

## NATURE AND SCOPE OF EVALUATION IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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### **Abstract**

Evaluation is a spontaneous activity that we come across in every walk of our life. Testing is just one of the aspects of evaluation process and takes place in various ways. Evaluation involves more than just testing the student outcomes. It includes several aspects of the teaching-learning methodology which gives a clear picture of whether the actual learning has taken place or not. Moreover the task of evaluation does not depend upon the teacher alone but the learner should also have the ability to evaluate oneself and others (peer evaluation). Feedback plays an essential role in the process of evaluation.

The development of the learner in language skills is impossible to evaluate on the basis of a single test. There are different modes of assessment such as norm-referenced test, criterion referenced test, informal assessment, formal assessment, self assessment, formative assessment etc...which are usually applied for assessing the language proficiency of the learners. In spite of all these evaluation methods, it is often found that testing does not always reflect the actual language proficiency of the learners. This paper takes an effort to address the various systems that are applied in a language classroom to assess the ability of expertise in the learners.

**Key words:** evaluation, feedback, formative assessment, criterion referenced test

### **INTRODUCTION**

Evaluation plays a crucial role in assessing the language learning. There are several factors which may contribute to the evaluation of language learning. The teacher and the learner both play the role of evaluator. In most cases the teacher is considered to be the best evaluator however an evaluation is far successful when the learner develops the ability to assess oneself. This paper will address the different modes of evaluation which is applied in the language learning classroom.

### **1. ROLE OF DIFFERENT ASSESSMENT MODES**

In Formal assessment we have data which supports the conclusion made from the evaluation. Here the student's language behavior in response to an activity is taken for consideration to carry out the purpose of assessment. The data here is mathematically computed and summarized.

Informal assessment is not data driven but rather content and performance driven. It is done through observation, assignments, projects etc...

Formal or standardized measures should be used to assess overall achievements to compare a student’s performance with others of their age or class or to identify comparable strengths and weakness with peers. Whereas in informal assessment sometimes referred to as criterion referenced, performance based measures should be taken to form instruction. Since both these kinds of evaluation have their benefits and challenges, it is up to the teacher to determine what things are to be assessed consciously and formally and the skills which are to be checked in a natural setting i.e, in an informal atmosphere.

Summative assessment concentrates on the final outcome of a student’s learning and measured through tests. Summative assessment of individual students may be used for promotion, certification or admission to higher levels of education. Formative evaluation focuses on maintaining the continuous development of a student during the course of study. This kind of evaluation involves getting information or feedback about the various aspects of the programme during the course. The students can use this information/feedback to adjust their learning strategies. Summative evaluation is used for judging the students’ level of achievements for the purpose of grading and accountability. Summative assessments promote the learners to demonstrate their skills and abilities.

On the other hand one of the biggest benefits of Formative assessment is that it allows both the teacher and the student to see where the student is and find ways to make improvements before the Summative Assessment occurs. Consistent use of Formative Assessment has been shown to improve student motivation, both intrinsically and extrinsically. One effective method of Formative assessment is Students’ feedback.

In modern times CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) is also an effective method which helps in evaluating the language proficiency of the learners. It reduces the time and the role of a teacher changes from ‘sage at a stage’ to a ‘guide by the side’. The students’ role also changes from passive learners to active participant in the learning process.

### 3. Norm-Referenced Test (NRT) & Criterion Referenced Test (CRT): a comparison

The term Norm-referenced (NRT) refers to the process of comparing one test taker to his /her peers. Whereas in a Criterion-referenced test (CRT), the score shows whether or not the test takers performed well or poorly on a given task, it is not compared to the other test takers

#### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN NRT AND CRT

NRT	CRT
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It includes those students and teachers who know what to expect from the test and that how the test will be conducted and graded.</li> <li>2. A NRT would primarily check whether a student correctly answered more questions compared to the other students in the group.</li> <li>3. It assesses the present standard of a student by comparing it with the current standard of his/her fellow learners.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The students appear in the examination with the motive to give the best possible correct answers and that they are concerned about the examination process only.</li> <li>2. In a CRT it does not matter about the performance of the other learners because each student needs to achieve the qualifying marks set in an examination.</li> <li>3. The student is evaluated on the basis of his/her individual performance. For eg: The common method of examination pattern which we have in our schools and colleges ,where there is a</li> </ol>

<p>For eg: IQ tests and Job -interviews are NRT because their goal is to see which test taker is more intelligent and able among the appeared candidates.</p> <p>4. NRT is a an easier process of evaluation for the teachers as they can assume that certain students will surely pass leaving behind the others, regardless what the “pass” criteria is .For eg in a Group Discussion, say there are ten candidates, here the candidates as well as the assessor knows that out of ten, two will be selected for the next round, so even if majority of the candidates fare brilliantly, still the best two will be selected.</p>	<p>specific pass mark which all the examinees have to achieve in order to get promoted to the next level.</p> <p>4. CRT is easier for the students since they know what standards they have to achieve irrespective of how the other students perform.</p>
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**5. ADVANTAGES OF USING GRADES**

For the assessment of a student’s language ability, Proficiency based grading is quite effective. This system of grading does not focus much on vocabulary building or grammar rule, but assesses the learner’s ability in writing or speaking .These skills can not be merely memorized but need to be acquired.

The system of grading is common to all the learners since their nursery classes. The grades are basically the performance indicators. Previously during our school days we used to get grades like “A+”, ”A”, ”B”, ”C” etc...Nowadays the kids gets the in the form of *stars* or *smiley*. Grades can be used to assess multiple perspectives. Earning of good grades is also a source of encouragement for the learners. One can compare his standard with the other students of the class. Peer assessment is also an effective tool by which the value, level and the quality of success of the outcomes of learning of peers is graded. This method provides learners with the opportunity to take responsibility for analyzing, monitoring and evaluating the various aspects of the learning process. It leads to the development of students’ higher order of reasoning and higher level cognitive thoughts. It also encourages active and flexible learning thereby helping to nurture student centered learning.

**5. Testing does not always reflect the actual language proficiency of learners**

Testing takes place in various ways. In certain methods it focuses on the overall outcome of a student. In the summative evaluation method only the end product of a program is usually involved for testing .So here testing only decide whether the students have passed or failed but does not give any credit to the skills developed. Here the development of the learner in language skills is impossible to evaluate on the basis of a single test. Therefore the validity and feasibility of the existing practice cannot be assessed. This system also does not provide any scope for

proper feedback. Unless a learner can be given a feedback he/she won't be able to realize his/her mistakes and go for rectification. Nowadays in the professional world one needs to be competent in oral language skills. However the kind of examination which is conducted by most universities/boards concentrates on written test only. So the students face problem while attending the interviews because for the first time their oral skills are taken into account along with other expertise. Here I would like to state my own experience while pursuing M.A in English literature from University of Calcutta. Some of my classmates who came from regional boards had high percentage of marks in their graduation (in English Hons.) but their English communication skill was very poor. So from this we can understand that evaluation on the basis of certain stereo-typed questions might fetch good marks for passing the examination but in the practical life the learners are unable to acquire expertise in the language. Moreover the testing methods are often quite mechanical and put unnecessary stress on the teachers as well as students.

Evaluation involves more than just testing the student outcomes. The gap in the testing can be bridged by some learner-centered approach of evaluation. One such method is formative evaluation. Such an evaluation involves getting information/feedback about the various aspects of the programme during the course itself. Learners in the classroom might be subjected to self evaluation and peer evaluation. This gives the learner a platform to go for self criticism and realizing one's own fault. Through proper criticism, a student learns to form opinions and is able to evaluate others. This is a very constructive method of developing proficiency in language learning. Proficiency tests like IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) often prove to be beneficial for the students. Progress testing through assignments, projects etc. is also a reflective method to evaluate the actual proficiency of a learner. Informal assessments like observing a student's behaviour during a role play or group discussion is also an effective method of developing learner's actual expertise in English language.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In this paper various approaches to English language teaching has been discussed. To summarize it can be said that the Tests play a crucial role in evaluating the learning outcome. The types of tests discussed above reflect different aspects of teaching learning in language classrooms. A successful outcome of language learning depends on both the teacher as well as the learner.

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