

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT APPROACHES IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Андрейко Л.В. (Суми)

Two words which are often associated with testing are those of stress and anxiety. This is especially true when we talk about summative tests where stakes are really high. However, for students who feel good about themselves and anticipate success such tests can be very motivating. On the other hand, for the less successful students summative tests may reduce their self-esteem and the effort they put into learning.

In order to avoid this gap between high and low achieving students as well as to reduce the sense of stress about testing, teachers should establish the classroom culture that is not centered around “preparing to the test”. We should rather enhance elements of formative assessment which helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas they need to work on. The idea is that students can learn from their weaknesses. Formative tests can also help teachers evaluate the syllabus, methods and materials they use.

Let us look at formative tests through the lense of McClelland’s Human Motivation Theory [1] which says that, regardless of our gender, culture, or age, we all have three motivating drivers, and one of these will be our dominant motivating driver. The three motivators are achievement, affiliation, and power. The individuals with high achievement needs are highly motivated by competing and challenging work. The individuals who are motivated by affiliation have an urge for a friendly and supportive environment. Such individuals are effective performers in a team. Those with a high need for power work best when they're in charge. Because they enjoy competition, they do well with goal-oriented projects or tasks.

McClelland’s theory can help us understand how to design formative assessment tasks and how to provide feedback to motivate students. For instance, we can alternate competitive tasks (for students motivated by achievement and power) and cooperative tasks (for students motivated by affiliation). This can help meet diverse students’ needs – through differentiation and individual approach to raise levels of student achievement. One of the examples of competitive assessment tasks that can be used as a wrap up after

working with texts, which they are usually asked to read at home, is as follows: write definitions or synonyms of some key words or phrases from the text on the blackboard and ask them to find their equivalents in the text. This proved to be a very effective motivational tool as everybody strives to read the text carefully at home and there hardly is a person in the classroom who doesn't do his or her homework.

For those who work best in a group environment, the task can be as follows: work in groups of 3-4 and write a summary of the text in 10-15 words. Compare your summary with other groups and with teacher model. This is a good means to develop student self- and peer-assessment skills.

Another crucial thing we need to remember about formative assessment is giving (and receiving) feedback. Number one rule is to make it a positive process and experience. Effective feedback shows students where they are on their path and provides guidance how to improve during the learning. I find “sandwich method” to be really helpful: positive feedback – what needs to be improved – positive feedback.

To sum up, there is strong evidence to suggest that using formative assessment approaches is the way to raise motivation and support effective learning.

Література:

1. Annick M. Brennen. *Enhancing Students Motivation* / Annick M. Brennen

[електронний ресурс]. – [Режим доступу]:

<http://www.soencouragement.org/enhancing-students-motivation.htm>