

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING: DEFINITION, PURPOSE, DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

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Introduction. In recent years, a great emphasis on language assessment has been the main focus of language teachers. 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). We believe that language teachers need to take assessment training or participate in language assessment conferences so that they understand how teaching and learning can be made easier with the help of assessment.

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 Uzbek can be translated as doimiy baholash or joriy nazorat.

Personal experience. During doimiy baholash, we mean students are assessed for learning where marking is not primary focus though students are given relatively one tenth of total point for their work. For example, K.Akhmadjonov (2017) taught a problem-solution essay in the classroom and assigned students 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 contained 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. In comparison with summative assessment, formative assessment is considered a low-stake measurement of student achievement because students are more encouraged to learn and be active throughout the teaching and learning process. Summative assessment, on the other hand, is high stake test 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. Mostly importantly, government usually compare students among schools, universities and in this way, they can make further decision on teaching, teachers, curriculum and policy.

Testing. Traditionally, testing or a test was considered the only assessment tool and in some teaching contexts, unfortunately, it is the only assessment tool. 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.

Conclusion. To sum it up, assessment matters much in teaching and learning environment, since their alignment brings outcomes. The other way around, may result in issues such as student demotivation, inappropriate assessment strategies, and overall poor student performance. Formative assessment will definitely help teachers to establish their teaching environment in the way they wish to have and students will benefit from learning and being in the classroom. Thus, teachers should try to learn assessment skills, apply their knowledge in selecting best alternative assessment tools and this is likely to lead to perfection in teaching and learning.

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