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Testing and Evaluation in English

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Abstract

Language influences human thought. Language plays a unique role in capturing the breadth of human thought and endeavour. The function of language is to enable people to communicate with each other in speech and writing. It involves numerous process to learn and teach the language. This paper illustrates the different methods of teaching and learning of English language. It mainly involves testing and evaluating the language using various tools and techniques.

Keywords: evaluation, good test, kinds of evaluation, types, measurement, tools of evaluation, values of evaluation

Art is something expressive, creative, original and usually, personal. English is an art subject in which imagination and personal taste are important. Skill is an acquired ability that is mechanical, exact and impersonal. Skill is the ability to do something efficiently. In other words, a skill is a performance of a specific task. English language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing are not independent. They do interact closely hence, language teaching should show concern for both skills and arts. In other words, instruction should emphasize acquisition of skills and expression of the language as an art.

Several practices are involved in teaching and learning of English. A teacher should know what his instructional task is and what he is trying to achieve by teaching English. A teacher without the knowledge of aims is like a ship without a harbour to reach. The aim of teaching English differs across countries. In India, English is taught as a foreign or second language. However, a teacher should help children acquire practical command of English so that it may be useful to them everyday life. Hence, he/she must test the performance of the students regularly. The teacher is responsible for guiding students into genuine experience in the foreign culture and meanings.

The teacher must be aware of different testing techniques, because they give useful information to both the teacher and the students. Testing techniques are often similar to teaching techniques but with the different purpose. Tests are used in the language class for two purposes:

To test the linguistic skills:

Tests are used to find out what students can DO. For instance, testing their listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills.

To test the linguistic components:

Tests are used to find out what students have LEARNED. For example, testing their spelling, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

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Types of tests:

There are different kinds or methods to test the students' ability. Those methods should be interesting and useful for the students, in order to make the syllabus fascinating. First, comes the Written Work, for instance, giving them daily assignments and unit papers, which should be plagiarism free.

Second, giving them Oral Work, that is, conducting class discussion and having debates on interesting topics or on subject matters. Third, giving them general tests or class/unit tests and exams often which will give the students the thorough knowledge of a subject. Finally, to enhance their creativity and individuality the teacher can give them mini projects and topic works.

Based on these types, the tests are categorized as follows,

- I. Objective test
- II. Short answer type tests
- III. Essay type tests
- IV. Oral type tests

I. Objective tests:

Objective test items are useful for measuring many specific skills and items of knowledge. It does not attempt to test the student's self-progression. They attempt to test student's recognition or comprehension.

Objective tests however, are difficult to construct. Framing a good objective type questions requires a good deal of time and thought. The answers in the objective tests are often single-worded. Objective tests have different types in it.

1. *Recall item (knowledge based):*

This type of test tests the students' ability to recall some items from their memory that they have learnt.

2. *Completion item (fill in the blanks):*

The students are asked to complete the incomplete sentence by supplying appropriate word.

3. *True or false:*

The students are asked to select whether the given statement is true or false.

4. *Multiple choice type:*

In this type, students have to select the correct answer out of three or four alternatives.

5. *Matching type:*

Pupils are asked to match the correct words from two given groups.

II. Short answer type:

These types of tests play a major role in evaluation in English. Here, the students have to answer the question in few sentences. The advantage of setting short answer questions is that it is possible to have a large number of questions in a paper. Therefore, they can be spread over the entire course.

It has advantages of both objective type tests and essay type tests. They are specific but sometimes students are required to produce their own answer condensing the matter that they have studied.

For instance:

Answer the following questions in one or two lines:

1. Why do you love your nation?
2. Explain the significance of the tricoloured national flag.

III. Essay type:

Essay type tests are the most common tests in our schools. This type of questions are very useful to test the power of expression of the pupil. They also tests the pupil's originality, have the ability to organize his material and to present in his own words and style. However, there are few drawbacks of essay type questions. This type of questions encourages cramming and rote memory. They are often vague or ambiguous and the pupil does not understand what the examiner really wants to know.

For example:

Answer the following essay questions:

1. The state of women in growing economic condition of a country.
2. What are the importance of education among women?

IV. Oral type tests:

Oral tests focus on speaking skills of the students. Teachers should give oral tests often to encourage the students to speak. There are two main ways of testing student's speaking ability,

Continuous assessment:

The teacher should test the student's ability to speak by continuous assessment throughout the year. It can be done by two ways: by giving marks for general willingness and ability to speak, and by noting down marks for certain oral activities done in class (eg: role play).

Short oral tests:

The teacher can give the whole class a set of general topics to prepare a few weeks before the test.

For example:

Select any topic and talk for two minutes (10 marks):

1. Talk about your family
2. Who is your role model?

There are other ways of testing the speaking skill of a student. They are, describing pictures, producing different sounds, conversations, reading aloud and describing actions.

Kinds of tests:

I. Diagnostic tests:

This type of test aim to find out what a student *still*, has to *learn* in a language. The result of this test provide feedback for a teacher, by displaying the learner's strengths and weaknesses. Diagnostic tests are not always given marks or grades.

II. Achievement tests:

Achievement tests determine how much of a particular course of study has been mastered. They are commonly used at the end of school terms.

III. Prognostic tests:

Prognostic tests try to predict how well a student will succeed in learning English as a second language. These tests focus on specific kinds of activity, for example, sound imitation, pattern matching. They provide data about individual difficulties.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

There are different measures in evaluating the students' performance. Those include measurement, and evaluation.

Measurement:

Measurement is a process of assigning numerical value to a quantity or a variable. It is a method of obtaining quantitative information of a student. It refers to observations that can answer the question "how much?" It is making a statement of how much and concerns itself with "what value?". It answers the student's and teacher's question, "what progress am I making?"

For instance: Assigning marks to the students.

Name of the student	Marks obtained	Total marks
Alex	36	50
Sindhiya	20	50

Table 1: measurement of marks obtained

Evaluation:

Evaluation includes measurement in it. It is a whole process of making judgments & taking decisions. The judgement is made based on the measurements made referring to a pre-established standard or norms.

For example: Grading whether a student scored average or below average or above average based on the score obtained through measurement.

Difference between measurement and evaluation:

Both measurement and evaluation are essential in the classroom for a teacher in order to assess the achievement of his students. A good teacher always measures and evaluates the students in order to improve the teaching learning process

Need for evaluation:

The need for evaluation is to assess students' achievement & to diagnose their learning difficulties. It is essential to measure the outcome of teaching and learning and to select the appropriate content and teaching techniques of a teacher. The teacher, by this, will be able to use appropriate data gathering techniques. Finally, evaluation leads to action-improvement of instruction & learning.

Two types of evaluation:

Process approach:

The process approach is helpful for both the students and a teacher. In this, the actual behaviour of teachers and students are evaluated.

Product approach:

This approach is useful for a teacher to judge the teaching skills based on students' progress. Apart from these, there are certain tests, which are meant to evaluate the progress of a student. They are as follows,

Norm based test:

There are certain objectives for a Norm based test. The teacher should set Unit Objectives first. Then they have to teach for those objectives. Once they cover their syllabus on their objective, they

should test the students to check whether the students have understood the unit objectives. Finally, they can assign marks or grades for the test.

Criterion based test:

The teacher should set Unit Objectives, teach for those objectives, and conduct test for the students to know the success of the objectives and finally the teacher should conduct *Remedial Program* based on the progress of the students.

What is an evaluation tool?

Evaluation tool is a device to collect data or assess the teaching outcomes of a teacher. They include,

- Questionnaires.
- Achievement tests.
- Check list.
- Anecdotal records.
- Rating scales.
- Observation schedules.
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Advantages of the tools of evaluation:

Tools of the Evaluation are useful not only for the students but also for the instructors to improve and enhance themselves. It is to test the teaching outcomes of an instructor and to test the knowledge, skills, attitudes, study habits, interest and appreciation of the students.

Values of Evaluation:

- It helps to diagnose the people's strength and weakness.
- Provides feedback on student's progress.
- Periodic test acts as a spur to learning.
- Tests are good teaching device.
- Process of evaluation should be a continuous one.
- It enables them to judge their progress from time to time.
- Examinations have a greater role to play than test because they determine the success or the failure of the student at the end of the year.
- Tests and examinations largely determine the methods of teaching followed in schools.

Steps involved in designing good questions:

What do we need to construct a valid question paper to evaluate the students' performance?

- Listing the major objectives
- Defining each objectives
- Writing the table of specifications or blueprint
- Checklist

Blueprint

Blueprint is needed to construct a valid question paper with appropriate weightage. It tests various skills of the students.

Things that are **needed** for the blueprint:

- Syllabus
- Units in a syllabus
- Question pattern

Characteristics of a good test:

A good test synchronizes evaluation with the objectives of teaching English. It aims to serve as a yardstick to find out whether the aims have been realized or not. It should give various emphases to skills.

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It should be highly reliable: this means that different forms of a same tests or repeated measurements of the same form, should give the same result. In other words, a highly reliable test should yield essentially the same or consistent score when it is administered to the same students at many times. Test and examinations should be carefully designed and it should neither be too difficult nor too easy.

A good test must be valid. This means that it should measure what it is supposed to measure. In other words, it should predict some *criterion*. A test predicts a criterion when it has a correlation with the criterion. For example: scholastic aptitude tests usually correlate with the student's college grades. Thus, higher the grades in the tests, predicts higher the grades in college.

A good test should cater for weak, average and bright students. Moreover, it should have a fair mixture of three types of questions.

- a. Questions that are easy and can be attempted by all the students
- b. Questions that are often average difficulty and can be attempted by average students.
- c. Questions that are difficult and can be attempted by bright students only.
- d.

Even when a test have reliability and validity, it may not do its job well unless it is administered by a standard procedures. A good test must have a standard procedure in time limit, scoring sheet and trained tester. The question paper should be neither too long nor too short. The instructions given in the question paper should be clear. The language used should be definite with no ambiguity. The length of the answer should be specified under each section.

The Questions aim at testing the real mastery of the structures, vocabulary items taught to them rather than testing their knowledge of memorized answers. Finally, the fair sampling over the whole course should be done by a teacher. A good test must have *norms* for proper interpretation of the scores. A norm is a set of scores obtained from a group of people who have taken the test. Once a norm is established, the scores of other students who take the test can be compared with it. There are different types of norms: age norms, grade norms, standard scores and percentile rank.

Informal techniques of evaluation:

The teacher can also use informal way of testing the students' ability. It is not relied on the test and it follows a non-unit related procedures:

- Measuring the extent of habit formation.
- Determining or finding out the speed & comprehension of reading
- Class room discussion.
- Informal teacher observation.
- Personality appraisal.
- Evaluation of oral & written.
- Analysis of study habits of students.
- Informal chat with students.

Conclusion:

The function of a language is to enable people to communicate with each other in speech and writing. The language is highly organized and intensively structured. Effective learning of a language depends on the effective teaching of it. However, effective teaching, in turn, depends on the application of general principles of language teaching. An English teacher may have the knowledge of several methods and approaches for teaching the language; hence, the effective way of incorporating in his/her teaching is vital for any fruitful learning.

Works Cited

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