ABSTRACT

This article attempts to look at the importance of classroom assessment and evaluation advantages. A major concern of teaching English language for teachers has been assessing and evaluating students' progress during their courses of study as well as their classroom achievements at the end of it. Despite the highly useful aspects of tests such as multiple choice test, essay test and paragraph reading, teachers have not been successful in the classroom.

We will consider multiple-choice testing in this regard in collecting information for language teachers evaluation. The methodology of this paper is a descriptive approach, using classroom activities and library sources, as well as other researches carried out in this regard.

Classroom assessment and evaluation are highly concerned with qualitative judgments that are used to improve students' knowledge and learning. Assessment and evaluation also give teachers useful information about how to improve their teaching methods.

Through using appropriate classroom assessment strategies and techniques, teachers can increase their students' motivation and show them how well they have learned the language. Evaluation goes beyond students' achievements and language assessments to consider all aspects of teaching and learning, and to look at how educational decisions can be informed by the results of alternative forms of assessment and evaluation.

After some discussion the paper will present some useful assessment and evaluation techniques which can assist language teachers to create a dynamic classroom situation for evaluation.

KEYWORDS

Evaluation, Assessment, Important, English language

INTRODUCTION

The present study focuses upon quality of English language learning assessment and evaluation process in the educational system.

Evaluation in teaching English language is a process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about teaching and learning in order to make informed decisions that enhance student achievement and the success of educational programs (Rea-Dickens and Germanie, 1993; Genesee and Upshur, 1996; O'Mally and Valdez-Pierce, 1996). Evaluation is a process that includes five basic components:

1) Articulating the purpose of the educational system.
2) Identifying and collecting relevant information.
3) Having ideas that are valuable and useful to learners in their lives and professions.
4) Analyzing and interpreting information for learners.
5) Classroom management or classroom decision making.

In classroom assessment, since teachers themselves develop, administer and analyze the questions, they are more likely to apply the results of the assessment to their own teaching. Therefore, it provides feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and gives students a measure of their progress. As Biggs (1999) maintains, two major functions can be pointed out for classroom assessment: One is to show whether or not the learning has been successful, and the other one is to clarify the expectations of the teachers from the students (Dunn et al., 2004).

Assessment is a process that includes four basic components:

1) Measuring improvement over time.
2) Motivating students to study.
3) Evaluating the teaching methods.
4) Ranking the students' capabilities in relation to the whole group evaluation.

The purpose of classroom assessment and evaluation is to give students the opportunity to show what they have learned rather than catching them out or to show what they have not learned.

Needless to say, evaluation and assessment can focus on different aspects of teaching and learning: respectively textbooks and instructional materials, student achievement, and whole programs of instruction.

A primary concern in education is whether students attain the objectives of the course of study or curriculum scope and sequence. Objectives refer to goals of a course of instruction whether we consider instruction as a course, a unit, or a lesson. In Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics two different types of objectives are distinguished: 1. General objectives, or aims, are the underlying reasons for or purposes of a course of instruction. General objectives are also called long-term goals. 2. Specific objectives or simply objectives, are descriptions of what is to be achieved in a course. They are more detailed descriptions of exactly what a learner is expected to be able to do at the end of a period of instruction. This might be a single lesson, a chapter of a book, a term’s work, and etc. A description of specific objectives which can be observed and measured is known as behavioural objectives.

It is important to clarify the distinction between evaluation and assessment. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they are technically different. Assessment of an individual student’s progress or achievement is an important component of evaluation: it is that part of evaluation that includes the measurement and analysis of information about student learning. The primary focus of assessment in Teaching English Language has been language assessment and the role of tests in assessing students’ language skills. Evaluation goes beyond student achievement and language assessment to consider all aspects of teaching and learning and to look at how educational decisions can be made by the results of alternative forms of assessment.
Gensee (cited in Carter and Nunan, 2001) believes that another purpose of evaluation is to
guide classroom instruction and enhance student learning on a day-to-day basis. Classroom
assessment and evaluation concerns:

- Suitability of general instructional goals and objectives associated with an individual
  lesson or unit plans;
- Effectiveness of instructional methods, materials and activities used to attain
  instructional objectives;
- Adequacy of professional resources required to deliver instruction.

Classroom assessment and evaluation under the active management of teachers can also serve
important professional development purposes since the information resulting from such
evaluations provides teachers with valuable feedback about their instructional effectiveness
that they can use to develop and improve their professional skills. As part of reflective teaching
movement, teachers are encouraged to conduct research in their own classrooms (Nunan,
1989b; A11wright and Baily, 1991; Richards and Lockhart, 1994); classroom assessment and
evaluation is an important part of such research.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Gensee and Upshur (1996) state that classroom assessment and evaluation is concerned
primarily with improving instruction so that student learning is enhanced. Classroom teachers
in educational system, more than anyone else, are actively and continuously involved in
assessment and evaluation. Students can also be active participants in assessing their own
achievements and in planning how they will study and learn the second language. The context
of classroom assessment and evaluation can be summarized in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. Shows input/output as teaching English language.
As a rule of thumb, (a practical method of measuring based on experience) any instruction consists of three components; The purposes identify the objectives of instruction- the “WHY”. The plans describe the means of attaining those objectives- the “HOW”. And practices are what actually takes place in the classroom- the “WHAT”. Gensee and Upshur (1996) also discuss other factors which, strictly speaking, are not part of classroom instruction themselves, nevertheless, can have a significant effect on second language teaching and learning. They refer to these additional factors as “input factors.” Thus, we can say that classroom assessment and instruction has four aspects (purposes, plans, practices, and input factors) which will be dealt with one by one as follows:

**Instructional objectives:** are identified as the goals that one, as a teacher, aims at while teaching. On the one hand, they provide direction for planning appropriate instruction, and, on the other hand, they provide a basis for determining whether one has achieved what one has set out to accomplish- they provide criteria for assessing the outcomes of one's teaching. When identifying objectives to use in classroom assessment and evaluation, it is important to use those objectives that best describe what one, as an individual teacher, wants to accomplish.

Different kinds of objectives guide classroom instruction; 1) language, 2) strategic, 3) socioaffective, 4) philosophical, and 5) method or process. Language objectives refer to language skills that learners are expected to acquire in the classroom. Objectives that are concerned with strategies for communicating, learning, and critical thinking are referred to as "strategic objectives". Learning process are “conscious processes and techniques that facilitate the comprehension, acquisition, and retention of new skills and concepts” (Chamot and O’Malley 1987). According to Chamot and O’Malley, these may include metacognitive strategies (such as selective attention), cognitive strategies (such as summarizing and elaboration), or socioaffective strategies (such as questioning for clarification).

Socioaffective objectives refer to changes in learner’s attitudes or social behaviours that result from classroom instruction (e.g. changes in attitudes toward the target language, the target language group, or the learner’s first language group). These objectives can be an important part of a second language teaching. In most cases, however, they are secondary to language learning objectives. Gensee (1996) deals with philosophical objectives as changes in attitudes, values, or beliefs of a more general nature than those associated with socioaffective objectives. And, finally, method or process objectives refer to methods, processes, experiences, materials, activities, or other aspects of instruction. They may also refer to opportunities or experiences that learners are expected to have in the course of instruction. Gensee and Upshr (1996), however, state that not all of these objectives are equally useful for classroom instruction. They believe philosophical objectives, for example, are minimally useful, and objectives of the method are useful for evaluating only one component of instruction- the evaluation component. Strategic objectives help in understanding student's performances in class thus, play an important role in instructional planning. They are, however, secondary to language acquisition; in other words, the effective deployment of certain strategies should lead to enhanced second language attainment and usage. Clearly, language objectives are fundamental to second language evaluation and are the focus of our attention. Teachers must be able to distinguish among these objectives so that they understand how each can or can not be used in planning more effective classroom assessment and evaluation in educational system.
Instructional Plans for the Classroom

According to Gensee and Upshur (1996) instructional plans specify what should be taught, and when and how it should be taught. They can be thought of as blueprint for achieving course objectives. Effective teaching requires detailed plans for an entire course, including plans for separate units and even individual lessons that comprise the course. Such plans are often referred to as the syllabus. A well-designed syllabus provides a great deal of specific information about all aspects of instruction, thus allowing teachers to implement equal course appropriately and effectively and to assess it thoroughly. By comparing the instructional plans described in the syllabus with course objectives, teachers can assess whether the instructional plans prescribed in the syllabus are compatible with the course objectives. Syllabus plans which are not compatible with course objectives are not likely to be successful in achieving those objectives, therefore, they probably need to be changed. The particular part of instructional plans that are useful in classroom assessment and evaluation can briefly be considered as:

A. **Content:** specific language content or objectives to be taught and learned which identify interim learning outcomes can provide criteria for assessing progress in learning.

B. **Organization:** a sequence of units that is organized in some way according to, (1) general theme (holidays, transportation) (2) situation (the supermarket, the post office), (3) tasks (preparing research reports, taking lecture notes), (4) communicative functions (inviting, asking for information, greeting), or (5) linguistic structures (prepositions of place, past tense of irregular verbs, direct and indirect pronouns).

C. **Materials and equipment:** The materials may include textbooks, audiotapes, videotapes, picture tests, language games and flash cards. Equipment might include filmstrip projectors, overhead projectors, tape recorders, audio cassette recorders, or television monitors. Information about the materials and equipment needed to implement the syllabus is also pertinent to assessing the suitability of a particular syllabus, unit, or lesson to meet instructional objectives.

D. **Activities and roles:** Activities refer to the ways in which materials and equipment are used and how the content is to be taught. Activities can be described as: 1) what the students are doing; 2) how the students are grouped; and 3) how the activities are organized in the classroom? Examples of classroom activities are paragraph reading, journal writing, oral drills, show-and-tell, conversation, question- response, role play, and so on. Students may be grouped into whole class activities, pairwork, and small group or individual activities. Activities may be teacher- centered or student-centered. All students may work on the same activity, or they might be subdivided to work on various activities according to interest or their ability level.

Student and teacher roles describe the relationship of these individuals to one another and to the content, materials, and activities. In student-centered classrooms, students take a much more active role: they decide what activities to do and when, and they consult with the teacher to identify reasonable and worthwhile activities and discuss plans for completing them. In such cases, the teacher acts as a supervisor or resource, advising students about their choices, directing them to relevant materials, and providing feedback on progress. In brief, roles and activities are not independent of one another; the roles of teachers and students influence the kinds of activities they do, and, conversely, the kinds of activities they do determine their roles. It is the combination of roles and activities that is important to consider. Gensee and Upshur
(1996) deal with the relation between instructional materials and activities and teacher-student roles, on the one hand, and language objectives, on the other hand, and state that this relation has especially valuable implications for evaluation. They believe where there is a close relationship between objectives and roles, materials, and activities, it is reasonable to use the latter as a basis for assessing whether students have achieved the objectives. Where the relationship between them is close, alternative activities, materials and roles need to be used for assessing achievement. In other words, it is advisable to use classroom activities that match instructional objectives and to avoid those that do not match with the educational system.

**Instructional practices:** include the actual strategies, materials, activities, and tasks used by teachers and students in the classroom. Genesee and Upshur (1996) state that it is necessary to consider classroom practices separate from plans because what is planned may not always occur in the classroom. Teachers may not implement instructional plans as prescribed for a variety of reasons (e.g. they do not understand them well; the plans are poorly described and, thus, can not be implemented unambiguously, etc). Moreover, classroom practice may not proceed according to plan because the students themselves do not react as expected. So, it is important that classroom assessment and evaluation take into account what actually happens in class rather than simply what is supposed to happen. It is unfair to assess student achievement with reference to instructional plans, including objectives, if these do not adequately represent what actually takes place in class.

**Input factors:** Second language teaching and learning are affected by a variety of factors from outside the classroom itself which are referred to as input factors. Examples of such factors can be mentioned as: students’ needs, students’ prior educational experiences, students’ cultural background, teachers’ attitudes, class size and composition, time for instruction, teachers’ professional training and expertise, etc. According to Gensee (1996) one can regard input factors as prerequisites to the development of sound instructional objectives and plans and to the effective implementation of classroom practice. In other words, instructional objectives, plans, and practices should be compatible with input factors. Second language evaluation needs to consider the match or mismatch between these prerequisites and instructional objectives, plans, and practices for particular teachers working with a particular group of learners in a particular community. For most part, input factors cannot be changed, so, if there is a mismatch, certain aspects of instruction must be altered to achieve a greater compatibility. Moreover, classroom teachers are seldom able to alter input factors since they fall outside their sphere of influence.

**A STRATEGY FOR CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

Gensee and Upshur (1996) argue that evaluation involve comparison. More specifically, decisions that result from assessment are arrived at by making comparisons between various components of instruction and the larger instructional context (including input factors, purposes, plans, practices, and outcomes) and then taking action to reduce mismatches between the components so that the desired outcome or match is achieved. If there is no mismatch, then instruction can proceed without changing anything.

Another way of viewing classroom assessment and evaluation requires that you look for potential problems and decide on actions to resolve them. Problems take the form of mismatches, inconsistencies between what is actually happening or is likely to happen on the
one hand and what you would like to happen on the other. Mismatches indicate that there is a potential problem; decisions about changes that will eliminate or reduce the problems.

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

To be useful and effective, evaluation and assessment requires planning. Preparing for evaluation should be an integral part of planning each lesson or unit as well as general planning at the beginning of the school year or course. Instruction and evaluation should be considered together in order to ensure that instruction provides itself to evaluation and that the results of evaluation can direct ongoing instructional planning. Moreover, if evaluation is not planned along with instruction, the time required for assessment activities will most likely not be available. As pointed earlier, clearly an important focus of classroom assessment and evaluation is student achievement. Teachers need to know what and how much students have learned in order to monitor the effectiveness of instruction, to plan ongoing instruction, and for accountability purposes.

According to Gensee and Upshur (1996), in order to plan and make instruction that is appropriate for individual students or groups of students, it is necessary to understand the factors that influence student performance in class. This means going beyond the assessment of achievement. Chastain (1988) believes that teachers need to evaluate constantly their teaching on the basis of student reaction, interest, motivation, preparation, participation, perseverance, and achievement. The conclusions drawn from such an evaluation constitute their main source for measuring the effectiveness of selected learning activities.

As a matter of fact, testing in language classes is often inadequate. The teacher is so preoccupied with classroom activities that he fails to maintain a comprehensive perspectives of the flow of the language learning sequence from objectives to activities to testing. This is the point where we can give priority to evaluation over tests claiming that the primary aim of evaluation in the classroom is to judge the achievement of both students and the teacher. Evaluation of achievement is the feedback that makes improvement possible. By means of evaluation, strengths and weaknesses are identified. Evaluation, in this sense, is another aspect of learning, one that enables learners to grasp what they missed previously and the teacher to comprehend what can be done in subsequent lessons to improve learning. To do so, alternative methods (e.g. dialogue journals, portfolio conferences, interviews and questionnaires, observation, etc) are available for collecting useful information about language learning and about student related factors which influence the processes of language teaching and learning.

Genesee (cited in Carter and Nunan, 2001) is of opinion that for tests and alternative forms of language assessment to be useful for classroom-based evaluation, they should be: linked to instructional objectives and activities; designed to optimize student performance; developmentally appropriate, relevant and interesting to students; accurate; fair and ongoing.
CONCLUSION

An effective, goal-oriented, teaching-learning sequence contains clearly understood objectives, productive classroom activities, and a sufficient amount of feedback to make students aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their performances. Feedback and evaluation are inseparably related to both instructional objectives and classroom learning activities and are indispensable elements in the learning process. Classroom assessment and evaluation is like a feedback. Loop-assessment activities are motivated and shaped by instructional purposes, plans and practices in the classroom and decisions that arise from the results of these activities in turn lead to reshaping of these instructional purposes, plans and practices. Effective classroom assessment and evaluation requires an understanding of the role of evaluation in planning and delivering instruction. It calls for the collection and interpretation of a wide range of information, familiarity with a variety of different methods of assessment and for competence in using these methods creatively, careful and systematic record keeping and judgment. Finally, an effective classroom assessment and evaluation calls on teachers to become agents of change in their classrooms actively using the results of assessment to modify and improve the learning environments they create.

There will be acceptance of the principle that all people can learn under the right conditions. An implication is that "If a program does not achieve the intended goals. Then it is redesigned until it does. There are no learner failures only program failures." (Fantini, 1986) Schools which do not develop the capability to respond will be restaffed or closed when their services are not sought.

REFERENCES


