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INTEGRATING ASSESSMENT PROCESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Language teaching has been evolved in seven folds since three to four decades. There are ways, approaches, methods and assessment which unify the process of language learning and teaching. New classrooms are rather more technological equipped and the so with learners' attitude towards learning theory of language practices. The approach towards language assessment has also been altered, throughout, considering the need of giving feedback on students' learning outcomes. The new skills in assessment details more rigorous need of comments or grades on students' strengths and weaknesses rather than just a set of marks/percentage given at the end. Assessment is mainly done on two bases: 'formative' i.e. assessment done on students' positive/negative area, 'summative' i.e. assessment done on final marks/score of the final exams.

Assessment, be it formative or summative, has to be authentic when it comes to learning language accuracy. In English Language Teaching (ELT), it has always been observed that a lot of focus on the evaluation has been made as how it should be done. The reason why it is done is just to create awareness about the process of assessment, which is influential and turn-taking for the future of speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL). Now generally this process is not considered authentic as our teachers' partial focus is on assessing the summative side of language development that is drawing the final score of the learners' and making a mark-sheet and not on the formative part which has a 'real-world' (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010) practical scenario. The present paper will focus on how we as language practitioners can accelerate the evaluation process in an actual way. It will also give possible solutions as how the skills of the students' could be assessed well with the help of rubrics.

Keywords: *Assessment, Formative and summative evaluation, ELT (English Language Teaching), ESL (English as a Second Language), Real-world scenario, Rubrics.*

INTRODUCTION

In ELT, since couple of years with the increment in the knowledge, practices, procedures etc. and other professional development related activities like broadcasting national – international webinars, seminars, online courses, language associations, scholarship

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programs etc. the emphasize has been greatly given on the assessment side of language development. Many ELT professionals have started realizing and propagating their thoughts on the evaluation of language skills.

In the classroom of Indian colleges where there is less knowledge about integrating activities and acknowledging the importance of functional approach for pedagogic goal, the process-oriented learning is not taking place the way it is expected. It is here the need of acknowledging and implementing various assessment practices comes in the center. Mostly English language teachers of college place importance on the final scores/grades only that is just evaluating the language learners on the basis of their performances in the final exams, which is even not authentic. The actual process of language evaluation should actually begin from the classroom itself. In most of the colleges of Gujarat be it B.A. (Arts), Commerce (B.Com, B.B.A.), Computer (B.C.A.), Science (B.Sc.), Engineering (B.E.) or any Master's program, the compulsory subject English is there, with the names like Business English, Communicative English, General English, Communication Skills, Commercial Communication etc., there is a clause of internal marks where usually marks are not given authentically but on the basis of subjective choices of teachers.

In ELT, Evaluation has two types: Formative and Summative. Above paragraph has discussed about the summative assessment that is marks given on the basis of the final examination score but Formative side of the assessment entails more on the need-base development. The formative activities like doing group-discussions, mock-interview practice, role-play, simulation, extempore, drama etc. that could be integrated into the learner's learning process. In the colleges, where the assessment procedure is not done very well there the formative activities should be encouraged.

Assessment/Evaluation:

- Formative (Internal) - 60%

(Class assignments/tutorials, Class attendance, Tests, Class interactions, and any laboratory work if required etc.)

- Summative (Final) - 40%

(Exam, Jury, Term Paper etc.)

In the formative assessment, feedback plays a vital role. First, let see about the Principles of language Assessment.



FIVE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

There are five principles of language assessment (Brown, 2005): 1. Practicability – that talks about the practical side of conducting the examination. 2. Reliability – it discusses about the scoring criteria and evaluation. 3. Validity – this entails about the objectives of the test. 4. Authenticity – this gives idea about the design of the test and students' grasping level. 5. Wash back – this principle renders the positive or negative impact of the test on student's psyche.

FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Assessment can be both formative and summative. It depends on the type of test. Formative assessment is done throughout the course, on-going evaluation, as our learners do require it more for the improvement. This comes in many forms and includes mostly constructive feedback by using different rubrics, checklists, self-peer assessment etc. Summative is done at the end of the course. Teachers may consider it as giving final score or grade at the end of the semester/exam. But this paper focuses more on the formative assessment part that helps more in terms of developing learners' communicative competence.

ACTIVITIES

Summative – Multiple choice questions, True/false, Matching, Short answer, Essay, Play or debate,

Formative – Gap-fill/Cloze, True/false, Matching, Essay, Interview, Role-play, Simulation, Oral presentation, Play or debate, Survey, Self-assessment, Checklist, Rubric,

Some resources for more information

Edutopia. (2011). What are some types of assessment? Available at

<http://www.edutopia.org/teaching-module-assessment-what>

Edutopia. (2011). Grant Wiggins: Defining assessment. Available at

<http://www.edutopia.org/grant-wiggins-assessment>

SOME ACTIVITIES DURING THE CLASS FOR FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

These activities would accelerate the process of formative assessment in the language classroom.

Activities like,

Brainstorming, concept-map, decision-making, item clarification, minute paper, multiple-choice survey, quick-case study, quick thinks, think-pair-share etc. Teacher should plan well



in advance these activities and should also develop the required checklists/rubrics for the same.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT V/S TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT

Traditional test is like an academic pen-pencil paper test that assesses students' final score/grade and percentage while alternative assessment examines students' strengths and weaknesses and hence providing a ground for giving constructive feedback. Alternative assessments are easy ways to release the students from the summative assessments notion that is getting good marks and give them ample opportunities to indulge themselves into pragmatic teaching/learning based tasks.

We all know that a student always come up with expectations and with "specific information gap" (NCLRC, P. 1) in their mind and it is our duty to bestow practical trainings, not necessarily based on summative assessment. What alternative assessment is?

- Alternative assessment is performance based concept
- It is based on the idea of learner-centered because here students can evaluate their own learning
- It gives opportunities to reflect on their overall (if the focus is on four skills) linguistic development
- It is based on authentic tasks and focus is on attaining communication skills rather than right or wrong answers (NCLRC P.3)

FEEDBACK IN ELT BY USING CHECKLISTS/RUBRICS

When we talk about the feedback in language classroom, it is generally given orally or face-to-face. Teacher never tries to formulate evaluation sheets in such a way that it becomes a vital tool. In ELT, it is expected that assessment should be done by using proper checklists or rubrics along with proper descriptors and elements. Checklists and rubrics play a very prominent role in evaluating performances of the students. Checklist gives indication whether a specific criterion, characteristics is present or not. Rubric provides a measure for quality performance from the established criteria. Say for example, if teacher is making students to do a mock-interview then there should be a rubric that can assess an interviewee from all the angles. Here is an example,



Performance Statement: Giving feedback to the student who played the role of the candidate in the interview. Assessment would be peer-evaluation. Minimum 25 to 30 points are expected.

Dimension/Task	Poor (2 pt.)	Average (5 pts.)	Excellent (8 pts.)	Total 40
1. Education and experience	Partially fulfilled achievements, no quality of leadership.	Expectedly fulfilled achievements, evidence of growth, might take responsibility further, leadership qualities	Achieved 100% criteria for Achievements, evidence of growth, willingness to be a part of a team, willingness to assume responsibility, leadership qualities	
2. Mental Qualities	Not have required general intelligence and decision-making skills.	Satisfactory in general intelligence, can improve on decision-making skills if provided with further training, good in logical thinking.	Master in general intelligence, alertness, decision-making skills and logical thinking. Proved best in mental qualities.	
3. Interpersonal and communication skills	Inappropriate manner and body-language. Lacking formal etiquette.	Manageable in manner, comprehension and body-language. Needed good precision in expression.	Proficient in manners, ability to listen, comprehension, fluency, body-language and precision in expression.	
4. Personality	Not confident and enthusiastic. Lack of motivation.	Good in confidence and enthusiasm. Motivation is needed.	Very confident, enthusiastic, good in motivation, proactive nature and assertive enough.	
5. Appearance	Lack of formal dress. Not groomed enough to justify the role for the post.	Formal attire. Need more grooming. Appropriate dress but need more professional style.	Formal appearance. Good grooming, professional dress and tidiness. Suitable for the job and team.	



Checklist for Oral Presentation of Interviewee

Criterion	YES	NO
Describes Interviewee		
Explains interviewee's reason for coming to U.S.		
Describes a challenge the interviewee has faced		
Describes how interviewee maintains connection to culture		
Speaks for at least 3 minutes		
Evidence of Rehearsal (Not reading from notes)		

Checklists/Rubrics

Oral Exam Rating Sheet

Name: _____ Score: /30

Communicative Success

- A 6 / 5.5 Understand all of the messages.
- A- 5 Understand the general message and most of the details.
- B 4.5 Understand general message, but only some of the details.
- C 4 Have some idea of the general message, but would not be sure to have understood.
- D-F 3.5 - 0 Do not understand what the speaker is trying to say.

Pronunciation/Fluency

- A 6 / 5.5 Speech is smooth; speaker is comfortable and confident in use of the language. No mispronunciation that would interfere with comprehension by a sympathetic native speaker.
- A- 5 Speech is occasionally hesitant, some rephrasing. Mispronunciation causing misunderstanding occurs only rarely.
- B 4.5 Speech is hesitant (e.g. frequent rephrasing, sentences left unfinished, long pauses). Several misunderstandings arise from mispronunciation of words or errors in intonation.
- C 4 Speech hesitant and choppy; conversation is almost impossible. Mispronunciation and inaccurate stress make understanding difficult. Has to repeat a lot to be understood OR not enough speech to evaluate.



D-F 3.5 - 0 Speech limited to isolated words, or mispronunciation makes comprehension impossible.

Vocabulary

A 6 / 5.5 Shows control of a wide range of the vocabulary taught in class and always uses this vocabulary appropriately.

A- 5 Shows control of an adequate range of the vocabulary taught in class and most often uses this vocabulary appropriately.

B 4.5 Some control of new vocabulary but relies on fixed expressions/basic vocabulary or uses vocabulary inappropriately.

C 4 Shows very limited control of the vocabulary taught, making discussion of related topics extremely difficult; OR not enough speech to evaluate.

D-F 3.5 - 0 Shows no command of the vocabulary taught, making communication impossible.

Grammar

A 6 / 5.5 Shows consistent control of the structures taught in class and communication is never impeded.

A- 5 Usually controls structures taught in class.

B 4.5 Shows partial control of structures taught in class.

C 4 Speech is very difficult to understand due to lack of control of structures taught OR not enough speech to evaluate.

D-F 3.5 - 0 Extreme lack of control of structures taught in class.

Role Plays/Interviews

A 6 / 5.5 Exchange is well-connected and appropriate to the topic and situation. Amount of time spent conversing is appropriate for the task assigned and the topic is adequately covered.

A- 5 Exchange is usually well-connected and appropriate to the topic and situation.

B 4.5 Some misunderstandings occur because discourse is not sufficiently connected or conversation is not always appropriate to the topic and situation; or speaker(s) does not maintain conversation for assigned length of time and needs to be told to continue.

C 4 Misunderstandings frequently occur between participants because discourse is not connected; or conversation is often inappropriate to topic or situation.

D-F 3.5 – 0 Exchange is not connected (many non-sequiturs; speaker unable to hold up his/her end of the conversation); or conversation is entirely inappropriate to topic or situation.



Some websites for creating rubrics:

1. www.fcps.edu
2. http://health.usf.edu/publichealth/eta/Rubric_Tutorial/default.htm
3. www.carla.umn.edu/assessments/vac/Evaluation/p_h.html

In language classrooms, major focus should be given for alternative assessment and if the focus is on the productive skills: speaking and writing then one could use lots of role-play, simulation, interviews, debate, discussions, drafting letters, memo, e-mails by checking their understanding as a part of formative assessments.

CONCLUSION

Being a language teacher what we should know is to create an environment of validity, reliability, productivity and authenticity (Coombe, 2007), amongst students and make them to speak well. I believe that a language teacher can only be a master if he/she knows the criteria for language assessment so that he/she can plan their teaching accordingly. It is seen that due to lack of timing for standardized evaluation, teachers are used to assess on traditional base but what can be seen now is every good teacher has started understanding and exploring alternative forms of student assessment and considering formative/alternative assessment as an integral part of language assessment.

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