Making Assessment Meaningful

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ETS TOEFL
Overview

• What is Assessment?
• Principles of Assessment
• Designing good assessment
• Implementing good assessment practices
Introduction

• Assessing student progress and achievement is an integral and important part of any English language program

• It is a NEAS requirement for any ELT program
NEAS standards for program design

E2 Program design
• 2.2 The ELT centre has assessment instruments that reflect the specific objectives of the course

E4. Assessment procedures
• 4.1 The ELT centre has effective methods and procedures for assessment and for ensuring the reliability and validity of assessment instruments
Thoughts on Assessment

"Teachers assess to test; educators assess to assist learning"
Thoughts on Assessment

“We prepare children to learn how to learn, not how to take a test”

Pasi Sahlberg, a former math and physics teacher now in Finland’s Ministry of Education and Culture.

http://www.smithsonianmag.com/people-places/Why-Are-Finlands-Schools-Successful.html#ixzz2SqXK0agh
Thoughts on Assessment

“Linking assessment to instruction is critical to student learning” (ETS)
Thoughts on Assessment

“For many students assessment is not an educational experience in itself but a process of guessing what the teacher wants.”[McLaughlin & Simpson (2004), cited by White, E. (2008)]
Your thoughts...

What is assessment?
What is Assessment?

Assessment refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers -- and by their students in assessing themselves -- that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities. Such assessment becomes formative assessment when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet student needs.

What is Assessment?

“Assessments of and for learning are both important. If Assessments of learning provide evidence of achievement for public reporting, then assessments for learning serve to help students learn more. The crucial distinction is between assessment to determine the status of learning and assessment to promote greater learning.”

What is Assessment?

*Summative assessment (Assessment of Learning)* is the evaluation of student achievement - primarily for accountability purposes, to rank or certify competence rather than to improve learning eg. an external accountability test.
What is Assessment?

Formative assessment (Assessment for Learning) does not result in an evaluation. Information about what a student knows, understands and is able to do is used by both the teacher and the learner to determine where learners are in their learning and how to achieve learning goals.
Your thoughts

1. Ongoing informal and formal classroom assessment is/can.....

2. By providing the means to gather evidence about what students know and can do, classroom assessment can help teachers....
Purposes of Assessment

Ongoing informal and formal classroom assessment:

• Is the bond that holds teaching and learning together

• Allows educators to monitor teaching effectiveness and student learning

• Can motivate and shape learning and instruction
Purposes of Assessment

- Can help teachers gauge student mastery of required skills
- Can help teachers determine whether students are prepared for tests that are used for high-stakes decisions
- Can help students improve their own performances
Purposes of Assessment

By providing the means to gather evidence about what students know and can do, classroom assessment can help teachers:

- Identify students’ strengths and weaknesses
- Monitor student learning and progress
- Plan and conduct instruction
Principles of Assessment

• What principles of assessment are assessment practices at your centre based upon?
Principles of Assessment

• How do you ensure that your assessment instruments are reliable and valid?
Principles of Assessment

Effective assessment:
• Has clear, direct links with course outcomes
• Is integral to teaching and learning
• Is balanced, comprehensive and varied
• Is valid (measures what it is meant to measure)
• Is reliable
Principles of Assessment

Effective assessment:
• Is relevant
• Is time efficient and manageable
• Involves a whole institute approach
• Conveys meaningful and useful information
• Is fair
Designing Assessment

Ask:

1. What am I trying to find out about my students’ learning? What learning goals or outcomes do I want to measure?
   • What kind of evidence do I need to show that my students have achieved the goals that I’m trying to measure?
   • What kind of assessment will give me that evidence?
Designing Assessment

2. Don’t forget the students:

Using assessment as part of the learning process instead of solely in a summative role at the end of a teaching unit ensures that students understand:

• The relevance of what they are learning
• How that learning will be assessed
Designing Assessment

Students benefit when they:

- Understand learning goals
- Know what kind of assessment(s) will be used to evaluate their achievement of those goals
- Understand what criteria will be used to evaluate their work and what an ideal response looks like
Designing Assessment

3. Before the test:
Develop scoring guidelines for performance assessments that
• define what constitutes an acceptable response
• establish clearly defined levels of performance
Designing Assessment

• Share the scoring guidelines with your students before they take the assessment

• Discuss the guidelines with your students
Designing Assessment

4. After the test

• Conduct a post-test discussion with your students

• Be generous with feedback
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

Improving Classroom Assessments:
• Review assessment before administering it.
• After reviewing the assessment, ask a colleague to review it. As part of this review process, have someone who did not write the task or question respond to it.
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

During the review, check to see that:

1. Directions are clear and content is accurate

2. Questions or tasks represent only the topics or skills emphasised during instruction

3. The type of assessment used is compatible with the method of instruction used in the classroom and the skill being measured
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

4. The assessment will contribute to the instructor’s understanding of what the students know and can do

5. The assessment can be completed in the allotted time

6. The assessment is fair and that all instances of offensive language, elitism, and bias have been eliminated
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

Post test review of assessment instrument:
When you begin to analyse assessment results, you should do two things:

1. Acknowledge that tests can have flaws
2. Identify each student’s strengths and weaknesses
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

1. Acknowledge that tests can have flaws.
   • Did all the students do poorly on the same question or set of questions?
   • Did students who are more able, based on other evidence, do well on the assessment?
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

1. Acknowledge that tests can have flaws.
   - Did students answer the assessment appropriately but fail to give the answers you were looking for?
   - Was the task well defined and clearly written?
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

2. Identify each student’s strengths and weaknesses.
   - Take a look at each student’s strengths and weaknesses, based on his or her patterns of performance.
   - This information can help you arrange for the next set of instructions to either remedy problems or build on strengths.
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

2. Identify each student’s strengths and weaknesses.
For example, if a particular group of students has difficulty with one set of items that measures a similar set of skills, then these students might need extra instruction or a different kind of instruction.
Implementing Good Assessment Practices

2. Identify each student’s strengths and weaknesses.

Or, if everybody in the class had difficulty with a particular issue that you thought was emphasised in class, then you need to determine if there was a problem with the instruction, the material, or both.
Your Assessment Practices

• What are your centre’s current assessment practices?

• Can they be improved? If so...how?
Using Course book assessment materials

Your thoughts...

- Advantages?
- Disadvantages?
Using Course book assessment materials

Issues to consider:
• Reliability
• Validity
• Relevance
References/Resources


References/Resources

• Education Services Australia
References/Resources


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