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WORLD PRACTICE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

After promulgation of the Decree PD-1875 by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures for Further Improvement of Foreign Languages Learning System” considerable changes have taken place in the organization of teaching foreign languages in the country.

The improvement of teaching of foreign languages involves not only the process of teaching in the classroom, i.e. teachers and students interaction but many other things. If we are talking about improvement of teaching of some subject it means we shall have to think about materials design, innovative multimedia packages, other reference materials, examination resources, teacher development programs, ways of objective knowledge assessment, teaching methodology. Constant attention to the spheres mentioned will result in quality assurance of the educational system which is the expectations of students, their parents, expectations of the stakeholders the society as a whole. The education system of our country must take constant care to meet the general societal demand.

Knowledge assessment is the only instrument which can measure and evaluate the situation.

The evaluation of foreign language knowledge is a highly complex undertaking that must be based on well-worked out system.

The cornerstones of assessment in our country. So far was based on examinations. Experience has shown that neither examiners nor students this type of assessment because it is not reliable instrument of knowledge evaluation. May be because of this growing number of students are leaving higher educational Institutions without appropriate skills for employment. Working out reliable format of testing system which is based on international experience will provide

transparency of knowledge assessment and quality assurance in learning foreign languages. Knowledge assessment by means of tests is reliable way in the exam production and evaluation process.

Thus, Teaching and learning no matter what field of education they refer to are connected with evaluation, assessment and testing. These terms are interconnected and at the same time they differ from each other. According to Ch.Coombe, K.Folse and N.Hubbly the term evaluation is all- inclusive and is the widest basis for collecting information in education (p. XV). Brindley (1989) considers that evaluation is “conceptualized as broader in scope, and concerned with the overall program” (p.3). According to Genesee (2001) evaluation goes beyond students achievement and language assessment to consider all aspects of teaching and learning and to look at how educational decisions can be informed by the results of alternative forms of assessment.

Assessment is part of evaluation because it is concerned with the student and with what the student does (Brindley, 1989).

Tests are subcategory of assessment. A tests is a formal, systematic (usually paper- and- pencil) procedure used to gather information about students’ behavior.

Thus, evaluation includes the whole course or program, and information is collected from many sources including the learner. While assessment is related to the learner and his/her achievements, testing is part of assessment, and it measures learner achievement (Coombe, Ch., False, K., Hubbly, N. 2010). One cannot but agree with the same authors when they say that “Good assessment mirrors good teaching they go hand”, “Assessment has its own culture, traditions, and special language”.

A good, qualified teachers of foreign languages must know the terms connected with assessment of all four skills, discover ways to help theirs students develop good test-taking strategies, to be aware of the processes and procedures of assessment, the types of tests, the principles of good and fair assessment.

There are four main types of tests. They are placement, diagnostic, profess proficiency, aptitude and achievement ones. These tests are used for different purposes and at different stages of the course to evaluates the students’ knowledge.

The primary aim of placement tests is to create groups f learners that are homogeneous in level which will help students to learn the foreign language most effectively.

The aptitude tests measure capacity or general ability to learn a foreign language.

Diagnostic tests identity language areas in which a student needs further help.

Progress tests measure the progress that students are making toward defined course or program goals. They are administered at various stages throughout a language course to determine what students have learned.

Achievement tests are similar to progress tests in that they determine what a student has learned with regard to stated course outcomes. They are usually administered at mid- and end-point of the semester or academic years.

Proficiency tests, on the other hand, are not based on a particular curriculum or language program. They assess the overall language ability of students at varying levels. They may also tell us how capable a person is in a particular language skill area. These tests are typically developed by external bodies. Some proficiency tests have been standardized for international use, such as the TOEFL, IELTS (Coombe Ch. and others 2010).

Ch. Coombe, K.Folse and N.Hubley (2010) mention eight most important guiding principles of good test design. They are: usefulness, validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity, transparency, security. Usefulness, validity, reliability.

By usefulness Bachman and Palmer understand that any language test must be developed with a specific purpose, a particular group of test – takers and a specific language use in mind (Bachman. P. 17).

Validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure. In other words, test what you teach and how you teach it. For example, a communicative language learning approach must be matched by communicative language testing (Coombe Ch. and other. 2010).

Reliability refers to the consistency of test scores, which simply means that a test would offer similar results if it were given at another time but administered to the same group of students.

Practicality is also an important feature of a good test. Practical tests are teacher-developed ones. A teacher should be able to develop, administer, and mark it within the available time and with available resources. Classroom tests are only valuable to students when they are returned promptly and when the feedback from assessment is understood by the student. In this way, students can benefit from the test-taking process (Coombe Ch. and other. 2010).

Washback refers to the effect of testing on teaching and learning. Washback is generally said to be either positive or negative. Positive Washback assumes that testing and curriculum design are both based on clear course outcomes which are known to both students and teachers / testers. Positive Washback occurs when a test encourages good teaching practice (Coombe, Ch. and other 2010).

Authenticity presupposes the usage of authentic materials in testing language skills. The testers should use authentic materials which may be used by students in real life situations.

Transparency refers to the availability of clear, accurate information to students about testing which includes out comes to be evaluated, formats used, weighting of items and sections time allowed to complete the test and grading criteria.

Security is part of both reliability and validity for all tests. They must be strictly secured.

Assessment must be an integral part of the entire curriculum, of the state of the entire curriculum, of the state Education Standard. They define the overall aims for a particular course, for a particular skills. Objective assessment is a reliable basis for helpful feedback to students, teachers and administrators. It can identify constructive changes for syllabus sequencing, course book choice and teaching strategies.

Knowledge assessment is closely connected with quality assurance in education. "Quality assurance is an umbrella term for several instruments which are concerned with the monitoring and development of quality. These instruments include evaluation, accreditation, benchmarking and quality management tools. The promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies is ne of the main objectives of the Bologna Process". There are two organizations Glossary on the Bologna Process, German Rector's (Process. 2006).

Setting up some sort of organization which will be responsible for such work is one of the priorities of the education system of our republic. The achievement of joint understanding and mutual respect between educational organizations, teaching staff and students will help to improve teaching foreign languages in the country and achieve intended learning outcomes.

One more very important thing is that the Republic of Uzbekistan has accepted the CEFR (The Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching and Assessment. It is well-known that the adoption of this system is connected with the development of state Educational Standard, curricula, syllabuses and course books. The impact of this document has been very deep in those countries where it was accepted. The aim of implementing of CEFR is to assist the educational system describe the levels of proficiency required by their tests thus facilitating comparisons between different language qualifications. CEFR offers a set of activities to enable comparisons between the level of any given examinations and the six levels (from A1 to C2) of the Framework which will facilitate mobility of learners in the countries which have adopted this system and it will serve to promote transparency of test

scores and the level of knowledge. Our country education system must keep to the exit levels of CEFR hereafter.