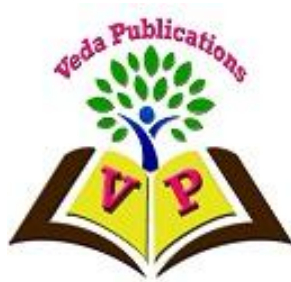# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Gandhi Babu Shanampoodi

(Asst. Professor Of English, Andhra Loyola Institute of Engineering and Technology, Vijayawada.
Andhra Pradesh, India.)

ABSTRACT

Assessment of performance is an integral part of any process of learning and teaching. This paper attempts to look at the role and importance of assessment and the advantages of evaluation. A major problem of teaching English language, for teachers, has been to do with assessing and evaluating students during their courses of study and their classroom achievements towards the end of the course. In spite of employing highly useful evaluation parameters such as filling blanks, spotting the error, multiple choice test, essay writing test and reading comprehension, teachers have not been fully successful in the classroom to meet the objectives of teaching and learning. Evaluation is actually a continuous appraisal of the achievement of the aims of education as well as the methods of teaching and learning aimed at continuous improvements so that education becomes dynamic and self-developing.

Multiple choice testing has become popular in today's system of evaluation. The methodology of this paper involves a descriptive approach, where using classroom activities, library, internet resources and researches carried out in this regard may also be considered.

By using assessment strategies and techniques appropriately, teachers can increase their students' motivation and show them how well they have learned the language .Evaluation needs to go beyond students' achievements and language assessments to consider all aspects of teaching and learning.

Using a few discussions, the paper presents some useful assessment and evaluation techniques which can assist language teachers to create a dynamic classroom situation for assessment and evaluation.

Keywords*: Assessment, Evaluation, Role, Importance, English Language.*

INTRODUCTION

The paper focuses on the significance and quality of English language learning assessments and evaluation processes in the educational system. Evaluation is a wider concept than testing and measurement, and is designed to judge the worth of all the educational outcomes brought about as a result of teaching-learning processes. In this process the students come to know their own drawbacks and try to improve. Thus, it helps the teacher in diagnosing difficulties in learning. Because in a continuous assessment of the student day-to-day progress it helps in determining the potentialities and interests of every student, on the basis of the day-to-day records of students it becomes easy to know the present status of the student and his growth towards the desirable goals. In this way evaluation provides information essential for effective guidance. Evaluation can therefore be defined as a systematic process determining the extent to which educational objectives are achieved by students.

Evaluation is a continuous process. It forms an integral part of the total system of education, and is intimately related to educational objectives. It exercises a great influence on the student's study habits and the teacher's methods of instruction and thus helps not only to measure educational achievement but also improve it (Kothari Commission 1964-66).

Evaluation is a process that includes fourbasic components:

1. Pointing out the purpose of the educational system.
2. Identifying and collecting relevant information.
3. Thoughtful Interpretationof information
4. Decision making.

Teachers play a major rolein classroom assessment as they 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. According to Biggs (1999), classroom assessment has two major functions: one is to show whether or not learning has been successful, and the other one is to clarify the expectations of the teachers from the students.

Assessment is a process that includes five basic components:

1) Formulating statements of intended learning outcomes.
2) Developing or selecting measures.
3) Creating experiences leading to outcomes.
4) Evaluating the teaching methods.
5) Discussing the results to improve teaching-learning.

The purpose of classroom assessment and evaluation is to give learners the opportunity to show what they have learned, rather than degrading them by showing what they have not learned. Evaluation and assessment focus on different aspects of teaching and learning: respectively textbooks and instructional materials, student achievement, and whole programs of instruction.

A major event to confirm 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. In Language Teaching, two different types of objectives are distinguished:

1. General objectives, or aims, are the primary reasons for or the 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, etc. A description of specific objectives which can be observed and measured is known as behavioral objectives.

It is important to clarify the important difference between assessment and evaluation. 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 which 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 based on the results of alternative forms of assessment.

Classroom assessment and evaluation under the active management of teachers can also serve important professional development purposes since the information issuing 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 a reflective teaching movement, teachers are encouraged to conduct research in their own classrooms; classroom assessment and evaluation is an important part of such research.

HOW TO CONDUCT ASSESSMENT

Assessment to improve learning focusses on how well students are learning what we intend them to learn. Upon establishing learning objectives, assessment methods are used to measure selected learning outcomes to see whether or not the objectives have been met for a course or a program. It can be done in four splendid stages.

1. Establish Learning Goals: Establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning.
2. Provide Learning Opportunities: Ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes.
3. Assess Student Learning: Systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches our expectations.
4. Use the Result: Using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION IN CLASS ROOM

In the educational system classroom teachers, more than anyone else, are actively and continuously involved in assessment and evaluation. Students can alsoparticipate actively in assessing

their own achievements and in planning how they will study and learn the second language.

Any instruction consists of three components. Purposes identify the objectives of instruction: the "WHY". Plans describe the means of attaining those objectives: the "HOW". Practices are what actually take place in the classroom: the "WHAT". Classroom assessment and instruction have four aspects (purposes, plans, practices, and input factors). 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; that ismthey 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) linguistic, 2) strategic, 3) socio-affective, 4) philosophical, and 5) method or process.

Linguistic 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 processes 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 Michael O'Malley, these may include metacognitive strategies (such as selective attention), cognitive strategies (such as summarizing and elaboration), or socio-affective strategies (such as questioning for clarification). Socio-affective objectives refer to changes in learners' attitudes or social behaviours that result from classroom instruction (e.g. changes in attitudes towards the target language, the target language group, or the learner's first language group).

These objectives can be an important part of second language teaching. In most cases, however, they are secondary to language learning objectives. 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. Strategic objectives help in understanding student's performances in class and 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 cannot be used in planning more effective schemes of classroom assessment and evaluation in an educational system.

STRATEGIES FOR CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Informal assessments allow teachers to track the ongoing progress of their students regularly and often. While standardized tests measure students at a particular point in the year, ongoing assessments provide continual snapshots of where students are throughout the academic year. By using informal assessments, teachers can target students' specific problem areas, adapt instruction and intervene earlier rather than later.

Fred Gensee and John A. Upshur (1996) argue that evaluation involvea 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.

Classroom assessment and evaluation requires one to 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 are therefore critical.

EFFECTIVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

To be useful and effective, evaluation and assessment require 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 lends 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, 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.

As a matter of fact, testing in language classes is often inadequate. The teacher is so preoccupied with classroom activities that (s)he fails to maintain a comprehensive perspective of the flow of the language learning sequence, from objectives through 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, and 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 the 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 the 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 competence in using these methods creatively, and 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 re-staffed or closed when their services are not sought.

REFERENCES

[1]. Kothari Commission-REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION 1964-66. Ministry of Education Government of India.

[2]. Chamot, A. U., and M. CT Malley. (1989). The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach: A bridge to the Main Stream. TESOL Quarterly. 21. 227-249

[3]. Genesee, F. and J. Upshur (1996) Classroom-Based Evaluation in Second Language Education. Cambridge University Press.

[4]. O'Malley, J. M. and L. Valdez- Pierce (1996) Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers. Reading. MA: Addison-Wesley.