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INVESTIGATING FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

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***Annotation.** In this paper, the author defines formative assessment and elaborates readers' understanding of the term. The central role of formative assessment to motivate language learners in the teaching and learning process is highlighted. Formative and summative assessment with a clear example of personal experience is illustrated. The writer explains how teachers in two distinct cultures approaches to student learning.*

***Key words:** formative assessment, test, summative assessment, motivation.*

Introduction

The assessment of students in higher education has always been crucial and controversial issue. Students should be assessed properly since after graduation they start working and what they learn, they will implement there.

Formative assessment is an ongoing data gathering process in which information will be predominantly used by teachers to make decisions on students' performance. It is usually associated with diagnostic assessment in which teachers learn about language learners' weaknesses and strengths. The term *formative assessment* in English can be reworded as *assessment for learning*.

Recently, a great emphasis on language assessment has been the main focus of language instructors. Reasonably, it has been a primary issue for decades since its role in the teaching and learning process is central. When assessment is not properly utilized, this can lead to several issues like poor student participation, reduction in student overall performance. There is a strong relationship between assessment and teaching because each depends on another. Teachers' lack of assessment skills may cause little or no connection between assessment and teaching (Malone, 2011).

Personal experience

I use formative assessment all the time. Students are assessed for learning where marking is not primary focus though students are given relatively one tenth of total point for their work. It is relatively the smallest measurement which does not really affect student performance. Suppose a problem-solution essay is taught in the classroom and students are assigned to do writing tasks at home. The following tasks were accomplished in the classroom and beyond it: First students were taught to structure essay, introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion. Many practical exercises were accomplished to understand aspects (thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting sentences, etc.) of essay. Then, students applied the knowledge to construct their own essay at home. The next lesson, students brought essays to classroom to do peer editing. All students were involved in peer editing activity. To do this, they were provided with an analytic rubric which contains assessment criteria that aligned with lesson objectives. The rubric helped students understand their weaknesses and strengths and they could also give constructive feedback to their peers in order to improve their writing. The teacher assessed students formatively for all they had done in the classroom and at home and for this, they were marked with a minimum grade compared to summative grade which accounts for maximum grading.

Comparison of formative and summative assessment

If formative assessment is compared with summative assessment, it is a low-stake measurement of student learning since students are more encouraged to learn and be active throughout the teaching and learning process. Summative assessment, on the other hand, is high-stake measurement as the results taken will be necessary for different stakeholders such as administrators, teachers, parents and government. Administrators need results from final examinations in order to evaluate teaching process, students' achievements and they compare statistics with previous years. Parents are eager to know about their children's achievements and progress as well. Interestingly, students also need results to understand their weaknesses so that they can work more on themselves. Most importantly, governments usually distinguish students among schools, universities and in this way, they can make further decision on teaching, teachers' achievements, curriculum and policy.

Language assessment and teaching interact as they both are directed to lead language learners to progress and achieve expected outcomes. Language instructors can ask some questions to clarify whether they are in the right path.

- What assessments are students expecting from course objectives?
- How are teachers going to achieve their goals?
- Are our assessments properly created?

- How do we intend to learn about students’ needs?
- Do assessments align with curriculum and learning objectives? (Frank, 2012).

These questions ought to be answered at the beginning of a course design as it will help instructors foresee assessment issues in their classroom.

Testing

This term denotes negative perceptions among students. Traditionally, testing or a test was considered the only assessment tool and in some teaching contexts, unfortunately, it is the only assessment tool (Akhmadjonov, 2023). Many test developers struggle to construct reliable and valid tests. Tests used to function as information tools that teachers used to learn about students’ achievements, weaknesses and strengths. However, later emphasis moved from testing to alternative assessment tools such as student portfolios, web-based testing (Frank, 2012), checklist, rubrics and others. Proper selection of assessment tools will definitely assist teachers to match students needs and learning strategies. In fact, students vary from being extrovert, introvert to auditory, visual, kinesthetic learners. For auditory learners, for instance, it may work listening tests, visual learners may find tests with some pictures. Fengying (2003) points out that among other factors, modification of assessment methods will motivate students.

Table 1.

Formative assessment practices with teachers’ approach in language classroom in two countries

China	Uzbekistan
Very developed country with high quality education system	<u>Developing</u> country with former Soviet Union education system in public universities
Very demanding language teachers. They do not praise their achievements instead they don’t give up until their students achieve the expected outcomes	<u>Depends on teachers</u> Generally, depends on teachers, some demand, others not. it is typical to praise their achievements when their students win and they can be awarded with some financial benefits.
A responsible teacher who stays till night and corrects errors students have. When students’ work is covered with much red, then they are satisfied with their work	<u>Teachers leave for home</u> Very uncommon to see teachers late in the evening working with students and correcting errors. They usually stand till the end of the lesson, they hurry up to another work.
Students’ outcomes are compared when announced. Students who did not receive higher results, are asked to work harder.	<u>Grades are priority</u> Students usually compare their marks with their peers. Students are encouraged to work harder but it is not typical to motivate them to do so

It is clear that there is a distinct understanding between two cultures in teachers' approach to student learning, achievement and motivation (see Table 1). Chinese teachers tend to be more serious, demanding and achievements focused (Fengying, 2003), while Uzbek teachers would love to finish eighty minutes lesson and get on to other tasks, less motivated, and more focus on personal interests rather on students' accomplishments. But not all teachers tend to possess the same features, self-sacrificing, student centered and student loving Uzbek teachers are manifold as well.

Conclusion

To sum it up, I believe that language teachers need to take assessment training or participate in language assessment conferences so that they understand how teaching and learning integrate through assessment. So it is highly recommended to train teachers on how to assess students and then they can design valid, practical, reliable tests. Otherwise, the future of students can be ruined by teachers careless wrong doings.

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