Language Testing System In Teaching-Learning Process

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Introduction:

Many language teachers distrust the test and testers, and this is not wrong because out language testing system is very poor, which could harm teaching and learning and often fail to accurately measure whatever is intended. So, the present question will focus on improving the way of testing.

The Term 'Testing':

Testing is any standardized procedure for measuring sensitivity, memory, intelligence, aptitude, personality, etc.; "the test was standardized on a large sample of students".

- Testing examines or judges someone's knowledge of something for a specific purpose.
- A set of questions, problems, or the like, used to evaluate the abilities, aptitudes, skills, or performance of an individual or group.

The Term 'Assessment':

Assessment is the systematic collection of information about student learning, including activities and functions that support such learning, both directly and indirectly, and the use of that information to create a continuing cycle of improved teaching and learning at the Institutional, Program and Course.

- The process of gathering and judging evidence in order to decide whether a person has achieved a standard or objective.
- Assessment is the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs.

Thus, the term assessment generally refers to all activities teachers use to help students learn and measure student progress. It is mainly categorized into Two Types.

1) **Summative Assessment:** A culminating assessment used to get a snapshot of a learner's mastery of content, knowledge, or skills in relation to a program of study, usually carried out at the completion of the course, program, or the end of term or

academic year. A summative assessment is a final determination of knowledge, skills, and abilities. This could be exemplified by exit or licensing exams, senior recitals, capstone projects or any final evaluation, which is not created to provide feedback for improvement but is used for final judgments. So the summative assessment generally carried out at the end of a course or project, for instance, term-end test, university exams, interview, etc., may be formal or informal.

2) **Formative Assessment:** It is a diagnostic tool implemented during the instructional process that generates useful feedback for student development and improvement and for teacher to change the course structure if needed. It is designed to give students feedback on their progress towards the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes rather than assessment for marks or grades which are not given to students. Formative Assessment is when the teacher wants to check the progress of the students during the course. It is based on the student's mastery and learning, which they have achieved so far, for instance, weekly tests, monthly tests, etc., also known as the 'staggered'. It helps the teachers to modify their teaching plans. And also gives feedback to students to improve their knowledge. Informal test or quizzes is part of it; for instance the student's study of their portfolios helps them to carry out self-assessment in terms of their progress and then modify their learning objectives. Educational researcher Robert Stake explains the difference between formative and Summative assessment with the following analogy: "When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative, and When the guests taste the soup, that's summative."

The Term Evaluation:

In general, the systematic gathering of information for purposes of decision-making. An evaluation may use Quantitative Methods (e.g., tests) and qualitative Methods (e.g., observations, ratings, and value judgments). Tests and other measures are frequently used to evaluate both programs and individuals. It is also categorized into two parts: formative and summative.

Importance of Test:

The test is very useful and necessary sometimes as it gives information about people's language ability. Test also imparts information about the achievement of a group of learners. Without a test format, it is difficult to draw out rational educational decisions. For instance, it is difficult to imagine that universities of U.K. and USA give admission to overseas students without their proficiency in English. Further, it is also helpful to satisfy the need of a common yardstick to make comparisons. In the teaching field also, test is needed because it is apt for individuals to be given a statement of what they have achieved in a Second Language or Foreign Language.

Purpose of Test:

(1) To establish present levels of performance so that learner can measure his or her progress or to determine whether there has been sufficient progress.

(2) To objectively evaluate the learner against predetermined criteria, such as end-of-the-course testing.

(3) For certification means providing people with a statement of their language ability for employment.

(4) To compare learner's performance against a larger group of learners with similar characteristics at a similar age.

(5) To screen for learning problems so that more specialized testing may be done to pinpoint remedial treatments more precisely.

(6) To diagnose specific kinds of learning problems and learner's strengths and weaknesses.

(7) To determine a learner's overall ability levels, both intelligence levels and aptitudes.

(8) To learn more about specific learning styles so you can tailor instruction effectively.

(9) To measure language proficiency & To motivate the learners to study harder.

(10) To assist placement of students by identifying the stage.

(11) Accountability: to provide educational funding authorities with evidence that intended learning outcomes have been achieved and to justify expenditure.

(12) Instructional decision making to decide what material to present next or what to revise.

Characteristics of Good Test: It should consistently provide accurate measures of the abilities we are interested in. It should have beneficial effect on teaching. It should be economical in terms of time and money.

Kinds of Test:

Not all language tests are of the same type. They differ with respect to how they are designed, what they are for, and the types of information they provide. In other words, in respect to test method and test purpose.

- ❖ **Method Based Test:** (1) Traditional Paper Pencil Language Tests which the takes form of familiar examination Question Paper. (2) Performance Based Test in which Language Skills are Assessed in act of communication.

❖ **Purpose Based Test:** Language tests also differ according to their purpose. In fact, the same form of test may be used for differing purposes.

(1) Proficiency Test: It is designed to determine people's ability in language. It has nothing to do with learning process that one has passed through. Its content is based on the knowledge of the person. Moreover proficiency test is further divided into Two sections:

✦ **Purposeful Proficiency Test:** It is designed to test that if the person has a sufficient command over language for a specific purpose. Such tests are organized to check the level and kind of English which is needed to follow courses in particular sub areas. Examples: BEC, BULATS (Business Language Testing Service), IELTS (International English Language Testing System), TOEFL (Test Of English as Foreign Language), TOEIC (Test Of English For International Communication), CAEL (Canadian Academic English Language Assessment) or a test to discover whether someone can function successfully as United Nations Translator.

✦ **General Proficiency Test:** It is designed to test whether candidates have reached a certain level or standard with respect a set of specific abilities. It does not have any occupation or course study in mind. Example: CPE (Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English), FCE (Cambridge First Certificate in English). These tests have a detailed specification and are based directly on these specifications. In it, the user can judge its appropriateness and interpret the result.

(2) Achievement Test: It is designed to assess the competence of the individual students as well as groups of students. It can be of Two Types:

✦ **Final Achievement Test:** Test which administered at the end of the term; year or semester therefore we can put it into Summative Type of Test. Its content is based on the concerned course. However regarding the content language tester have different views: (1) Some believe that this type of test should id based on syllabus content approach that has no feedback. But the disadvantage with this view is that if the syllabus is badly designed then the result of the test might be misleading. However success of some student does not suggest the successful achievements of the course objectives. Example: A course may have as an objective the development of conversational ability, but the course itself and the test may require students only to utter carefully prepared statements about their home town, the weather, or whatever. (2) Another testers favor that content should be based on objectives of the course which have number of advantages like (a) It requires course designers to clarify course objectives. (b) It shows the students achievement of objectives. (c) It puts pressure on course designer to ensure that syllabus; selected books are consistent with the course objectives. (d) It works against the poor teaching practice.

✦ **Progressive Achievement Test:** These tests are held to check the students progress as its name suggest. It is a part of Formative Assessment. Its content is based on the achievement of the course objectives. Examples: monthly test, weekly test etc. one way to check progress is to held final achievement test repeatedly and increasing result suggest the progress made. The problem with this is that if the students' obtained low scores then it will lead them to discouragement. However one alternative is possible that to establish a series of well defined objectives and it should make progression towards the final achievement test. It has some advantages: if the syllabus and teaching are appropriate to these objectives, progress tests based on short-term objectives will fit well with what has been taught. If not, there will be pressure to create a better fit. If it is the syllabus that is at fault, then it is the tester's responsibility it.

(3) Diagnostic Test: It is designed to identify learner's strengths and weakness. The result or the outcome of the test tells us about that in what areas learner is weak and to improve them is still need to study. Example: Oxford Grammar Practice. If one wants to analyze learner's performance in writing and speaking with reference to grammatical accuracy or linguistic Appropriacy. Thus a comprehensive diagnostic test would be long and its size makes its implications impractical. However its lack is unfortunate. It can be extremely useful for self- instruction to gain command over language because it shows where gaps exist. Generally it is used in ESP (English for Specific Purpose).

(4) Placement Test: It is intended to provide a certain goal or objective in which the students are supposed to fit in. Examples: GPSC, UPSC, Bank Tests, Board Exam and so on. The placement tests constructed for particular situation are more successful. They are tailor made means produced by the in house rather than bought of the peg. The work is rewarded by the saving time and effort through accurate placement.

Types of Testing:

1) Referenced Testing:

- **Norm-referenced Testing:** A test that measures how the performance of a particular test taker or group of test takers compares with the performance of another test taker or group of test takers whose scores are given as the norm. A test taker's score therefore interpreted with reference to the scores of other test takers or groups of test takers, rather than to an agreed criterion score for instance, percentile score in GRE (Graduate Record Exam), Grading system of SCOPE (A, A +, B, B +). So it does tell much about the capabilities of learner same like final achievement. It is some time good sometimes demotivated.
- **Criterion-referenced Testing:** A test that measures a test taker's performance according to a particular standard or criterion that has been set. And it motivates the test taker to reach this level of performance to pass the test (e.g. 85% correct might be called a Passing Score), and a test taker's score is interpreted with

reference to the criterion score, rather than to the scores of other test takers. So in it the criteria are pre-defined by test maker and the students know why they are tested for. Example, A Criterion-referenced Test score of 100 might mean Perfect Score.

2) Direct and Indirect Testing:

- **Direct Testing:** A test which directly measures ability of test takers to perform tasks designed on the base of authentic material as possible. An example of a direct test of writing includes a test that asks test takers to write an essay; an Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) is an example of a direct test of speaking conducted face to face between an interviewer and an interviewee.
- **Indirect Testing:** A test which indirectly measures ability of test takers to perform tasks not reflective of an authentic material and from which an inference is drawn about the abilities underlying their performance on the test. An example of an indirect test of writing includes a test that asks test takers to locate errors in a composition; and also Lado's proposed method of testing pronunciation ability in which the learner has to identify pairs of rhyming words.
- **Semi Direct Testing**: A test that elicits test takers' spoken language ability by asking them to respond orally on tape to a set of tape-recorded or text-based cues or stimuli, An example of a semi-direct test is a tape mediated, Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview.

3) Discrete and Integrating Test/s:

- **Discrete Test:** A language test that measures knowledge of individual language items, such as a grammar test with different sections on tenses, adverbs, and prepositions which can be tested separately for instance multiple choice items.
- **Integrating Test:** An Integrative Test is one that requires a test taker to use several language skills at the same time, such as a dictation test, which requires the learner to use knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and listening comprehension.

4) Objective and Subjective Testing:

- **Objective Testing:** A test that can be scored without the use of the examiner's personal judgment is called objective test. Tests that consist of True False and Multiple – Choice Items are examples of Objective Test.
- **Subjective Testing:** A test that is scored according to the personal judgment of the marker such as an essay examination is called Subjective Test. A Subjective Test in which a person is required to write an extended (comprehensive) piece of text on a set topic.

5) Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT):

- Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) is an Interactive Computer Language Testing which is a very basic Psychometric Procedure which enables the examiner to measure language proficiency efficiently and with considerable accuracy. Teacher can use Computer Adaptive Testing for Evaluation. Computer Adaptive Testing is better than Paper Pencil Test because it save great amount of time. Now we have online Test facility e.g. MAT, CAT, etc.

References:

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