Assessment and Evaluation of L2 Learning

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Assessment and Evaluation

Defined

- **Assessment:** “Procedures used to obtain information about student performance” (Woolfolk, 2005, p. 504).
- **Evaluation:** “Decision making about student performance and about appropriate teaching strategies” (Woolfolk, 2005, p. 504).
- “Assessment is the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about students' learning. The central purpose of assessment is to provide information on student achievement and progress and set the direction for ongoing teaching and learning (NSWDET, 2008).
Assessment and Evaluation Defined cont.

- “Sometimes the term assessment is used to describe the process of trying to determine what students already know about a topic before instruction, whereas the term evaluation refers to the process of monitoring progress during and after instruction” (Nelson & Price, 2007, p. 65)
- “Assessment is defined as ‘the gathering and synthesizing of information concerning students’ learning,’ while evaluation is defined as ‘making judgments about students’ learning. The processes of assessment and evaluation can be viewed as progressive: first assessment; then evaluation’” (Echevarria, et al, 2004, p. 148)
How Do Assessment and Evaluation Relate to Student Learning?

Learning Cycle

- Where are my students now?
- What do I want my students to learn?
- Assessing and recording
- How do I know when my students get there?
- Planning and programming
- How will my students get there?
- Ongoing evaluation
- Classroom practice
- Reporting
Where are my students now?  
Assessment provides information about what students already know, understand, or what they can do.

What do I want my students to learn?  
Standards  
Objectives  
Performance Measures

How will my students get there?  
(Teaching and learning strategies)  
Consider:  
Teaching Strategies  
Classroom Organization  
Learning Environment  
How can students demonstrate learning?

How do I know when my students get there?  
Assessment:  
Conventional Assessment (Testing)  
and Alternative Methods
Formative vs. Summative Assessment

Formative Assessment: Happens during the lesson.

- Allows teachers to see how successfully students are progressing in relation to objectives
- Allows students to benefit from the teacher’s feedback while the lesson is still happening
- Can tell teachers where to go next (review, spend more time, move on)
- Examples:
  “Checks for Understanding”
  “Checks for understanding (CFU) are monitoring opportunities that, when done correctly provide teachers with excellent ways to evaluate whether students are learning” (Nelson & Price, 2007).

Observation
Conversations with students
Summative Assessment:

Can happen at the end of a lesson, unit, school year, etc.

- Allows teachers to compare student performances to objectives and standards
- Tells the teacher whether a student has mastered the objective
- Helps shape future instructional plans
- Examples:
  - Criterion Reference Tests
  - Work Samples/Portfolios
- Assessment can be many things for many situations.
- Assessment can be informal, formal, authentic, multidimensional, alternative, dynamic, written, oral, etc.!

No matter what the type of assessment, it should emphasize learning rather than better grades or scores.

“Assessment information is not valuable if it does not lead to a course of action for the student’s (and teacher’s) benefit” (Hargett, 1998, p196).
Reliability and Validity

“…regardless of the means used to evaluate cognitive abilities, academic achievement, linguistic competence, or language proficiency, confidence in the reality of the assessment rests with the selection of reliable and valid measures, with careful consideration of the context of the evaluation” (Collier, 2007, p 169).

- **Reliability:**
  The consistency of a test includes:
  “test-retest” reliability
  Alternate form reliability
  Split half reliability (internal consistency)

- **Validity:**
  Criterion-related validity
  Content validity
  Construct validity

“A test must be reliable in order to be valid…However, reliability will not guarantee validity (Woolfolk, 2005, p514).
Perception of Intelligence

- What does it mean to be intelligent?
- What does an intelligent student act like?
- What should an intelligent student be able to do?
- Will all English-language learners express their intelligence in the same way?
- Robert J Sternberg’s work with intelligence and culture
  - “Intelligence may be conceived in different ways in different cultures” (Sternberg, 2007, p 148).
  - “Whether teachers take into account the differences in conceptions of who is intelligent and who acts intelligently can also affect how well students learn. When students are taught in ways that take into account their cultural contexts and that are culturally appropriate for them, they can achieve higher levels” (Sternberg, 2007, p 148).
Assessment Bias

“Biases are aspects of the test such as content, language, or examples that might distort the performance of a group—either for better or for worse (Woolfolk, 2005, p514).”

- Types of Assessment Bias:
  
  Unfair Penalization: Tests may penalize groups of students for their lack of knowledge, or experience with situations, examples, or language.

  Offensiveness: Content, such as situations, examples, or language may be offensive to certain groups of people.
So What is the Point?

- Make sure you are testing what you want to test!
- Assessment and evaluation of proficiency in L2 should measure proficiency in L2, not other factors.
- Make sure assessment measures and expectations are clear.
- “When standards and expectations are clearly communicated to students, it also allows students to become partners in assessing their own progress” (Hargett, 1998, p 199).
- Make sure that both formal and informal measures of assessment are free from bias.
- Have colleagues help.
K-12 Classroom and Teacher

- Understand the Classroom Population.
  - Cultural background
  - Previous Education

- Understand the Teacher
  - Teaching method
  - Classroom effectiveness
Assessment Models

- Language Samples
- Dynamic Assessment
- Narrative Analysis
Problems with Assessment Models

- Standardized Tests
- Examiner Competency
- Reliability
Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)
Problems of Poor Assessment

- Student Self Esteem
- Student Placement
Assessment Improvement

- Teacher Responsibility
- Standardized Testing
Assessment Conclusion

- Accommodation
- Environment
ASSESSMENT WITH ADULT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Reasons for Testing

- The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of the Workforce Investment Act of 1988) requires each state to report educational gains of learners in terms of level descriptors defined by the National Reporting System (NRS) document.
WHY TEST IN ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE) OR ESL?

- To place learners in appropriate instructional levels
- To measure their ongoing progress
- To qualify them to enroll in academic or job training programs
- To verify program effectiveness
- To demonstrate learner gains in order to justify continued funding for a program
TYPES OF ASSESSMENTS USED

- Michigan Test of English Language
- The Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE)
- BEST
- CASAS
Alternative Assessment

- Surveys
- Performance Samples
- Interviews
- Checklists
Learner Portfolios as another option...

**Learner portfolios:**

- Collections of individual work, are common examples of alternative assessment.

- Portfolios can include such items as:
  - reports on books
  - notes from learner/teacher interviews
  - learners’ reflections on their progress
  - writing samples
  - data from performance-base assessments
  - scores on commercially available tests
Best Practices

- Clearly identify the purpose of the assessment (why the learners are being assessed) and what learning is to be assessed (e.g., increased speaking proficiency).

- Select assessment instruments and procedures that match the program's learning goals (e.g., an oral interview to show progress in speaking skills, writing samples to show progress in writing) and that engage learners so they are interested and will strive to do their best.

- Whenever possible, use multiple measures to present a more complete picture of what has been learned.

- Ensure that adequate resources are available to carry out the assessments (e.g., enough materials, comfortable environment, adequately trained administrators and scorers).

- Be aware of the limitations of the assessments selected.

- Remember that assessment is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Share assessment results with learners and instructors, as well as with administrative staff.
Information for a Student Profile

Contact parents, teachers, psychologists, and pediatricians and review records for information about a student experiencing difficulty with learning English.

Testing information
Psychoeducational testing in native and second language
Standardized test scores
Medical records (hearing, sight, etc.)

Developmental history
Speaking, reading, writing, motor skills
Sibling/parent history of learning disabilities

Psychological issues
Traumas
Stability in care/family
Prior learning experiences
Length of time in second-language country

Language/Cultural experience
Prior English learning experience/education system
History of study with tutors
Bias (toward or from second-language country)
Languages spoken at home or by caretakers
Languages spoken by social peer groups
Native language’s similarity to English

Learning disability signals
A. Language-based
Dysfluent speech/writing
Disorganized speech/writing
Associative language learning

B. Nonverbal characteristics
Ability to focus
Processing lag
Memory
Sustained concentration levels
Abstract nonverbal reasoning
Organization (time and materials)
Work and study habits across subjects
Behavior in classroom (avoidant/cooperative)

C. Visual/auditory processing
Directionality (confuses letter order)
Phonemic/phonological difficulties
(segment, rhyme, play with sounds)
Speed of discerning subtle visual differences
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