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У СУЧАСНОМУ ГЛОБАЛІЗОВАНОМУ СВІТІ:
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INSIGHTS INTO FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT IN ELT

Assessment in education is the product of the 20th century. Michael Scriven proposes the use of “formative and summative” assessment as it serves two different purposes: 1) informative, to improve instruction, and, 2) summative to measure students’ achievement [6, 25]. Because assessment significantly affects students’ approach to learning, assessment paradigms have shifted from testing learning of students to assessing for students’ learning. Bloom asserts that when assessment is aligned with the process of teaching and learning, it will have a positive effect on students’ learning and their motivation.

This paper attempts to explore different forms of formative assessment in ELT and their impact on students’ learning. The classification of different forms of assessment is primarily based on the work of Herrera et al. [5].

Diagnostic assessment or pre-assessment is used to collect information for planning instruction and acknowledging learners’ needs. It was observed that, many students come to university with a misconception that they are not talented enough to perform a certain task, such as making a presentation or writing an analytic memo. Given this scenario, a teacher is responsible for recognizing these misconceptions and finding ways to confront them.

Portfolio development is not a new concept in the history of language education. It is one of the instruments of alternative assessment and indicates the deliberate, careful collection of learner production and reflective self-assessment which is employed to record progress and achievement over time. It has gained great popularity and prominence in the field of foreign language learning and teaching in view of its several benefits such as learners’ full participation in the evaluation process, autonomous assessment of their own language skills and knowledge, and the improvement of critical thinking skills. It plays a quite key role in terms of supplying teachers with information beneficial for instructional decisions and evaluation process. It is viewed as an instrument of stimulating learners and enhancing the learners’ self-reflection and self assessment.

In addition, portfolios are driven by classroom activities; in most cases, they reflect “in-process adaptations to instructional methods and assessment”, and they assess learning which motivates students [5, 32].

It is now entirely evident that self-assessment is the key element of the European Language portfolio(ELP) in that the passport involves the learners in assessing their own proficiency in line with the levels and descriptors derived from the Common European Framework, and the biography requires regular determining on learning aims, which is only probable via the learners’ regularly assessing their own progress. This focal point on self-assessment indicates the Council of Europe’s concern to maximize autonomous lifelong learning, gives rise to the learners’ comprehending their problems about their learning process and evaluating their own language skills and competences.

Self-assessment has recently become a prominent component of learning and teaching English as a second or foreign language. Like all forms of evaluation, self-assessment needs clear criteria in order for it to work. Learners can be encouraged to participate, by developing assessment criteria together. This helps them become aware of what they have to work on. For example, when students are engaged in assessing their own work, they try to learn the criteria for high-quality performance, and they experience a willingness to apply those criteria. Agreements exist among educators, in which they recognize the value of self and peer-assessment which helps students exert control over their learning. Initially, some teachers provide rubrics for student so that they can assess their progress. The rubrics incorporate the criteria that provide the opportunity for students to reflect on the extent to which they have made progress. Atkin, Black, and Coffey [1, 43] illustrate a feature of alternative assessment that asks learners to answer three questions as they assess themselves: “Where am I trying to go?; Where am I now?; and How do I close the gap?”.

The advantage of a self-assessment instrument is that it is relatively easy to construct and score, and because it can be administered anonymously, it is low-anxiety for the student. The weakness in the method is that students may not be able to accurately assess their abilities. However, accuracy improves when the response options are clear and tied to specific concepts or behaviors (e.g, what am I able to do with what I know) that students can reflect on or even mentally simulate.

Similar to self-assessment, educators consider *peer-assessment* advantageous, as it furthers opportunities for students to identify targeted learning goals. In peer-assessment, students often assess other students’

work compared to the criteria developed by the teacher, or both students and the teacher. An important aspect of peer assessment is that it engages students in dialogue with their classmates, commenting on each others' work rather than a one-way feedback system from teacher to student.

To enrich peer-assessment and use it productively, it can be proposed that students be trained to assess their peers purposefully, with the goal of improving learning. As students comment on their peers' work, they use informal language which is understandable to them. In addition, according to Herrera et al., given the concept of peer-assessment, students compare other students' work to the accepted criteria, which "enables them to discern outstanding elements of both their own and their classmate's performances and products" [5, 34].

The idea that knowledge is constructed during the learning process and that a student discovers knowledge for him/herself, rather than receiving knowledge, inspires the notion of *performance-based assessment*. This approach facilitates both the way students take information and the way they store and apply this information to deal with novel situations. This means that, in addition to eliciting constructed responses, performance based assessment incorporates authentic tasks that need higher level of thinking and application of skills. It can be interpreted as an opportunity that "tap[s] into the depth and breadth of students' learning" [5, 28].

Interview-based assessment is another form of alternative assessment the teachers use to gather data about students' experiences, interests, background, thoughts, beliefs, activities etc. Teacher-student interviews vary from highly structured to informal conversations. Unstructured detailed interviews with students help teachers to adapt the lesson based on the information gathered from students.

Recent recognition of collaborative or teamwork is increasing among educators, realizing that strengths and skills of some students are well-defined when they are engaged in group activities such as *cooperative/group learning or assessment*. Planning for group assessment requires educators to consider both group efforts and individual liability. The researchers note the complexity of assessing a cooperative group activity, in particular distinguishing an individual student's effort and the contribution he/she makes performing a group activity or project. Teachers often document the thought and action of individual students in the process of performing an activity as they learn from cooperative activities and the dialogue that occurs among the students.

Accommodative or scaffolded assessment may take various forms, including dialogue journals requiring students to write their thoughts about certain topics, or stories. Another form, scaffolded essays, allows the teacher to simplify a complex essay question by breaking it down into short answer questions. This is especially useful when assessing content information, because it reduces the stress of students who may assume that they will have to answer questions in an essay format.

The concept of *questioning* has a long history in the area of classroom assessment; however, what has changed over the course of time is a shift from close-ended questions to more informative, open-ended formats. Questions can focus on knowledge, skills or experiences that teacher assume students have acquired and are prerequisites to the course, and topics and skills that he/she plans to address in the class. The feedback from the instrument can help calibrate the course appropriately or direct students to supplemental materials that will help them fill in gaps or weaknesses in their existing skill or knowledge base that may hinder their progress.

Teachers are encouraged not only to develop more effective questions but also to facilitate an environment where students must think analytically and provide their own answers to their questions. Black et al. [2,p.39] argue that formative questions challenge “common misconceptions, to create some conflict that requires discussion” which encourages students to think of a response or an idea from different angles.

In addition to these formats, *questionnaires and checklists* are developed initially by identifying skills, knowledge, and competencies to perform a task. Given the identified knowledge and skills, a series of questions or statements are developed to describe expected outcomes, taking into consideration the varying levels of students, as well. Using questionnaires and checklists helps teachers to reduce repetitions, and they also provide information about students’ prior knowledge and what they bring into the classroom.

Although these types of formative assessment can be developed and used in ways that demonstrate students’ academic learning, Herrera et al. note that “such assessments are not immune to bias” [5, 46]. This means that a teacher may provide more feedback to some students and less to some others, or may prioritize his/her perspective in assessing a performance, ignoring the fact that other voices and aspects should be considered accordingly. As can be summarized from the above discussion, increased student involvement in the process of assessment, can be used to reduce this concern.

Overall, the study reveals that, based on the students' and the faculty members' responses, the impact of assessment depends whether the assessment assesses (measures) what it intends to assess. Forms, environment, and the intended objectives of classroom assessment are the three main indicators of good assessment. The impact of assessment is significantly observable on students' performance. The way students approach learning determines the way they think about classroom assignments and tests. Recent studies advocate for including students in the process of developing assessment tools because, as Falchikov [4, 43] states, student involvement in peer assessment adds more value to the learning process.

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