



Assessing English Language Proficiency

KEYWORDS

Speaking, Reading, Writing, Listening

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ABSTRACT *English has become the international link language. The multi-national corporate mania demands proficiency in English as the need of the hour for a promising employee. A person who has the capacity to use language effectively is a real asset to any business. Those who seek lucrative positions need to make their linguistic skills perfect in order to gain faster recognition. Therefore it is essential to update the language skills and competence from time to time to make the best use of language in different contexts and situations. To ensure acquisition of skills and competency in language proficiency, performance based assessments should be conducted in the classroom. Various assessments in English language help the learners use the language skillfully. Assessments have great impact on the class room performance of the students and learning goals. Assessment methods reward the students. They exercise a good influence on the students' learning, study habits and method of instruction. They help to measure educational achievement and improve it. Assessments that involve integration of practical and theoretical knowledge should be administered in all institutions to bring out the potential ability of the learners. Integrating assessments provide wonderful scaffolding for students and generate immense teacher satisfaction. Assessments improve the standard and quality of the institution and the students get progress as a whole, as assessments are broader in its scope than tests and examinations.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the international link language. The multi-national corporate mania demands proficiency in English as the need of the hour for a promising employee. A person who has the capacity to use language effectively is a real asset to any business. Those who seek lucrative positions need to make their linguistic skills perfect in order to gain faster recognition. Therefore it is essential to update the language skills and competence from time to time to make the best use of language in different contexts and situations. To ensure acquisition of skills and competency in language proficiency, performance based assessments should be conducted in the classroom. Various assessments in English language help the learners use the language skillfully.

IMPACT OF THE ASSESSMENTS

Assessments have great impact on the class room performance of the students and learning goals. Assessment methods reward the students. They exercise a good influence on the students' learning, study habits and method of instruction. They help to measure educational achievement and improve it. Assessments that involve integration of practical and theoretical knowledge should be administered in all institutions to bring out the potential ability of the learners. Integrating assessments provide wonderful scaffolding for students and generate immense teacher satisfaction. Assessments improve the standard and quality of the institution and the students get progress as a whole, as assessments are broader in its scope than tests and examinations.

ASSESSING LSRW LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Assessment of listening and speaking skills is entirely different from the assessment of reading and writing skills. Personal interviews and oral narrating come under speaking evaluation. Competency of communicative English in students should be evaluated on the existing and acquired skills of listening and speaking. Assessments on listening can be done by playing audio. The students should comprehend the audio and answer the questions. These methods motivate the students' learning ability and increase their confidence. Assessment is an integral part of language learning. It bridges the teachings and learning process. Evaluating listening and speaking has to be done with appropriate validity and reli-

ability. Assessments on listening include tests to absorb the sounds of the language, understand the context and meaning of conversation build the vocabulary and pronunciation skills and remember words through listening.

Speaking is an active skill, requiring students to combine the words into sentences without preparation. Creating situations for dialogue, language games and activities, use of language in social gatherings, conducting interviews and telephone conversation are some of the methods to assess the reading skill. Learners with high and favorable motivation for speaking co-operate with teachers' activities positively and speak confidently. Speaking skill is assessed by the way in which one responds to the person he is speaking, body gestures, including the facial ones, pitch and tone of one's voice and a lot of other things.

READING AND WRITING

"Real reading means plucking out all the subtle threads of meaning from sentences, paragraphs and pages and weaving them into one's personality" – Artley. Free Reading contributes to the development of all measures of language competence which include grammar, vocabulary, spelling, syntax, fluency and style. Practical questionnaire survey system can be followed to evaluate the students' efforts and progress. Samples of creative work, tests, quizzes, projects, audio tapes of oral work also can be given to test the students' meta-cognitive development. Through reading a work, the learner is often encouraged to recreate the meaning. Reading assessments are used for many purposes, beginning from an understanding of the reading construct to an adequate proficiency in speaking. Evaluation of reading proficiency exhibit the learners' true potential.

Writing is a complex activity in comparison to speaking. Curriculum – based assessments can be used to assess the writing process and product. The hallmark of expository writing is clarity, brevity and un-ambiguity. Replying a letter, commenting on a news or real life events come under writing evaluation. The development of efficient written skills has accelerated rapidly due to the globalization of the world and the necessity to become professionals. In order to get language skill mastery, the language proficiency of the learners

should be evaluated continuously by providing creative formats to present projects. In spoken language, the learner can depend on his body language, tone, voice quality etc. But the written communication understanding is not possible unless the learner has the language competence. The language competence has to be assessed constantly while the learners try to express their own experiments. Brumfit and Johnson say, " The students need exercises which will help them to write accurately and cohesively"

CONCLUSION

Assessment is an integral part of language learning. It bridges the teaching and learning processes. The success of effective teaching lies in effective testing. In order to make the testing successful, I have designed the language tests suitable to all the students in my class. My performance based assessments helped me to evaluate my students' achievement and to check the percentage of the skill acquired by the students. My assessment of language proficiency of my students integrated into a meaningful activity and gave me an immediate feedback on their level of acquired skills. I constantly follow the assessment methods to create the expected changes in their use of English language and to elevate their confidence level, necessary to be placed in multinational companies.

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