

## THE PURPOSE AND PECULIARITIES OF TESTING

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*In the process of teaching in general and teaching foreign languages in particular we need to pay attention to many aspects: how effective the methods and techniques used in the process are, how well the learners know the new material, what should be changed, what should be discussed in detail. It is a test that helps assess the existing situation. However, there are different attitudes to testing. There are some opinions that tests do not do any good, but only create additional stress for students. In addition, it is said that in most cases guessing of the right answer takes place, instead of demonstrating the real knowledge. This article will try to understand what testing is, how appropriate it is in the process of teaching foreign languages, what kinds of tests exist.*

*Key words: assessment, evaluation, testing, to check knowledge and skills, objectives, challenge.*

Assessment, evaluation, and testing are complex processes and very important components of language teaching. They are all used to measure how much of the assigned materials students are mastering, how well student are learning the materials, and how well student are meeting the stated goals and objectives. Effective teaching and effective testing are two sides of the same coin. Test evaluates not only the progress and achievement of learners but also the effectiveness of the teaching materials and methods used.

The purpose of the work is to study the appropriateness and effectiveness of testing in teaching a foreign language.

Problems:

1. to consider the difference between testing, assessment and evaluation;
2. to determine the benefits and pitfalls of testing and how often tests should be applied;
3. to see other forms of assessment.

What do we mean by testing, assessment and evaluation? Education professionals make distinctions between these notions. Each term has a different meaning. Here are some definitions:

- A test or quiz is used to examine someone's knowledge of something to determine what he or she knows or has learned. Testing measures the level of skill or knowledge that has been reached.
- Evaluation is the process of making judgments based on criteria and evidence.
- Assessment is the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes and beliefs, usually in measurable terms. The goal of assessment is to make improvements, as opposed to simply being judged. In an educational context, assessment is the process of describing, collecting, recording, scoring, and interpreting information about learning.

In order to be successful, you will need to have confidence in your ability to learn. Assessment helps you in it as well as in developing your lifelong learning skills.

We need to know how our students are doing, if they truly meet all the objectives, or not. This is where tests come in handy. They give us the feedback we need to know what to focus on more, what needs to be worked on and what doesn't. Sadly, they make a lot of people nervous and anxious, and they are also a lot of work for teachers. Nevertheless, we all know what the benefits of testing are. The real question is: how often? Some subscribe to the idea the more the better. Others don't since they believe that testing too often does not promote real learning. There is a continuing argument that there is too much assessment in higher education which encourages assessment-led students, rather than learning-led students. So what are the advantages of using tests and disadvantages of using them too often?

The advantages of using tests:

1. To test the student.

Testing goes on in almost every educational institution in the world and is familiar to both teachers and students. It goes without mentioning that checking to see if your students are learning is incredibly important. No matter what is taught, tests are a way for teachers to determine which students are having trouble and which are acquiring the skills and knowledge they should be acquiring. The result of the test can help the teacher know if some things should be reviewed, or if it's okay to keep moving forward. Where grades are concerned, they give students something to strive for and work towards.

2. To test the teacher

Since teachers are directly responsible for providing the lessons themselves, tests also provide insight on how well they do their job. After all it's not only about the program, material and students. Teachers have to work their magic to manage all these elements to ensure learning takes place, basically, to see how well they are teaching their students. Tests can help them ask themselves if the chosen strategies are effective. What teaching methods or approaches are most effective? Are any changes or modifications needed to help the student? What have they learned? Can the student use the new knowledge? Can the student demonstrate and use the new skills accurately?

3. To keep students motivated

Most would agree that the harder you work, the better you do. With this in mind, students tend to work harder if someone is checking up on their work. If they know that they'll have to take a test on the material, they might be more likely to give it that extra effort.

The Disadvantages of Testing Too Often

1. Unrealistic expectations

Unrealistic expectations may be one of the greatest risks to success where tests are concerned. It is very important to have clear and realistic objectives of what your students are actually expected to achieve. Testing too often can affect how clear objectives are to learners and teachers. Testing should take place only after specific milestones have been achieved.

2. De-motivating

Too much of something is usually not good. It's always better to avoid excesses. So if that's the case, testing too often should be avoided too. While working towards a goal can be very motivating, as I mentioned earlier, by using tests too often you run the risk of putting unnecessary stress and pressure on students and it may result in a decrease in their enthusiasm.

3. Can progress be measured accurately?

Tests need to be spaced out. When there are too many tests, they tend to bunch together and don't really provide a clear view on what the progress has been between one test and the one that follows. It's like reading something when it's held too close to your eyes. The words get jumbled up and it is confusing. By holding it away or leaving some room, things become easier to see.

#### 4. Is there room for improvement?

When tests are taken too often, there is little space between them to make improvements or needed changes. If a student is facing an issue, they won't have enough time to dedicate to the areas that are difficult to them either. There simply might not be enough time to make the necessary improvements.

To avoid using tests too often, perhaps other forms of assessment should be used instead. Project-based assessment is yet another alternative, though it tends to be collaborative. Tests should be used when you need to look for knowledge and skills for individual students. They provide data on individuals.

Language tests are broadly classified into two types as testing skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and sub- skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation and testing knowledge of content. There are different kinds of tasks to check student's knowledge in language.

#### Other forms of assessment:

##### 1. Oral interview

You can do a one on one interview with each of your students to get a good idea of their listening and speaking abilities. You can schedule these types of interviews during class (perhaps take each student into the hall to have a private discussion while the rest of the class does seat work) or schedule with students individually. Asking questions that use grammatical structures and vocabulary that your class has studied will help you know exactly what each student has grasped. Do not penalize a student for not knowing content if he or she can compose grammatically and situationally correct statements or questions in response to your questions [2].

What should we focus on in a speaking test? That depends on what you want to find out. Do you want to test spoken production (how well the student can give a mini-presentation or a little talk about something – a monologue) or spoken interaction (how well the student can take part in a conversation). In judging what the student says, you might want to focus on areas like 'communication' (does the student get his / her message across?); 'accuracy' (is the language the student uses accurate and correct?); 'range' (is the student able to draw on a good range of vocabulary and grammar?). The important thing is not to turn a speaking test into a form of grammar test, penalizing the student for each and every grammar mistake and not looking at other aspects of his/her performance [1].

##### 2. Class presentation

A presentation in class assesses a different aspect of spoken language. When you ask a student to speak in front of the class, he is able to prepare what he wants to say. He can also research information on his topic. In this case, the grade you give your student should be based on both content and presentation.

##### 3. Role play

Another way to assess your students' speaking abilities is by having them perform role-plays in front of the class. By giving them a situation and roles to play, you can see how creatively your students are able to use language with one another. Listen for content and grammar as with any oral assessment and how your students are making creative use of their language to communicate with one another. Even if they show grammatical imperfection, are your students able to understand each other? Are they able to use the language skills they possess to get their point across to their partner? These are important skills.

#### 4. Fill in the blank test

This type of test is used to check a specific grammatical structure or set of vocabulary. You can write individual sentences or an entire paragraph for your students, but it is probably best to provide a word bank in either case. You may choose to supply more words than will be necessary to fill in the blanks to make the test more challenging. This will force your students to choose the best answers rather than matching ten words with ten blanks.

#### 5. Writing sample

Having your students give you a writing sample is another good way to assess their proficiency with grammar. If you have them write something for homework, you run the risk that someone other than your student will do the writing but this will not give you an accurate picture of your student's writing. To avoid this, have your students do writing in class. Give them an adequate amount of time to write about a subject that you assign. You will then get an accurate look at their grammatical and writing proficiency. Follow up your assessment with some mini-lessons on common grammatical pitfalls that the class exhibited.

#### 6. Online quiz

You do not have to spend as much of your class time assessing your students as was often necessary in the past. With the extensive collection of online resources for students, you can require your students to spend time at home working on exercises available online. Have your students print out their final scores or e-mail them to you. In so doing, your students will still get feedback on their work and knowledge, but you will not have to give up valuable class time for it to happen.

#### 7. Multiple choice test

Sometimes the classics are often the way to go when assessing your students. Make sure all the answers are grammatically correct. Your students should not be able to eliminate an answer based on grammar alone unless, of course, that is what you are trying to test. Also, try to keep all the answer choices around the same length [2].

Can the selected response task test both elements of language and communicative skills? A multiple-choice test can be a good way of finding out what students know. But finding out what students can do is rather more difficult. If you are thinking of communicative skills in terms of production (speaking and writing), you have to see how well they can actually speak or write [1].

#### 8. True/False Quiz

The true/false quiz is also a test that is used by most teachers. When you use this type of test, do not give trick questions that focus on minor details. Even more important, have your students correct the questions that they say are false. If they are making the corrections rather than just identifying the mistakes, you will make sure they are answering from what they know rather than making lucky guesses [4].

There is a question about all multiple choice questions: when students have only two options – A or B, does that stop them analysing the question/ choices at all? Some students find the answer to the question in the way you would like them to – by reading the question carefully and thinking about the right choice; others try to “outsmart” the teacher (the answer to the last three questions was A so this one must be B); others just guess without bothering to think at all. There are some advantages to multiple choice questions but this is a big disadvantage [1].

To sum up, testing and evaluation take major role in language teaching and learning. We can conduct different kinds of test to know about the students’ skills in language. After a test, we do the standard evaluation. It shows the performance level of students. In language skills evaluation we can find the students’ problems in learning. Then we can find out the remedy for that particular problem. Evaluation is a systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of any aspects of education as part of a recognized process of judging its effectiveness. It is not just for measuring students learning results at the end of a course.

Tests are useful in diagnosis, prediction, selection, grading, guidance, self- correction but they should be used moderately to avoid extreme situations, Keep in mind that tests are part of assessment, they are part of a bigger picture.

There are many different forms of assessment. Consideration should be given to the ones which encourage students to learn certain subject matter, are relatively easy to achieve equality of opportunity, time-efficient, cost-effective and which are appropriate to the discipline [3, p. 35-40].

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