test consists of sentences with blanks in places words have been removed. Students must choose the proper word to fill in the blank. Cloze tests have a wide range of applications, from testing vocabulary retention to honing reading comprehension skills and deductive logic. One popular Cloze activity is using a song that students learn to sing. Later, a Cloze version of

the song with key words removed is presented to the students, who must then fill in the missing links.

Other Assessments for English Language Learners

Dictation exercises, strip stories, multiple choice tests and written assignments are all examples of different types of assessments suitable for English language learners. Simple dictation exercises require students to write down a passage read aloud by the teacher. These exercises offer an assessment of students' listening and writing skills. Strip stories require students to organize a short passage into the proper order after it has been taken apart and reorganized. Strip stories test reading comprehension and narrative awareness. Multiple choice tests and written assignments are good ways of assessing vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing skills.

It was all made worse by the fact that the chemistry teacher read the results to the whole class, from first to last place. My humiliation was complete. Students can have very negative reactions towards tests and it's no surprise when they too may have had experiences like this.

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