The assessment and testing in the classroom context concerning to the reading skills through the teachers perspective

La evaluación y prueba en el contexto del aula concerniente a la habilidad lectora a través de la perspectiva del profesor

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The present article has as main objective to analyze some tests designed by teachers of English with the purpose of assessing the language learning outcomes of the reading skill based on the information and materials provided by Funiber (2019) in the subject "Assessment and Testing in the Classroom" and also based on the experiences as teachers and learners of English as a foreign language. Materials and methods: There are some methods to be considered and taken into account when this article is going to be done. Likewise, In teaching and learning process, to evaluate the students proficiency, ability, knowledge or background, the teachers use different and various techniques to measure or diagnose students ´proficiency or ability on the learning of a language. In order to have a minimums idea of strength and weakness of the students it is important to apply an assessment or testing to diagnose or measuring the student's knowledge, ability and proficiency. Results and discussion: Within this, evaluation deals with syllabus objectives, course design, materials, methodology, teachers' performance and assessment. Assessment involves measuring the performance of English learners (students) and the progress they are making, which helps teachers of English to be able to diagnose the problems students have to provide them with useful feedback whereas, testing deals with formal assessment. Conclusions: The discourse indent to be based on the explanation of Evaluation, assessment and testing on the designing of test samples.

Keywords: assessment and testing, classroom, strength and weakness, teachers and learners of english, teaching and learning process.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El presente artículo tiene como principal objetivo analizar algunas pruebas hechas por profesores de Inglés con el propósito de evaluar los efectos del aprendizaje de la lengua a partir de la habilidad lectora basado en los materiales e información provenientes por la Funiber (2019) en la asignatura "Assessment and Testing in the Classroom" y también basado por las experiencias de los profesores y estudiantes de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Materiales y métodos: Hay algunos métodos a ser considerados y tenidos en cuenta cuando este artículo sea hecho. Al igual que, el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, evaluar el nivel de aptitud de los estudiantes, la habilidad, el conocimiento o los antecedentes, los profesores utilizan diferentes y varias técnicas para medir o diagnosticar la habilidad de los estudiantes en el aprendizaje de una lengua. Con vista a tener la mínima idea de lo que son las fortalezas y debilidades de los estudiantes es importante aplicar una evaluación o prueba para diagnosticar o medir los conocimientos de los estudiantes, la habilidad y potencialidad. Resultados y discusión: En esto, la evaluación tiene que ver con los objetivos

del programa, diseño del curso, materiales, metodología, evaluación de los profesores. La evaluación envuelve medición del performance del estudiante de Ingles y el proceso que ellos hacen, el que ayuda a los profesores de Inglés ser capaces de diagnosticar los problemas que los estudiantes tienen providenciándoles respuestas útiles, mientras que, la prueba tiene mucho que ver con la evaluación formal. Conclusiones. El discurso tiende a ser basado en la explicación de lo que es la supervisión, evaluación y la prueba sobre los presupuestos o de muestras de pruebas.

Palabras clave: evaluación y prueba, el aula, fortaleza y debilidad, profesores y estudiantes de inglés, proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje.

INTRODUCTION

This study describes: the literature on evaluation, assessment and testing is famous for its various uses of these very terms; quite what is evaluation, assessment and testing seems to differ for different authors. For the purpose of this module we will use the terms as defined in Harrys and McCann (1994). And the existed relationship between the terms: Evaluation, Assessment and Testing.

The results of data collected through student's questionnaires and "simulated situations". The bases of the article are studies on the reading comprehension and the learning process, emphasizing those related to oral comprehension. The factors that interfere with the use of both (oral and reading), regarding to evaluation, assessment and testing and strategies factors were also investigated. The results show that although students did not mention some of the strategies described by O'Malley & Chamot (1990) and Oxford (1990), they mentioned others, which were not mentioned by these authors. The presence of activities planned to be used before, during and after tests is reflected in the article of a new classification for the evaluation as a whole process based on metacognitive, socio-affective and cognitive processes as well as the moments in which the act of testing can be divided: before, during and after.

Explanations of Evaluation, Assessment and Testing

An illustration of three concentric circles, Lynch (2001), provides a conceptual framework as the basis for understanding the inter-related constructs of evaluation, measurement (assessment), and testing. Figure 1 is the schematic representation of the construction of evaluation, measurement (assessment), and testing as applied in education. The conceptual framework sought to illustrate the superordinate-subordinate relationship between these concepts and demonstrate the areas of overlap (see appendix A).

According to Weiss (1972), evaluation refers to the systematic gathering of information for the purpose of making decisions. It is not concerned with the assessment of the performance of an individual, but rather with forming an idea of the curriculum and making a judgment about it. This judgment is made based on some kind of criteria and evidence. The purpose is to make decisions about the worth of instruction, a course, or even the whole curriculum. Evaluation is thus larger and may include an analysis of all the aspects of the educational system.

Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions (Patton, 1987). Likewise Lennon (p: 4) argues that, evaluation involves looking at all the factors that influence the learning process, e.g. syllabus objectives, course design, materials, methodology, teacher performance and assessment.

It is important to periodically assess and adapt your activities to ensure that they are as effective as they can be. Moreover, Evaluation can help the teachers to identify areas for improvement and ultimately help them realize their goals more efficiently. Additionally, when a teacher shares her/his results about what was more and less effective, he/she helps advance environmental education.

Evaluation enables the teacher to demonstrate his/her program's success or progress. Thus, the information the teachers collect allows them to better communicate program's impact to others, which is critical for public relations, staff morale, and attracting and retaining support from current and potential funders. Evaluations fall into one of two broad categories: formative and summative.

Formative evaluations are conducted during program development and implementation and are useful if you want direction on how to best achieve your goals or improve your program. Summative evaluations should be completed once your programs are well established and will tell you to what extent the program is

achieving its goals. Within the categories of formative and summative, there are different types of evaluation, according to the stages of your program (see appendix B).

Assessment: According to the Webster Dictionary (2017), assessment means appraisal. Lennon (p: 4) claims that assessment involves measuring the performance of our students and the progress they are making. And it helps the teachers to be able to diagnose the problems students have and to provide them with useful feedback. According to Le Grange & Reddy, (1998, p. 3), assessment occurs when judgments are made about a learner's performance, and entails gathering and organizing information about learners in order to make decisions and judgments about their learning.

As stated above, and according to Brown (1990) assessment refers to a related series of measures used to determine a complex attribute of an individual or group of individuals. This involves gathering and interpreting information about student level of attainment of learning goals. Assessments also are used to identify individual student weaknesses and strengths so that educators can provide specialized academic support educational programming, or social services. In addition, assessments are developed by a wide array of groups and individuals, including teachers, district administrators, universities, private companies, state departments of education, and groups that include a combination of these individuals and institutions. In classroom assessment, since teachers themselves develop, administer and analyze the questions, they are more likely to apply the results of the assessment to their own teaching. Therefore, it provides feedback on the effectiveness of instruction and gives students a measure of their progress. As Brown (1990) maintains, two major functions can be pointed out for classroom assessment: One is to show whether or not the learning has been successful, and the other one is to clarify the expectations of the teachers from the students.

Furthermore, assessment is a process that includes four basic components: 1) Measuring improvement over time; 2) Motivating students to study; 3) Evaluating the teaching methods. 4) Ranking the students' capabilities in relation to the whole group evaluation.

Assessment is important because it drives students learning (Brown 1990). Whether we like it or not, most students tend to focus their energies on the best or most expeditious way to pass their 'tests.' Assessment is thus the process of collecting information about learners using different methods or tools (e.g. tests, quizzes, portfolios, etc).

Testing: According to Linn (2008), one of the most commonly used assessment tools in education is to conduct tests. In another words, Lennon (p: 4) states that testing is a synonymous with formal assessment. Thus, beyond being considered as an instrument, tests can also be seen as standard procedures used to systematically measure a sample of behavior by posing a set of questions. Tests are designed to measure the quality, ability, skill or knowledge of a sample against a given standard, which usually could be deemed as acceptable or not. In educational practice, tests are methods used to determine the students' ability to complete certain tasks or demonstrate mastery of a skill or knowledge of content. Tests can take the form of multiple choices or a weekly spelling.

Manichander (2016) adds that, although tests have been interchangeably used to mean assessment or even evaluation, the distinguishing factor of a test is the fact that is a form of assessment.

Braun et al (2006) conjecture testing as the process of measuring single or multiple concepts, under a set of predetermined conditions. They are used to measure the level of students' learning. Tritschler (2000) explains a test to mean administering a given tool or undertaking a procedure to solicit students' responses as information, which provides the basis to make judgments or evaluation regarding some characteristics such as skills, knowledge, and values. Three types of tests have been identified by Skinner (2002), which can be used in determining a student's progress against the set objective(s). Tests can take the form of standardized tests, diagnostic tests, and teacher-made tests. Diagnostic tests (also referred to as analytic tests) are tests used by the teacher to get evidence detailing the learners' progress about a given subject. To undertake this, the teacher approaches this during the learning process by breaking the subjects into units. Since teachers adapt their teaching methods in their schemes of work, teacher-made tests are made by teachers. Consequently, teachers are at liberty to customize these tests. The advantage of a teacher-made test over standardized tests is that it allows further specific and individualized evaluation.

However, a downside to teacher-made tests is its ineffectiveness in determining certain parts of objectives like skills of speaking and reading. Deducing from the preceding explanations, a test can be understood as a method or tool administered to measure the levels of knowledge, ability, and skills of learners. This means

that there is some performance or activity required of either the learner or the teacher or both. More so in formulating tests, there is the need to attach the approach to the method, whereby deliberate efforts must be directed towards striking the fine balance so that the items are neither too difficult nor too simple. That way, learners will be motivated to participate.

Bachman (1990) and Lynch (2001, 351–372) in their postulation of evaluation agree that evaluation is the superordinate term to both measurement and testing. Bachman (1990) adds that measurement encompasses testing when decision-making is done through the use of a specific sample of behavior.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

There are some methods to be considered and taken into account when this article is going to be done. Likewise, In teaching and learning process, to evaluate the students proficiency, ability, knowledge or background, the teachers use different and various techniques to measure or diagnose students ´proficiency or ability on the learning of a language. In order to have a minimums idea of strength and weakness of the students it is important to apply an assessment or testing to diagnose or measuring the student's knowledge, ability and proficiency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Testing students is a process in which the teacher evaluates the ability and proficiency of the learners. Coming across with these issues, we intend to design an achievement test dealing with the second and third generation testes for elementary students aged from 11 to 14 years old. As Lennon (p: 15) claims, achievement tests are those which come at the end of a relatively, long period of learning, and whose content derives from the syllabus that has been taught over that period of time.

This test contains contents related to present simple and present continuous, personal pronouns and possessive adjectives and so on. Moreover, within this, writing and reading skills, vocabulary and grammar are associated. Due to the contents selected, the test intended to be marked in both objectively and subjectively way. Furthermore, Lennon (p. 20) argued that, the nature of the tasks in speaking and writing demand integrative language use. As it was mentioned so far, the test consists of addition (grammar), completion, multiple choice and matching elements and rearrangement (see appendix C).

Therefore, another test sample we designed for assessing language learning outcomes of the reading and writing skills (see appendix D) has the following objectives:

- To test the students' reading skills (deducing meaning from context, skimming and scanning, reading between the lines).

- To get students to summarize and paraphrase information from a text.

- To make learners develop reading speed.

- To get students to distinguish main ideas from specific details.

- To make students carry out real life tasks.

- To give students exposure to language as a whole.

The designed test is distributed in four different types of activities that learners have to develop after reading the text given about Language Learning and we find aspects from both types of tests, second and third generation. It can be considered as a mixture of aspects of both of them. The question "Find words in the text which match the definitions below" asks the learner to find specific categories of words in the text that matches the descriptions. It matches with the description of Second-Generation Tests; as it is stated by Lennon (p. 19) "questions in second generation testing normally measure one item of language, known as a discrete point", and in the case of this specific question the learners know to what grammatical category belongs the word they are looking for.

Moving in the test, we find the next question that is "Read the article above and say if the following statements are true or false. Justify the false ones, using your own words. Do not write more than 20 words in each answer." This question could be considered as Third Generation Test because it is related to giving

the learners some information taken from the reading they have already done and deciding, based on their reading comprehension, if the statement given is correct (true) or incorrect (false) and besides they are asked to say why they say it is incorrect but not using the words from the reading, instead they have to use their own words. Some examples given by Lennon (p. 20) regarding these kinds of tests include this activity: "Examples of communicative language testing tasks may be an authentic reading with some transfer of information such as correcting some notes taken from it".

The next question is "Answer the following questions using your own words. Write about 30 words in each answer." This type of question involves a deeper level of comprehension from the reader, since after reading and analyzing the text he or she has to answer these three questions based on his or her understanding, but he or she has a limitation for answering and it is the number of words asked. They are expected to prove their level of comprehension of the reading and of the questions asked, but also, they are expected to show writing skills, such as synthesizing their ideas because they are given an exact number of words, besides, they will have to show their grammar and their vocabulary for answering the questions.

The final question found in the test to be analyzed is "Fill in the blanks with words that would best complete the passage." This type of question belongs to Second Generation tests, and it consists on the learner completing blank spaces with words taken from two paragraphs of the reading. This is known as cloze test and it is considered to be an objective and integrative technique, due to the fact that from the options given to the learners to complete the blank spaces only ONE option is right and is expected to complete it; the fact of putting a word that makes sense but is not the correct one is going to lead to more mistakes in the activity. As it is expressed in the materials by Lennon (p. 47) "the technique operates beyond the sentence level, and the learner has to draw on a wide range of language sub-skills in order to complete the test successfully". Taking this into account we can see that the learner does not have to read only the words that are near the space but all the paragraphs to be contextualized and to make sure that the option he or she is choosing is the most appropriate one.

An assessment is considered an important component of the teaching-learning process. By assessing students, teachers can obtain information about the different abilities and achievement of their students. A crucial aspect that has an important role in assessment are tests, a good test is designed by considering the principles of language testing, practicality, validity and reliability just to mention some.

By far the most complex criterion of an effective test- and arguably the most important principle- is validity, "the extent to which inferences made from assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, and useful in terms of the purpose of the assessment" (Ground, 1998, p. 226). The designed test has questions and activities that learners will answer by reading and understanding the passage. It is focused on measuring the students' reading ability and not their prior knowledge on the topic from the passage; this makes the student rely on his/her reading ability to complete the test. The passage topic is interesting and engaging for the students, this makes it meaningful and appropriate for the group. The questions have been designed based on the reading, which makes most of the test answers consistent and somehow reliable.

Conclusions

This study brings about the growing need to constantly reexamine the concept of educational assessment as it has proven over the time to be an evolving one. Even if the English language taught is for specific purposes (see appendix E). Knowing that there exists, a barrage of scholarly publications regarding to the concepts of measurement, testing, and evaluation in the educational contexts, the concepts remain difficult to be understood by the educational researchers and educators as well. However, there is a great widespread agreement that, evaluation with its components of measurement and testing is fundamental to the educational practice. This study clarifies the concepts with a detailed explanation of their respective applications from the language teachers' perspectives with the hope that the stakeholders in the educational enterprise will be better equipped for the effective educational practices.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.