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FORMS AND PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Ушбу мақола баҳолашнинг хорижий тиллар таълим сифатини таъминлашдаги аҳамиятини очиб беришга бағишланган. Ўз навбатида муаллиф баҳолаш шакллари ва тамойилларини чуқур таҳлил этган. Шунингдек, ҳар бир тамойил муаллифнинг тажрибасидан олинган мисоллар ёрдамида ёритиб берилган.

В статье рассматривается значение оценки в обеспечении качества преподавания и изучения иностранных языков. Автор подробно рассматривает цели и формы оценки – итоговой и формирующей. Кроме того, принципы хорошей оценки объясняются с помощью примеров из опыта преподавания автора.

This article discusses the significance of assessment in guaranteeing the quality of teaching and learning foreign languages. The author thoroughly examines the purposes and forms of assessment that are summative and formative. Besides, the principles of good assessment are explained with the help of examples taken from the teaching experience of the author.

Калит сўзлар: баҳолаш, якуний ва шакллантирувчи баҳолаш, баҳолаш меъзонлари, таълим сифати.

Ключевые слова: оценивание, итоговое и формирующее оценивание, принципы оценки, «обратный поток», качество обучения.

Key words: assessment, summative, formative, principles of assessment, backwash, quality of teaching.

Good teachers have a huge role and moral obligation in student learning.

(Greg Light and Roy Cox)

Since teaching is seen as “to change the student’s experiences, perceptions or conceptions of something”(4) teachers should be aware of how to teach effectively. Especially, the quality of learning increases when teaching is aligned. It means that the teaching objectives, learning outcomes and the assessment should be interrelated. Biggs explains the role of alignment with simple example:

“Parents don’t lecture a toddler on shoe-tying, and give a multiple-choice test at the end. The objective, the teaching/learning activity, and the assessment are all the same: it is tying a shoe. In the case of driving instruction it is driving a car. The alignment is perfect. This is what we should be aiming for in university teaching(1).

The concept of constructive alignment considers assessment as an important chain of teaching. Therefore, assessment is inseparable part of education. It influences on the “quality” of both learning and teaching (4). While teachers see the learning outcomes as a central point in teaching and learning process, students accept assessment as initial motivation to learn. Students determine what to learn according to expected assessment task(1, p.169). This students’ perception of assessment called “**backwash**” inevitably effects learning. For example, in writing classes my students know that they will write an essay for assessment. Therefore, they learn the techniques of writing an essay thoroughly. Since the students do not know what type of essay they will write, they try to do their best to learn all types of essays. I assume that if they knew what essay would be in the test they would make effort on learning that type only. Here we can see how restrictive effect the backwash might have. Even though backwash is seen as negative (1), it is undeniable, as Ramsden claims “Assessment sends messages about the standard and amount of work required, and about which aspects of the syllabus are the most important”(1). In general, backwash is considered unhelpful when the learning is aimed at to be successful in the exam. So, it encourages surface approach to learning. However, when assessment contains what students should be learning then the “backwash” will be positive (1). The example above has no negative upshot, as the intended learning outcome is to be able to write an essay.

When we assess we have certain reasons in mind. We assess students mostly to give mark for their academic performance, to see where they are and what to do next, to select, to motivate, to see the results of our effort and let the administration know the results of the students. According to Biggs there are two main reasons to assess: **formative** and **summative**. In **formative assessment**, teachers will determine “errors, difficulties, and shortcomings in students’ work” and the feedback during the course will help students to achieve their learning outcomes (2). Arends and Kilcher consider formative assessment as **assessment for learning** which “is designed to provide

diagnostic information to teachers about students' prior knowledge and formative information about the effects of their instruction on student learning". Feedback is essential in formative assessment, as it is a tool to help students to develop. Especially, in writing classes my students and I find written and oral feedback of help to improve their writing. I always give feedback in a constructive way. It means that I do not directly criticize the student's drawbacks in the writing task. Instead, I use "the feedback sandwich" which starts with the strengths of the work, then I discuss the weaknesses or areas to improve in the written task and finally end my feedback in a positive tone giving my recommendations. Besides, there are other features of feedback, which Arends and Kilcher suggest. It is obligatory that effective feedback is "timely, specific, descriptive and developmentally appropriate". As useful feedback is an immediate one, I provide written feedback in time. If I have not sufficient time to write I substitute written feedback with oral or peer feedback. Besides, I point out errors, underline language mistakes and use marginal notes to supplement my feedback in order to be "specific and corrective" (ibid). When students get their mark for the summative assessment I give "evaluative feedback" (ibid) where I praise students who attempt and show better results based on the recommendations. In short, all types of feedback have one aim; that is to assist students in finding out the areas of development and change in order to achieve learning outcomes.

Moreover, it is important for the teacher to be aware of the way to deliver feedback. Once when I gave feedback to student in front of her group mates she became disappointed and demonstrated her dissatisfaction defending herself. Then I realized that a teacher should master rendering negative feedback. Ramsden also supports this: "Learning how to find the right tone and level of specificity of feedback is another difficult art of teaching that has to be mastered if we want consistently high quality learning"(4).

In **summative assessment**, final grade or accreditation is awarded to the student at the end of the course (1). Richard called this type as **assessment of learning** which "is designed to serve the functions of accountability, determine class ranking, deciding who should graduate, and making judgments about placements and promotions". For summative assessment, at the university we use midterm written test, computer based test and paper based exam. The main purpose of these exams is to report on students' achievement in the module and in the semester.

Both reasons of assessment determine the role of assessment: formative is used for developmental purposes, while summative serves to determine accountability (2). I agree with Ramsden that university teachers neglect the developmental role of

assessment, which is about assisting students in learning and teachers in identifying ways to teach their students more effectively. Moreover, this role of assessment is denied with absence of feedback (4). Ramsden considers absence of feedback as “unprofessional teaching behavior” In addition, teachers assess in traditional ways, which assess “what students memorized rather than whether they can apply, analyze, and critically reflect on what they have learned” (2).

Assessment is also considered as a tool to measure how much knowledge a student has. This should not be the most important aim of the assessment. Consequently, through appropriate assessment we must determine how well we learned and taught. This is determined with the help of principles of assessment. The **principles** of good assessment include **Validity**, **Reliability**, **Transparency**, **Authenticity**, and **Fairness**, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

First, assessment should be **valid**. It means that a teacher should assess the skill or knowledge that intended to be assessed. When I was the first year at the university, we were given a task to write an essay on a particular topic each month. Comparing each other’s work and marks awarded, we realized that the teacher was giving grade for the length of the work not the structure, and/or language or content. Once I wrote three pages long. The mark was 8 out of 12. Later, writing about 10 pages I started to get the highest score. In fact, as the essays are used to test “creative thinking” (2), I can realize that giving mark for the length of the essay is **invalid**. In my case, I ensure the validity of assessment for the essay by evaluating according to the assessment criteria, which focuses on the content, structure, language, and style of an essay.

Secondly, assessment should be **reliable**. The reliability shows that assessment does not belong to one person or one situation. Jarvis stresses out that in spite of the place and the person who is responsible for the assessment, reliability lies on the fact that “equivalent results” are granted for “equivalent student performance” on the assessment task. Biggs differentiates two types of reliability. **Reliability of tests** means that tests should give the same results in different conditions (1). Thus, “tests of simple recall are usually highly reliable” (4). Another type of **reliability** involves the capability of teachers or evaluators. There are intra-judge and inter-judge reliability. The former one should answer the following question positively: “Does the same person make the same judgment about the same performance on two different occasions?” While the latter should respond to the question: “Do different judges make the same judgment about the same performance on the same occasion?” (1). In order to guarantee these principles double marking can be a good solution. In my case, I ask my colleagues to check the essay, which I assessed in order to see whether my peers judge similarly. I am

sure that this way “inter – markers” provide **reliability**. Besides, I read the essay once and leave it for another time to read and check. I do it to avoid subjective or personal affect on the work. In my opinion, I act as intra-marker to assure **reliability** of the result of my evaluation. In addition, a marking scheme also assures the reliability of the assessment. Unfortunately, our team does not have a detailed marking scheme. However, we have criteria for each assessment where we allocate points for each part. For example, when checking an essay I evaluate the idea, structure, and language of the essay and allocate separate points for each. Having at least the criteria for assessment helps me to assess students both oral and written work easily and students trust their marks, as they are sure that they are being assessed according to the learning outcomes of the course.

Another principle of good assessment is **transparency**. As Race claims, the assessment should be free from “hidden agendas” or “nasty surprises”(3). This means that students should know the criteria of the assessment and what they are going to be assessed on in advance. Besides, the criteria should be understandable to everyone (3, p.6). In order to ensure transparency, I usually discuss the criteria for the essay they will write in the exam. Usually I devote the lesson before the exam to preparing for it: the students will look through similar exam questions, discuss the criteria and ask questions about the exam. Moreover, with the help of peer evaluation good outcomes can be obtained. In fact, while assessing each other students understand assessment criteria better. It also helps to increase transparency of formal assessment.

In addition to transparency, **fairness** of the assessment is also important. It provokes the idea that everyone should have equal opportunities to manage the assessment task. To illustrate I would share my experience at the department of International Law faculty of UWED where I started my career as a university teacher. At that time, the first year students were allocated into A, B, C groups according to their level of English. They all had different lessons according to their level. Competent students studied in A group and they covered all the learning objectives of the course. B groups were taught according to the curriculum too. However, the students in C groups were almost beginners. They just learned Basic English. It was unfair that the students of C groups were given the same task for the assessment as A and B groups, even though they did not learn the material, which was included in it. This discriminated the students in C groups.

Authenticity proposes that the method used to assess should prevent students from plagiarism and cheating. For assessment tasks in writing our team constructed authentic tasks. Most exam topics for writing are relevant to the students and

their life at the university. For example, in the university where I work the 1st year students have good English grammar knowledge but are weak in writing and speaking. This causes some problems in their first year language studies. For the final test, the 1st year students were asked to write an essay discussing possible reasons, effects of the problem and suggest a solution to the problem. Thus, ready essays about general topics, which can be copied out easily, cannot help students in the exams. Besides, when students are given the tasks close to their life they can construct their understanding easily. Undoubtedly, this encourages deep approach to learning.

Generally, assessment is a vital part of education. In achieving learning outcomes, the assessment is as important as teaching and learning activities. If organized and adjusted to the principles and purposes of assessment appropriately, it will surely contribute to the quality of learning.

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