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## Principles and Forms of Assessment in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

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**Abstract:** Recently there has been a growing interest of Methodologists for the requirements of assessment procedure during foreign language teaching and learning in Ukraine, because the forms of assessment and especially principles are fundamentally different from traditional principles of assessment overseas. Hence the principles of assessment are the following, such as practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity and washback. From our point of view, Ukrainian teachers are interested in performing all these principles. The core value of these principles are to distinguish the impact of assessment and overview the classroom-based issue such as the degree of assessment affects to students' language development.

**Keywords:** *Foreign Language Assessment, Principles of Assessment, Forms of Assessment, Alternative Assessment, Testing*

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### Introduction

This article deals with the principles and different forms of assessment in methodology of teaching and learning foreign languages. Among the essential forms of assessment methodologists consider the following alternative assessment, authentic assessment and informal assessment. The purpose of the article is to provide a characterization of forms and principle of assessment in foreign language teaching and learning and to overview the assessment practice in Ukraine. Methodologists have proved the fact that assessment procedures relates to validity, reliability, objectivity, authenticity and washback as key principles of assessment in foreign language teaching and learning.

### The forms of assessment in Methodology

Different forms of assessment have a vital importance to both students and teachers. Assessments of foreign language teaching and learning in high education are performed for a wide variety of reasons. Firstly, it illustrates the teacher how many students have already achieved learning goals in foreign language, who has any difficulties or problems with their learning, and which activities and methods are more useful in teaching foreign language. For the second, the teacher wishes to decide whether to continue or not the corrective foreign language program and may ask for an assessment of student progress and to know the overall teaching effectiveness before deciding the significance of the program.

In addition the teacher has an opportunity to determine a students' grade in foreign language skills from accumulated scores across tests. Each example proves the fact that any form of assessment is conducted to make teacher's decisions. Essentially, the assessment process can have a significant impact on foreign language teaching and learning process.

The scientists define assessment as, "the process of collecting data for the purpose of specifying and verifying problems, and making decisions about teaching students". Five primary types of decisions that can be made from assessments have been identified. These are decisions about referral, screening, classification, instructional planning, and students' progress evaluation. For each of these decisions, academic, behavioral, or physical problems may be the targets of assessment (Shapiro, 1987, p. 23).

Speaking about different forms of assessment, there are a lot of them in modern pedagogical science. There are some of them. Group assessment is probably the most frequent type of assessment procedure used in high education. Almost all educational spheres have a testing program in which students are routinely administered standardized achievement and aptitude tests. Class-room teachers using informal and teacher-made materials administer group tests to determine student progress. Although these group assessment measures may have direct impact on individuals, school psychologists are much more involved in assessments of individual performance. Used mainly to make decisions regarding an individual student' educational progress and psychological outlook, this type of assessment leads to changes that may directly affect a students' life.

In teaching foreign languages, teachers often have to measure students' language abilities, which they achieve by developing tests or quizzes or through more informal methods. In addition, they often select commercially-developed tests for use in their classrooms or language programs.

There are many ways to talk about methods of assessing foreign language. We are interested in distinguishing the distinction between indirect and direct methods. These methods are both common in foreign language testing, often used for different skills or in different kinds of classes. Indirect methods may be more common in assessing reading, listening, vocabulary or grammar. Direct assessment works well for productive skills such as writing or speaking and provides a better picture of what students can do with the language. Thus, direct assessment tries to measure what a test taker is doing as a sample of productive language. For example, having students discuss a topic while the teacher observes and rates their performances would be a direct assessment.

Indirect assessment tries to measure language through means that are not directly productive. For example, indirect assessment might ask students to recognize the correct verb form, but not actually measure their ability to produce it or use it.

Comparing traditional forms of assessment of foreign language and using current forms of assessment in teaching practice the methodologists offer the table which reflects the changing paradigm in education in general and in second language teaching in particular. The table also reflects an old paradigm and anew one:

<i>Old Paradigm of teaching and learning foreign language</i>	<i>New Paradigm of teaching and learning foreign language</i>
1. Focus on language	1. Focus on communication
2. Teacher-centered	2. Learner-centered
3. Isolated skills	3. Integrated skills
4. Emphasis on product	4. Emphasis on process
5. One answer, one-way correctness	5. Open-ended, multiple solutions
6. Tests that test	6. Tests that also teach

Among the essential forms of assessment methodologists consider the following *alternative assessment, authentic assessment, or informal assessment*. These new forms of assessment focuses more on measuring students' ability to use language spontaneously in real-life situations, moreover, is normally carried out continuously over a period of time (Richards, 2002, p. 335 – 339).

More authentic forms of assessment, such as portfolios, interviews, journals, project work, and self- or peer assessment have become increasingly common in the classroom in other countries, but Ukrainian teachers are trying to use all these types in practice, because these forms of assessment are more student-centered. In addition, they provide students with a tool to be more involved in their learning, and give them a better sense of control for their own learning.

According to Richards & Renandya, (2002) “alternative assessment has been described as an alternative to standardized testing and all of the problems found with such testing. There is no single definition of alternative assessment” (p. 339). Alternative assessment is different from traditional testing in that it actually asks students to show what they can do. Students are evaluated on what they integrate and produce rather than on what they are able to recall and reproduce.

Most important, alternative assessment provides alternatives to traditional testing in that it (a) does not intrude on regular classroom activities; (b) reflects the curriculum that is actually being implemented in the classroom; (c) provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of each individual student; (d) provides multiple indices that can be used to gauge student progress; and (e) is more sensitive and free of norm, linguistic, and cultural biases found in traditional testing.

Alternative assessment procedures are nonintrusive to the classroom because they do not require a separate block of time to implement them, as do traditional tests. Thus, alternative assessment is based on the daily classroom activities; it also reflects the curriculum, unlike traditional, standardized tests that often test skills different with classroom practices. Furthermore, because the data collected are based on real-life tasks, alternative assessment provides information on the strengths as well as the weaknesses of a student.

Basically, using testing assessment is becoming more considerable and important in teaching and learning foreign languages in Ukraine. Thus, we intend to examine this aspect more carefully.

According to Ukrainian Methodology of teaching and learning foreign languages, there are two types of testing, such as informal and formal tests. The difference among them lies in

their goals. Most informal tests evaluate students' awareness of foreign language in the process of forming their both sociocultural and communicative competence and their skills and the perspectives to continue that growth process. Thus, Natalia V. Fedicheva (2011) believes that "the teacher's success is greatly depends on constant informal assessment, for it tells us how well learners are progressing towards goals and what the next step in the learning process might be" (p. 151).

As for formal testing, this type of testing requires systematic, planned and sampling techniques. Moreover, such types of test are used by teachers for evaluating the students' awareness or skills during module or course assessment summarizing students' grades for term or for the unit.

Speaking about the criteria of different types of test they should be specified and have to be the following:

- a) *test structure* (What sections will the test have and what will be tested in each? For instance, grammar section or vocabulary in particular topic etc.);
- b) *number of items* (in total or in particular aspect in learning foreign language);
- c) *timing* (for each section or for entire test);
- d) *techniques* (what techniques has to be used for evaluating students' skills or theoretical awareness).

### **The principle of assessment in teaching foreign language**

Assessment, based on the context of the paper, involves the means of obtaining information about students' abilities, knowledge, understanding, attainments, or attitudes. Assessment places the needs of the students and it performs in the center of the teacher's planning. Speaking about testing, the standardized tests have been most often associated with terms of the following principles: *validity, reliability, practicality, authenticity and wachback*.

*Validity*. Supporters of alternative assessment do not suggest that these criteria be ignored, for any high-quality assessment must remain to them. Concerns with validity and reliability of assessment instruments have been addressed in qualitative research through the use of the term honesty. In other words, does it measure what it is supposed to measure and would the instrument give the same results if replicated.

*Reliability*. A reliable test has to be consistent and dependable. For instance, if a teacher gives the same test to the same student or matched students on two different occasions, the test has to show the same results. So the principle of reliability:

- a) is consistent in its conditions;
- b) gives clear directions for evaluation;
- c) has uniform rubrics for evaluating;
- d) contains tasks that are unambiguous for the test-taker (Brown, 2010, p. 27).

Speaking about reliability, Richards and Renandya (2002) mention that it follows that if a procedure is valid, then it is reliable in that it will consistently produce the same results if audited or replicated. The probability is very high, for example, that a student's written retelling of a story will share the same, or at least highly similar, characteristics in his or her writing from one week to the next. Two instructors, or even the same instructor who is trained in the use of a holistic evaluation scale, will more than likely find that two pieces, written a week apart by a student, will exhibit similar characteristics. Thus, the rater will assign the same or a similar score on the scale because the descriptors that best fit the two pieces will most probably be the same ones (p. 340 – 341).

*Practicity.* This principle refers to the logical and administrative issues, reflecting making, giving and scoring an assessment instrument. It has to be taking into account that the test that fails to meet the following criteria is impractical. This form of assessment:

- a) stays within budgetary limits;
- b) can be completed by the test-taker within appropriate time constraints;
- c) has clear directions for administration;
- d) considers the time and effort involved.

Actually, the value and quality of a test sometimes is under consideration.

*Authenticity.* In addition, the fourth major principle of foreign language testing is authenticity. Basically, using the principle of authenticity in a test task means to use test task performing in the real world. Thus, in a test, authenticity may be present in the following ways:

- a) contains language that is as natural as possible;
- b) has items that are contextualized rather than isolated;
- c) includes meaningful, relevant, life-relating topics;
- d) provides some thematic organization to items, such as through a story line or episode;
- e) offers tasks that replicated real-world tasks (Brown, 2010, p. 37).

*Washback.* Typically, this principle defines as the effect of testing on teaching and learning foreign language. Another point of view on the substance of washback principle is that the washback effect may refer to both the promotion and the self-consciousness of learning. This principle reflects how test influence both teaching and learning.

The following factors have to be taking into account in using washback:

- a) positively influences what and how teachers teach;
- b) positively influences what and how students learn;
- c) offers students a chances to adequately prepare;
- d) gives students feedback to evaluate students' language development;
- e) is more formative in nature than summative;

- f) provides conditions for peak performance by the student (Brown, 2010, p. 38).

*The principle of giving student advance preparation.* Comparing principles using teachers in Ukraine, we have to mention principle of giving student advance preparation. Natalia V. Fedicheva (2011) believes that this principle gives students an opportunity to know what to expect during future test.

The following teachers' instructions have to be taking into account:

- a) provide the information about the strategy of a test;
- b) provide information about types of items that will appear;
- c) give students opportunities to practice certain item types;
- d) encourage reviewing the material to be covered;
- e) give anxiety-lowering reassurance (p. 152).

## Results

Defining principles and forms of assessment promote the planning assessment of foreign language. The principles and forms of assessment also serves as a summary of the key points presented in this article. The following has to be taking into account by teacher in planning the process of teaching foreign languages:

1. Instruction and assessment should be reflection of each other.
2. Assess student progress by means of multiple measures that cover both formative and informal assessments and all forms of assessment.
3. All forms assessments must be meaningful in using language.
4. Assessment should have a central place in the teaching and learning plan.
5. All principles of assessment have to be taking into account in creating test by teachers for students.
6. Realizing the importance of encouraging students in achieving their own progress, selecting and reflecting on their own work samples, making improvements in performance, and providing feedback about the instruction they are receiving.

## Conclusions

This article seeks to briefly present arguments in favor of the use of different forms of assessment in foreign language teaching and learning particular testing form. Testing can provide teachers and students with information about the students' level of knowledge, skills and difficulties in foreign language learning and which activities and methods are more useful. The article reflects the main principles of assessments using in Methodology

of teaching and learning foreign languages which promote the recommendation for planning the process of teaching foreign languages.

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