



## How to evaluate learning of English Language? Some issues and observations

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### ABSTRACT

*In spite of years spent in learning English, fluency and accuracy elude the learner. This has adversely affected the morale of many learners. When we talk about language learning it is necessary to understand the nature of language. Language has different objectives. To achieve these objectives different methodology and approach of teaching is required. Language can never be evaluated with the traditional written exams. It ought to be treated with different approach. Author has tried to draw attention towards evaluation pattern for language skills. In this paper author has shared his view regarding evaluation techniques for English language teaching.*

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### Introduction

Testing, measurement and evaluation are terms that we come across frequently as students or as teachers and as evaluators. What is the purpose of such tests or evaluation in education? With specific reference to language teaching and language learning, author wants to raise some issues and share observations. Let us understand the word evaluation first. Evaluation, as the term indicates, is the assigning of value to the results obtained. It can be defined as the entire process of gathering information and making conclusive inferences from it. It covers testing, measurement and assessment. For Bachman (1990), evaluation does not have to be a quantifiable activity. He elaborates it thus: Evaluation therefore does not necessarily entail testing. By the same token, tests in and of themselves are not evaluative. Tests are often used for pedagogical purposes, either as a means of motivating students to study, or as means of reviewing material taught, in which case no evaluative decision is made

on the basis of the test results. Tests may also be used for purely descriptive purposes. It is only when the results of tests are used as a basis of making a decision that evaluation is involved.

## **Measurement**

What then is measurement? It is the activity by which the results of tests are quantified and judgments about characteristics and relative performances are made available. Here specific rules and procedures are employed for an objective rating of the learner's abilities. Numerical indices are assigned to data in a meaningful and consistent manner. Assessment is the process of estimating ability using scores, marks or grades. At best, it may involve presentation of data about relative performance but it does not necessarily make value judgments.

## **Appraisal**

This is a word which we come across often now in connection with job assessment and performance on a task. Appraisal involves assessment and the assigning of value to someone's work or performance. It therefore includes an element of judgment and evaluation.

## **Principles of Evaluation**

Evaluation, as we mentioned earlier, is a process which helps the user in:

- Determining whether his/her objectives have been achieved or not by the teaching/clarifying what is to be evaluated
- Selecting suitable techniques to achieve the purposes identified
- Combining a variety of strategies for more comprehensive or holistic evaluation of the learning activity

Why do we need evaluation in education? The immediate answer to this question would be: to make decisions about learner performance or abilities, as also about our activities as teachers and educators. Evaluation is used primarily in three types of situations.

## **To evaluate**

- Student Performance
- Teacher activities

- The programme or curriculum

Hence, educational evaluation has a greater degree of seriousness than the evaluation we do as part of our day-today life, when we appreciate a work of art or express disagreement of an opinion or viewpoint. Evaluation in Education thus needs to be more systematic and deliberate, so that the results obtained from the process are not ad hoc or uninformative. If so, they would be insufficient for making judicious and well-planned decisions.

Another significant feature to be borne in mind here is that evaluation is integrated with the entire learning process. It would be improper to separate the evaluation process from the objectives of teaching and the methods and materials employed in instruction. There is an interrelationship between all these elements of the educational process. The objectives of teaching should determine what materials and methods are to be employed and these in turn should lead to the evaluative techniques used, such that they examine the extent to which the objectives are fulfilled by the teaching-learning process.

### **Objective of English language teaching**

The objectives of teaching English language are classified under two heads: comprehension and expression. Comprehension here means comprehending the written and spoken language, and expression means expressing one's ideas in speech and writing. Following objectives need to be achieving (CBSE, 2011):

- The learner should acquire the ability to listen and understand, and should be able to employ non-verbal clues to make connections and draw inferences.
- The learner should develop the habit of reading for information and pleasure; draw inferences and relate texts to previous knowledge; read critically and develop the confidence to ask and answer questions.
- The learner should be able to employ communicative skills, with a range of styles, and engage in a discussion in an analytical and creative manner.
- The learner should be able to identify a topic, organize and structure thoughts and write with a sense of purpose and an awareness of audience.
- The learner should be able to use language creatively and imaginatively in text transaction and performance of activities.

- The learner should be able to develop sensitivity towards their culture and heritage, aspects of contemporary life and languages in and around the classroom.
- The learner should be able to refine their literary sensibility and enrich their aesthetic life through different literary genres.
- The learner should be able to appreciate similarities and differences across languages in a multilingual classroom and society.
- It is important for the learner to notice that different languages and language varieties are associated with different domains and communicative encounters.
- The learner should become sensitive to the inherent variability that characterizes language and notice that languages keep changing all the time. It is possible for a student to notice the differences between her or his own speech and the speech of others.

### **English language teaching and Evaluation Process**

Language evaluation need not be tied to “achievement” with respect to particular syllabi, but must be reoriented to the measurement of language proficiency. Unfortunately, English has been taught as one of the subjects in schools. So, the same evaluation process has been adopted for evaluation. English language has been taught to them throughout the year and at the end one examination with paper and pencil to see their performance. How it can be justified?

**Table 1**

<b>Comprehension</b>	<b>Expression</b>
Listening	Speaking
Reading	Writing

**To evaluate our students following tests are conducted in our schools**

- Essay questions
- Short answer questions

- Gap-filling
- True/False Type
- Multiple Choice question
- Reading comprehension

With the help of this type of test only Reading and writing can be tested. Listening and speaking can't get Justice. To solve this problem following initiative can be taken:

1. Summative approach of Evaluation should be adopted for Reading and writing and formative approach of evaluation should be adopted for listening and speaking.
2. English language teachers should develop profile of each student in which he/she should maintain record of the performance
3. Under the continuous comprehensive evolution system in every 15 days listening and speaking test ought to be organized. Performance of the student should be recorded through videography.
4. For the development of listening and speaking test, it is necessary that teacher should pass through the training program. EFL Hyderabad provides such training.
5. In the school time table English language teaching should be kept with proper understanding keeping aforesaid matters in mind.
6. Components of listening and speaking should be framed and accordingly students should be given practice
7. Teachers should be encouraged to go beyond the prescribed syllabus. Each teacher can develop his/her own listening and speaking test.
8. It is not individual's task. For such effort school management and principal should give freedom to teachers to explore innovative ideas in English language.

## **Conclusion**

Author wants to conclude here with one example. If we use in instrument, say thermometer, to gauge the body temperature of a patient, we must ensure that the instrument is accurate and gives reliable results as well, and that the patient will permit its use for this purpose. Only this will ensure accurate results (here, the temperature recorded) for our

purposes. The other significant feature here is that we should use an instrument that can capture the information we want. The assumption here is that a thermometer indicates changes in body temperature and that there is a relationship between the instrument and its readings and the condition we want to study.

If we extend this argument to the educational testing and evaluation situation, the test, instrument or tool we use should be one that captures the kind of behavior or performance we are interested in studying and are attempting to measure and evaluate. For instance, if we are interested in evaluating the performance of our learners in spoken English, our test should be sensitive enough to indicate differences in their ability to speak English. In other words, the tool we use for evaluation must be reliable and accurate.

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