
The Role of Assessment in Teaching Foreign Languages to the Primary School Students

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Abstract: The paper deals with assessment which is closely connected with the reflection of a child's learning progress and achievements in their learning performance based on the curriculum developed for the primary school students. It provides information about the child's learning process and what the child has learnt namely the result of learning. The information gained through assessment can be effectively used by teacher to recognize and guide the child's learning performance according to which further and future support in terms of learning can be provided.

Keywords: assessment, formative assessment, diagnostic assessment, summative assessment, assessment for learning, assessment of teaching.

Assessment is an effective way for teacher to have clear understanding to what extend the child is progressing in the course through the information gathered through the results of assessment and the information can be used for the further teaching and learning. Therefore assessment is not just testing but it goes far beyond examining and grading. It involves everyday interactions between the teacher and learner that include continuous conversation, observation and performance.

Through assessment the information reflecting the child's acquisition process and development in processing knowledge, improving skills and forming attitude towards learning can be gathered, recorded, interpreted and used for the future action. While teaching the teacher questions, listens and observes the child working on the given task and use the results of tests all of which influences the assessment given for the child's performance. So it can be said that assessment is based on many overlapping and simultaneous activities like gathering, recording, interpreting, using, and reporting information. These activities may take a few seconds or sometimes cover a period of study like a term or half of the academic year.

The activities given for the students may take a few seconds or in contrary, several days or weeks depending on the purpose of the assessment and the method used in the process. The results of the exams facilitate the teacher with clear understanding of both what and how the child is leaning. That information can be used to plan learning experiences based on appropriate objectives from the curriculum and on the previous learning of the child. It means that by the use of assessment the teacher draws a clear understanding of the short-term and long-term needs of the child according to which he/she plans future teaching strategies. The information gathers in those ways can be used by the teacher to support and extend the child's learning.

The concept of assessment for learning contributes to the extension of the potential of formative assessment which is done on daily basis during the classes. It puts emphasis on the child's active role in their own learning in which the teacher and child agree what the outcomes of the learning should be and the criteria for judging how much the outcomes have been achieved. Through assessment the teacher has to focus on three key points:

- Where the children are in the process of learning
- Where they are going namely, what their needs are
- What is the current stage in their learning and how they get to the next stage

It is central to provide feedback to children based on the evidence of how and what the child is learning. Feedback on the basis of learning or tasks given can be helpful for children to identify and celebrate their progress and achievement, show difficulties they undergo and the next steps to be. This stage involved in forming their own learning can rise children's awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more responsibility for and feel satisfaction of their learning. Assessment for is not generally conducted at the end of a particular piece of work or a certain time. It usually happens during the day-to-day, minute-by-minute interactions between teachers and learners. Everything children perform, say and do such as asking questions, working on an assignment in group or individually on any task, playing, designing or making model and so on facilitates the teacher and the children themselves with information about what understand and what do not, what they can do and what can not. Using the assessment for learning the teacher interprets the gained information and uses it to support children in their performance and plan beforehand. By this way the teacher can involve the assessment into their interaction with the child and the child can regard it as a natural part of how they learn in school. The teacher can also use the information gained from assessment to evaluate their own way of teaching and its effectiveness. According to the information gathered observing the child the teacher can make alterations to their planning, organizing their strategies and choosing methodologies in order to make learning more successful for the children.

There is another concept in terms of assessment which is defined as assessment of learning. In contrast to assessment for learning, assessment of learning focuses more on long-term assessment. It generally involves assessing a child's learning at the end of a certain period such as at the end of a unit of work, a week or a term or a year. The purpose of assessment of learning is to measure a child's overall progress towards the objective of the curriculum. It is only grade or score which is the only feedback for a child to receive. Even though the results can be useful for the teacher, they may be of limited value to the child. To prevent its possible negative impact on the child the teacher should identify the essential information which gives evidence about the child's progress and achievements at the same time shows that to the child. Assessment of learning can also help the teacher to plan their future teaching strategies, set new targets and give information for the summative assessment.

The information gained through as assessment of learning can be used for reporting about the child's progress especially to parents and other teachers. The results of assessment of learning have the potential to ascertain literacy and numeracy standards or evaluate the progress within the curriculum.

With regard of assessment, there are classroom and teacher-related factors. What it means is that, since curriculum time for language learning at primary school is typically fairly limited, there appears a question whether teachers can afford to devote some of it for assessment. Furthermore, how to develop assessment formats that facilitates the teachers with the most useful information about learners may not be something all primary language teachers know or have been trained to do. Approaching from another angle, it is known that students' motivation and confidence can be enhanced if they know that they are making progress in their language learning (Graham et al., 2016). Assessment particularly formative and diagnostic assessment help a lot for both students and teachers to have valuable insights into strength and areas to be developed.

Assessment information not only important for teachers to plan in short term period but also using the records the teachers may organizes their teaching for long term period. Assessment is also seen as a tool to transit the students from primary to secondary school language learning. So assessment should be based on the following principles to guarantee better quality in primary education. It should

1. be designed to improve the students' knowledge and achievements
2. provide complete information about students' achievements
3. be seen as an indispensable part of learning and teaching
4. be organized involving different methods
5. be continual process
6. be fair
7. achieve transparency
8. be valid and reliable

Through the assessment students should be motivated to study and show their knowledge, aptitudes, attitudes or behaviours which are the core subject of assessment. There are two basic functions of assessment:

- (1) to show how much progress the students have achieved in the educational process
- (2) to maintain students' learning so that they can obtain higher results.

Assessment should start coincide the goals of the educational program and take into consideration the ways of teaching and learning, more specifically, the teacher should follow and value students' achievements related to each goal. Before the assessment process, the teacher is obliged to explain to the students why their achievements are tested and evaluated and how their results will be used. Having tested the students' knowledge, capabilities, skills and attitudes as an introduction into new educational content, the results of the students are not only evaluated but also used for planning of teaching and learning which is called a diagnostic assessment.

Several authors have claimed that when deciding how to assess young language learners, assessment tasks should be concrete rather than abstract; in a format that enables learners to maintain concentration and motivation to complete the tasks; be challenging enough to give a sense of progression but not so much as to be daunting; and be in a format which is relevant to the kind of learning activities experienced in class and related to learners' interests. The information obtained should give enough details for teachers to have a precise understanding about to what extend their learners are doing and what areas need to be developed more. At the same time the information should also coincide to the learning objectives, of course. That more complete information will then enable teachers to make careful decisions about how to adapt their teaching and planning which are underlined purpose of assessment

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