The Correlation Between Assessement And Teaching In Students' English Language Proficiency

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Abstract-The article outlines the author's perspectives on the importance of giving an appropriate assessment based on curriculum content and individual capacity for effectiveness in students' English using. To achieve language proficiency goals, it is more important to find out strengths and weaknesses that arise from each individual student rather than basing on those of large numbers of students. When seeing the problem from the individual, it will be able to find the most suitable solutions to overcome. The article raises issues related to the reliability of assessing students as well as appropriate assessment methods. In addition, the author also mentions the limitations and weaknesses of the assessment and its influence on the measurement of students' actual ability. The author supposes that building a system to evaluate students' foreign language proficiency effectively is a must to find suitable solutions or shortcomings each student faces to help them find directions to overcome and improve themselves.

Keywords-Assessment, reliability, ability, weaknesses, individual students.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is time to consider the roles as well as issues related to assessing student's ability and performance. The questions are whether students are properly assessed their actual capacity, whether the results of those evaluations are considered to provide better methods of improvement and whether those evaluation criteria are really objective.

The use of English in work and life requires high practicality, but what students have been accessed to is theory without opportunity to practice communicating and using English in actual situations. At the same time, the assessments through multiple-choice tests as well as the speaking test on general topics have not yet assessed the students' level of reflexes when applying English to real-life contexts. "Parents don't lecture a toddler on shoe tying and give a multiple-choice test at the end to see if their child ties her shoes better than the kid next door" [1]. Biggs

and Tang compare assessment with tying shoes to show the gap between teaching and assessing [1]. It can be seen that each student has his or her own strengths and that the approach to language is completely different. In fact, there are absolutely no stupid students, so it is important for teachers to recognize their abilities and encourage them to exploit their strengths to achieve the expected results. "When I stand in front of a class, I don't see stupid or unteachable learners, but boxes of treasures waiting for us to open" (Cheung Chin-ming, a part-time P.C.Ed. student, University of Hong Kong) [1]. The following conversation between the teacher and student raises a big question for all teachers, assessors and researchers in paying much more attention to performance of each student individually [1].

Teacher: How many diamonds have you got?

Student: I don't have any diamonds.

Teacher: Then you fail!

Student: But you didn't ask me about my jade.

The short talk shows that each student should be considered as a box of treasure with both diamonds and jade that the teacher or assessor must care for when making judgement about his or her performance on the test. The five key points that Tyler mentioned to prove the significance of aligned assessment are [2]:

- Don't blame the students.
- Don't blame the teacher.
- Don't blame the teaching tool.
- Do blame the lack of alignment.
- Do blame the lack of aligned assessment.

It is true that both teachers and teachers' teaching methods have their own strengths, so they are quite capable of imparting their knowledge and experience to students in the best way. Therefore, it is not possible to blame students, faculties or their teaching methods, but the problem that should be noticed is "the lack of aligned assessment" [2]

The assessment of students' performance on final exams partly shows the level of standards that students meet or need improvement. The other part depends on many other factors that also need to be addressed including cheating among students during the exam or exam content is too difficult or too easy for the actual competence of students. Lorrie proved that "assessment plays an integral role in teaching and learning". In the research "the role of classroom assessment in teaching and learning", it was pointed out that "the content and character of assessments must be significantly improved" and "the use of assessment information and insights must become a part of ongoing learning process" [3].

For this matter, the writer supposes that if it is taken into careful consideration, it will definitely contribute to find solutions to help students enhance their English Proficiency.

II. THE ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

There are many vital roles of assessing students needed to be researched, and the most considerable one is its role to determine the extent to which course aims have been achieved [4]. They in the book named "Assessment Issues in Higher Education" mentioned a great number of reasons why assessing students should be done. It is here worth mentioning that students should be assessed so as to "motivate" them and "diagnose" their strengths and weaknesses and that assessment can help obtain the information on the effectiveness of learning the environment. According to them, assessment may include a 'learning contract' between the student and the institution.

Biggs and Tang mentioned the two most outstanding reasons of assessment including "formative feedback" and "summative grading" among other reasons as selecting, controlling and motivating students [1]. There is a different view about assessment between teachers and students. Teachers suppose assessment and the intended learning outcomes to be the "central pillar' of their teaching while students see differently. In students' points of view, they learn what they think they will be tested on and therefore consider assessment as 'the actual curriculum" [1]. This group of authors explained the roles of assessment according to teacher's and student's viewpoints by using this figure.
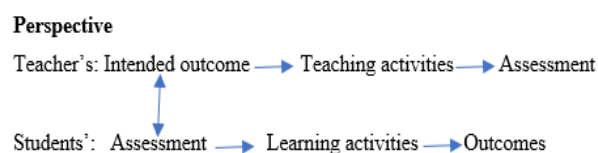
This figure shows that teachers believe assessment is at the end of course or teaching activities while students think it is at the beginning. This therefore leads to different perspectives of teachers and students on assessing problems

"Assessment is the senior partner in learning and teaching. Get it wrong and the rest collapses"[1]. They believe in the key role of assessment in the teaching process, and if this role is not performed well, both the teaching and learning process will be collapsed. However, the assessment only performs the task of scoring, classifying students and managing students. In outcomes-based teaching and learning, assessment is carried out by seeing how well a student's performance compares to the criteria in the outcome statement. They suppose that "assessment is more than grading. It's about measuring the progress of student learning". It is defined as a "process of gathering data to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of student learning" [5]. Assessment becomes a lens for understanding student learning, identifying invisible barriers, and helping us to improve our teaching approaches.

In order to assess students' competencies accurately, the content of the tests needs to meet many factors. One of these factors is whether the content of the test is too much different from the content of the curriculum and the actual capacity of the students. If a less capable student is to study with a higher-level student and take a more difficult level test, the result of the test does not prove that he or she has the required abilities and vice versa. However, it is common for students of multiple levels to study together and take the same test level, so that is a challenge to evaluate students' achievements accurately. Lorrie also mentioned that teachers' assessment of students' understandings, feedback from peers and self-assessment are part of the social processes that mediate the development of intellectual abilities. In addition, it is also believed that "tests should be used frequently to ensure mastery before proceeding to the next objective' and that 'tests are the direct instantiation of learning goals" [6]. The writer agrees that tests and assessments should be taken after each lesson, if possible, to determine if students have

any trouble keeping up with the content of a curriculum and then teachers will have plans to support them. The writer is convinced by Bloom with the idea that "it would be useless and inefficient to go on ABC problems without first having mastered A and AB objectives" [7]. Therefore, if teachers just keep on the progress of the curriculum, but not on what extent students can follow it, there will be a big gap between the test result and students' competences. Similarly, Skinner expressed the same thought about the fact that to achieve the final goal, steps must be divided into smaller ones: "The whole process of becoming competent in any field must be divided into a very large number of very small steps, and reinforcement must be contingent upon the accomplishment of each step" [8]. Boud believes that "the content of assessment defines what is to be studied' and 'the kind of task required shapes the learning strategy of students" [9]. Additionally, according to Mikreassessment is considered as an indispensable component of curriculum practice and enhance of learning. The article points out that assessment helps instructors to find strength and weakness of students and it also provides "feedback" about success of a curriculum [10].

III. THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AS ASSESSORS

It is undeniable that teachers play various roles in teaching, not just completing lessons. These roles include " the learner, facilitator, assessor, manager, evaluator and guide" [11]. About the role of an assessor, they pointed that "assessing is one of the important roles for extracting students' knowledge by giving continuous feedback". To their views, a teacher before assessing a student first must assess their own conclusions, as to what extent a student will be benefited with their correct assessment results. With the results of regular assessment, teachers will orient and plan the most suitable lesson plans and teaching methods to help students overcome their shortcomings and promote their strengths. As an evaluator, differences in attitudes and personalities of different teachers will also result in different assessments of students. The writer admits that it is one of the problems needed to be concerned.

In the exams, if there is a consistent assessment among teachers and especially the way of scoring, the results achieved by students are truly accurate and fair. In this regard, the author poses a question that the teacher's personality will lead to the difference in grades and whether that degree will be significant and affect the student's test results.

IV. THEORIES OF CURRICULUM, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Lorrie suggested different views on the curriculum, learning and assessment from various theories. They include "reformed vision of curriculum", "cognitive and constructivist learning theories" and "classroom assessment" [3]. It was clearly stated in each theory about the conceptual framework that to develop a model of classroom assessment that supports teaching and learning according to a constructivist perspective, it is important to see how a reconceptualization of assessment follows from changes in learning theory and from concomitant changes in epistemology. For classroom assessment, it is used to "evaluate teaching as well as student learning". Assessing the progress of the class will help to address some of the problems in the learning process as well as the goals to be achieved for each student. This assessment can help students proactively and self-assess their own progress through the guidance of teachers.

Wood-Wallace mentions two kinds of assessment including "summative assessment" and "formative assessment". Summative assessment measures "the growth" of students after learning and formative assessment is meant to improve students on an ongoing basis instead of measuring it. Each type of assessment takes an important part in "defining the curriculum" and provides "an overall picture of learning" [12].

Atkins, Beattie and Dockrell clarified two more forms of assessment together with formative and summative assessment, and the first form is criterion-referenced. This assessment system requires to mark students' performance according to criteria and standards. Competence based assessment has no standard definition and it can require intellectual, personal or practical achievements [4].

V. PROBLEMS OF CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT AND STUDENTS' LEARNING ABILITY

A frequent criticism of assessment is that it is "subjective" and "unreliable"; therefore, reliability and validity are major issues of assessing students. The two questions posed by Biggs and Tang are 'can we rely on the assessment results and are they assessing what they should be assessing? [1]. They

explained that reliability means 'stability', dimensionality' and 'conditions of testing' and it is considered as a 'property' of the test. In case reliability is not a property of the test, it is the ability of teachers or judges to make consistent judgements towards students' performance. The two concepts of reliability include 'intra-judge reliability and inter-judge reliability'. The first concept concerns if the same person makes the same judgement about the same performance on two different occasions and the second one concerns if different judges make the same judgement about the same performance on the same occasion. Teachers often rely on test results to assess students' actual ability and find ways to improve and try to achieve output goals. However, in this process, we need to consider a lot of different factors to be able to give an accurate evaluation. It is believed that when finding the cause of the student's unsatisfactory results, finding a solution is reliable. For this matter, Buhagiar, in the article named 'classroom assessment within the alternative assessment paradigm' explains four important aspects of 'unfriendly' related to assessment, curriculum, academic qualities and so on. He mentions a 'narrow' of traditional tests and examinations due to the fact that they just 'assess a very narrow range of academic qualities' [13]. In fact, if teachers just concentrate on their final test results to come to conclusion of what should be done to improve their ability, it is not persuasive. 'Curriculum unfriendly' is clearly explained in his article, which means that teachers just pay attention to a 'narrow range of test-taking skills', but not focus on 'a broader range of higher order competencies and understanding.' This leads to the fact that students are limited to develop their own strength and that assessment should be rebuilt to reach the intended learning goals. Importantly, 'teacher unfriendly' partially reveals the fact of test scores and the necessity of test scores so as to judge teachers and schools. That makes teachers, to some extent, do their best to increase their students' test scores.

Another crucial problem stated in his article is about assessment for learning inside the classroom. To be more detailed, he clarifies that one of the weaknesses of assessment is 'superficial and rote learning' of students and this makes students soon forget what they have learned. Therefore, students' performance and achievement on their examination just partly reflect their academic qualities. In addition, it is also vital for teachers to review and discuss their assessment questions critically unless there is little reflection on what is being assessed. That means to be successful in assessing students, and it requires teachers' mutual support in terms of creating high-quality criteria for assessment questions.

Atkins, Beattie and Dockrell pointed out that with a wide choice of questions in the final examinations, just marks are aggregated without any requirements to show students' understanding of the important basics of the subject [4]. Therefore, it shows testing will not help achieve the learning outcome if based only on scores. Students need to be evaluated via their competency and potential to deal with related problems happening at work in the future and then they will be provided with suitable methods and effective feedbacks to enhance their own ability. It is also believed that certain types of question format are easier for candidates of a given ability than others. Regarding this drawback, to assess students' ability correctly requires much more attention and consideration so as not to affect assessment outcomes. Additionally, about a quality assurance system, the external examining procedure is often ignored, but it is in fact an important factor which may also affect the outcomes of assessing. The reason is external examiners are not usually part of the curriculum design team. Another issue mentioned is that 'continuous assessment' can lead to overloading for both teachers and students, so its reliability is often low [4]. In term of marking scales, Biggs and Tang proved a problem believed to be all teachers' concern about how to avoid being subjective in marking and judging students. It is clearly stated as followed 'I am marking out of ten; this is the best so it should get ten but I'll give it nine because no answer can be perfect'[1]. They wonder what is 'worth' one mark, what is worth five or how many marks.

'Grading on the curve' clarified by Biggs and Tang is the hot issue of all teachers and it is stated as followed:

• The top 10% of the class awarded 'high distinction';

• The next 15 % 'distinction';

• The next 25 % 'credit' and 45 % 'pass'.

This common form of assessment is believed to be stable from year to year and from department to department. With 'a quick and dirty multiple-choice questionnaire', teachers just simply put an A to the

first 10%, B to the next 25 % and so on. It is here true that the actual quality of students' performance is not relevant.

Fairness is also a problem that all teachers should definitely pay much attention to and the question is 'shouldn't all students be assessed on their performance in the same task?' For this matter, students are suggested to be involved in discussing with the teacher what the criteria might be. This could be different for all students. Assessing students by giving multiple-choice questions can help to assess declarative knowledge, but the worst thing is that the kind of questions can encourage the use of game-playing strategies such as 'never choosing the facetious or obviously jargon-ridden alternatives', choosing 'longer alternatives rather than the shorter ones' and so on. If this happens, student's ability and the test results cannot be correctly assessed.

VI.SUGGESTIONS

To make assessment more effective and reliable, Biggs and Tang suggested that students should be provided a signpost to be clear about what they are expected to do and know about the grading criteria for different levels of performance. Similarly, success or failure should be relatively controllable by students but not be based on luck or the ability of others. They also mentioned the means to minimize plagiarism which students do not see as a moral issue in some universities. One of the means is creating a culture that emphasizes scholarly values, which helps students to be aware of what should be done to follow the culture. Another one is to alert students to the rule and the penalties if they are proved to commit plagiarism. Also, it is advisable to use oral assessment and peer – group assessment so that students can be required to perform their own ability in the examination.

Assessment plays a vital role and to avoid narrowly specified job competence, there are four components including task performance, task management, contingency management and role/environment skills to confront with environmental factors [4].

Gibbs claimed that assessment was a 'nightmare' for students because many universities assess students in a mysterious way. It is argued that assessment should be an integral part of learning and that institutions and universities should tackle this strategically [14]. Assessment is believed to be motivating, productive for students and helping them know how well they are doing and what else they need to do when it is at its best.

Mark Jackson used a digital recording equipment to study verbal assessment which provided assessors with the benefits of more time to explain the grading decision. This also helps to clarify what good performance is. This research also suggests that the assessment process should provide the assessors with information to shape their teaching [15].

VII. CONCLUSION

Buhagiar points out drawbacks of classroom assessment and suggests key elements in improving quality of assessment. The writer states that instead of being a 'transmitter', teachers should be 'facilitator' of student learning and that instead of being a receiver, students should be 'a constructor of knowledge' [13]. Also, students are required to 'monitor' their learning and become 'self-monitoring' learners to enhance their achievement in the long run. Evaluating students' competencies accurately and effectively will of course help them proactively plan to promote their good sides and overcome their own weaknesses. In addition, finding out negative attitudes in the student assessment process in exams is also essential because this is also an important factor to help students find goals in their academic endeavors. According to Boud, there is a gap between 'what we require of students in assessment tasks and what occurs in the world of work.'[9]. Considerably, teachers should pay much attention to the necessity of designing assessment questions that contribute to form students' confidence and related knowledge for future jobs. Biggs and Tang compare teachers as journal editors who need to develop their own framework because it is necessary to have a conceptual framework to be able to see the relationship between the parts and the whole. In the next research paper, the writer will study the difference in evaluation among teachers and the correlation between curriculum content and exam content in assessing the actual capacity of students.

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