

Investigating the Performance of Iraqi EFL Teachers in Using Assessment in Teaching

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ملخص البحث

يشير هذا البحث إلى جزأين. الجزء الأول هو الجزء النظري، إذ سيتم مناقشة مشكلة الدراسة والفرضية، والإجراءات والهدف وحدود الدراسة. وسوف تكون هذه في الفصل الأول. وفي الفصل الثاني، هناك أربعة أقسام. القسم الأول حول تعريف التقييم والاختلافات بين التقييم والاختبار والتقييم والتغذية المرتدة. ثم سيكون هناك استكشاف لأنواع التقييم

في الجزء الثالث سيكون هناك استكشاف لنهج التقييم الذي يتم فيه تقييم التعلم، والتقييم للتعلم والتقييم الذاتي في التعلم. أما الجزء الأخير فسيكون حول مبادئ التقييم؛ فهي التطبيق العملي والموثوقية والصلاحية، والأصالة وتأثير الاختبار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم في التدريس

ABSTRACT

This research indicates two parts. The first part is the theoretical part, it will discuss the problem of the study, the aim, the hypothesis, the procedures and the limits of the study. These will be in chapter one. In chapter two, there are four sections. The first section is about the definition of assessment and the differences between assessment, test, evaluation, and feedback. Then there will be exploration to the types of assessment according to the formality, and the differences between summative and formative assessment.

In the third section there will be exploration to the approaches of assessment which are, assessment of learning, assessment for learning and assessment as learning. The last part is about principles of assessment; they are practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback.

Key words: Assessment in Teaching

Section One

1.1 Problem of the study

This study is about assessment and the different types of it. The major problem and common as well that, teachers in Iraq are focusing on the traditional assessment which is assessment of learning and somehow neglect the other types.

1.2 Aims of the study

1. Explore the types of assessment and the approaches of assessment to know the strong points and weak points of each one .
2. Decide what is the best way that teachers must use to assess students and motivate them to get benefit of the exams .

1.3 Hypothesis

Teachers use traditional way to assess their students , this way depends on collecting marks to evaluate students only .

1.4 Procedures of the study

1. There will be a theoretical explanation of the types of assessment
2. The researcher will submit a random sample of teachers and lecturers to a questionnaire about assessment

1.5 Limits

There are (12) Teachers that submitted to the questionnaire in Al-Tahrir school , Marzok Al-Awaad school , Shams Al-Hurria school and Abdualamir Al-Aaraji school, all these school are in Najaf – Iraq and

(10) lecturers in English department , College of Education , University of Kufa.

Section Two

2.1 Test , Assessment , Evaluation and Feed Back

Reader of this study must distinguish between Test , Assessment , Evaluation and Feed Back.

Many people think that testing and assessment are the same , so the term of assessment is understood wrongly at present in many educational practice (Brown,2004:p4).

2.1.1 Test

Brown defines test as “prepared administrative procedures that occurs at identifiable times in a curriculum when learners gather all their faculties to offer highest performance, knowing their responses are being measured and evaluated ” (Ibid:p4).

2.1.2 Assessment

Assessment on the other hand is “An ongoing process that composes a much wider domain” (Ibid:p4)

Assessment happens when students answer questions in different situations, comment on the subjects and give their opinions, etc. In this case teachers assess their student’s performance subconsciously and assessment maybe speech by teachers or written words. (Ibid:p4) .

Sophie (2003: p4) defines assessment as “A general term which includes all methods used to gather information about children ability, understanding, attitudes, and motivation”.

2.1.3 Evaluation

The differences is not just between assessment and test, they also between assessment, evaluation, and feed back.

Assessment has defined above, while evaluation “refers to a boarder notion than assessment [...]. Evaluation can concern a whole range of issues in and beyond language evaluation” (Lynne,2001:p222).

According to Ioannou , the evaluation’s process maens “Gathering information in order to determine the extent to which a language program meets its goal” (Sophie, 2003: p5). Teachers and parents’ opinions, text books’ quality, children attitudes and exam result are considers as an important related information. Also tests, questionnaires, text books analysis and observations can be considered as one of the most important ways of evaluation (Ibid:p5).

2.1.4 Feedback

Merriam Webster online dictionary defines feedback as “ the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event , or process to the original or controlling source” (Merriam Webster, 2011). That means feedback is a kind of information that given to the learners to improve their performance.

2.2 Types of Assessment

To distinguish between the test , assessment and teaching in a very clear way , there are some terms needs to be known and understood .

2.2.1 Informal and Formal Assessment

Informal assessment has many forms starting with incidental , comments during the lesson , for example “ good job “ , marks and signs on the homework. This type of assessment does not stop here , the way of what teacher deals with students considered an informal assessment , the duties that teacher make for the students inside the classroom is an informal assessment , even the essays and exercises are from the same kind . (Brown , 2004:p5)

Michele and Paul state that informal assessment is getting information about students' performances inside class without testing them . Assessment is continuous process because it's done in period of time , for example during one year, in opposite to formal assessment that has limited period and specific place. (Harris, McCann , 1994: p5)

While formal Assessment is that type of assessment which put into the top bazaar of skills and knowledge . It's planned to know the achievements of students. This kind of assessment happened by practicing of students. (ibid:p5) There is a question must be asked, which is “Is formal assessment the same as the test ?”. We can say that all tests are a genre or type of assessment, but we can not consider that all formal assessments are tests (ibid:p6).

2.2.2 Formative and Summative Assessment

The assessment that is done in classroom is called formative, it depends on forming the qualities of the students and their skills and to help them to grow up their skills and abilities. This kind of assessment depends on performance of students and the way that teachers deliver the information. (Brown:2004:p7). We can say that all kinds of informal assessment are formative assessment. This kind of assessment aims to measure the development of learners in language by giving comments or feedbacks or even call attention to an error. (ibid:p7).

Jayne (2000: p152) defines formative assessment as “the sort of assessment that what we do in daily basis. It is closely related to the feedback that the students received during lesson and indicates if are they are doing good or not”. This type of assessment happens during the course, for example when the teacher finished X numbers of units, he could assess their students, and this assessment is a formative assessment. The test aims to find out information about how well classes as a whole and individual students have grasped the learning objectives, how well the course content is functioning within the specified aims and objectives and future course design. (Harris, McCann , 1994: p28).

While summative assessment is the type of assessment that aims to measure the achievement of students and what they get in the long period of studying and typically it happened at the end of the year or in the half of the course that they study. It includes what students have learned, implies looking back and taking stock of how well that students have accomplished objectives. The examples of summative assessment are final exams, proficiency exams, and all the quizzes of midterm (Brown,2004:p6). Also Harris and McCann define summative assessment as “These tests are administered at the end of courses and their objective is to see if the students have achieved the objectives that set out in the syllabus” (Harris, McCann , 1994: p28).

2.2 Approaches of Assessment

The essential and the main part of teaching and learning is the assessment. The approaches of assessment that make teachers gather information and judge their students are:

- Assessment for learning
- Assessment as learning
- Assessment of learning

(nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012)

The principles of assessment for learning and assessment as learning have some common elements. In other words, Assessment for learning and assessment as learning associated in :

- Self-assessment and peer assessment
 - Strategies for students to actively monitor and evaluate their own learning
- Feedback, together with evidence, to help teachers and students decide whether students are ready for the next phase of learning or whether they need further learning experiences to consolidate their knowledge, understanding and skills. (nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012)

2.3.1 Assessment for Learning

This approach includes using evidences about what students understand, getting knowledge and what skills that they achieve, and teachers use these evidences to inform their teaching. It usually occurs through the teaching and learning process. (nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012).

AJones (2005: p4) defines assessment for learning as “ Part of classroom activities is a fundamental process required to promote learning and ultimately achievement”

Assessment for learning :

- Reflects a view of learning in which assessment helps students learn better, rather than just achieve a better mark.
- Involves formal and informal assessment activities as part of learning and to inform the planning of future learning.
- Includes clear goals for the learning activity.
- Provides effective feedback that motivates the learner and can lead to improvement
- Reflects a belief that all students can improve.
- Encourages self-assessment and peer assessment as part of the regular classroom routines.
- Involves teachers, students and parents reflecting on evidence.
- Is inclusive of all learners.

(nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012).

2.3.1.1 How to use Assessment for Learning in classroom practice

All the activities in the class room are considers as assessment. Teachers give a duties to students and ask them a questions, and learners must respond to the tasks, activities and questions, then teachers judge student’s skills, knowledge, and understanding. These are considered as evidence of learning and gradual development. The judgment happens in the course and during the lessons and require two-way dialogue, decision-making and communication of the assessment decision in the form of quality feedback to the learner on their performance. The varying of degrees between learners depends on how succssfully classroom practice have been undertaken (Ajonse,2005,11).

2.3.2 Assessment as Learning

This approach helps students to assess themselves by asking each other questions and discuss them between each other and use limit stratigies to know what the skills and knowledege they get, what can they do and how assess themselves for new learning. (nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012)

Through this approach, students can learn about themselves as learners and became aware how they learn. This approach can appear clearly when students explore their works regularly, and show their acheivemnt, and decide what is next learning will be. (Docplayer,

2016: P10). The advantages of this approach are to give students more responsibility for their own learning and monitoring future projects (Ibid:p10).

2.3.3 Assessment of Learning

It's the most popular approach that used by teachers. This approach assesses students by using evidences to know their achievement. This happens in certain point in the process of learning for example, at the end of the course, it also used to rank and grade students. The effectiveness of assessment of learning to grade and rank students depend on the reliability of activities. (nesa.nsw.edu.au, 2012).

Assessment of learning force students to make them show the achievement seems perfect, so this make students always preoccupied. Also it detracts classroom activities and prevents direct feedback to performance of students, so they can't improve their works (AJonse,2005:p1).

This approach is accepted by parents for a long time because they want good marks from their students, and this made students worry always before exams and they force themselves to keep the texts in their minds. So the aim of this approach is very limited, it just grades students according to their marks (Lorna, 2003:p2-3).

The roles of teachers in this approach :

- Show reasons for undertaking a particular assessment of learning at a particular point in time.
- Describe the intended of learning .
- Processes that make it possible for students to demonstrate their competence and skill.
- A range of alternative mechanisms for assessing the same outcomes
- Public and defensible reference points for making judgements
- Transparent approaches to interpretation
- Descriptions of the assessment process
- Strategies for recourse in the event of disagreement about the decisions.”

(Docplayer, 2016: P4-5)

2.4 Principles of Language Assessment

In this part Researchers will discuss how principles of language assessment can be applied to the formal test and all kind of assessment.

The aim of study principles is to ((testing the test or testing the assessment)) and the tools of this test are practicality reliability, validity, authenticity and wash back (Brown, 2004: p19).

2.4.1 Practicality

Practicality means that test is not expensive, has proper time to do, easy to manage, and processes of evaluation and scoring connecting with time. (Ibid:p20).

2.4.2 Reliability

“A reliable assessment constantly gives the same results the same circumstances” (McAlpine,2002:p12).

That means, If a test is given to the same students or matched under the same cases different times, it should give similar results. (Brown,2004:p20-21) There are some effects which effect on the reliability of the tests, for example, students-related reliability, this is caused by the illness, bad day , physical or psychological factors, these make the scores deviate from the true one (Mosavi,2002:p804).

Another effect is Rater reliability. This happens when the same test has different scores, this may happen due to lack of interesting in scoring criteria, in experience, or prejudice. (Brown,2004:p21). Unreliability may also as result from the condition in which the test is administrated, this is called "test administration reliability". The conditions may related to the class room arrangement, the noise outside the class or the amount of light in different parts of classroom. These causes confusion for students in listening or watching, etc. (Ibid:p22)

The last effect on reliability is "test reliability". It means the nature of test itself, this is caused by the time of the exam or the date. Many students in the exam know the answers very well, but if there is alarm in the class the answers of the students bad. (Ibid:p22)

2.4.3 Validity

Norman (1998:p226) defines validity as "The extent to which inferences made from assessment result are appropriate, meaningful and useful in term of the purpose of the assessment". For example, to measure writing ability, you may ask students to write one hundred words in fifteen minutes then simply count the words for final score, this exam is practical and reliable, but it's not valid one because it does not care about the comprehensibility, rhetorical discourse and the organization of the ideas. So, it's important to measure the knowledge of the students through the exam (Brown:2004:p22).

There are three sorts of validity and it's important to explore it. The first sort is content validity, this type ensure that the student's need of knoledege is fullfilled by the curriculam that they study, without content validty, the doubtful will be through the assessment quality and even the questions of the test through whole course, we can figure out content validty is fruitful by checking the outcomes of succesful student and how it related to the objectives of learning (McAlpine,2002:p11).

The second sort is construct validty, it means how the assessment is closly related to field that you want to assess. The field that you want to assess must have many skills that must assessment appllied on them. The example of these skills is, (Read questions including techniqal termonology). This sort must implicit with the learning objectives. So ensuring construct validty through the objectives of learning of learning that must be realted to the content assessment. (Ibid:p11)

The third sort is predictive validity, it means that the basis that made on the assessment results will be vaild and this depend on prediction. For example, you might predict someone scored an A in Biology in monthly test might perform better in the final exam than someomne who get C, if this case happen then the assessment will consider as predictive validty. The ensure of this sort depend on performance of the students and how the is actual performance on the assessment closly related to future performance on predictive measure. (Ibid:p12)

2.4.4 Authenticity

Bachman and Palmer (1996: p23). define authenticity as "the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task,". When you give a test and say an author test you mean that the exam is written in the same words that student get through the lessons. Many tests are fail to simulate the real words tasks. They may be contrived or artificial in their attempt to target a

grammatical form or a lexical item. If the items of the test generate no relationship between each other it will lack authenticity (Brown:2004:p28)

In a test authenticity may be present in the following ways:

- ✓ The language that is used in the test is natural and easy.
- ✓ Items are connectd to each other.
- ✓ Subjets are meaningful and relevant to the learners
- ✓ Task represent in actual words

(Ibid:p28)

2.4.5 Washback

Washback refers to how students prepare for the test. An example for washback happen the classroom assessment when teachers give an useful information to students to locat the weak points and strong points in learning process. Washback effects on assessments itself that is, on the prepartion of the assessment. Informal assessment can be consider as a washback because teachers give an interactive feedback to students. Formal assessment can also considers as washback but if teachers send simple letter grade or a single overall numerical score to students. (Ibid:p27-28)

Section Three

3.1 Design of the study

This study was designed as description and analytical methodology. This study is about the way and strategies that teachers do to assess their students, the answers of the questionnaire used as the experimental design of the study.

3.2 The pilot study

The pilot study was conducted as questionnaire for Iraqi EFL teachers an Lecturers in English department was administered to 12 English teachers in 6 secondary and 10 lecturers in English department in Faculty of Education in Kufa university. It designed to know how teachers assess their students and how they use assessment in their teaching.

3.3 Participant of the study

3.3.1 Teachers

The participants of the study consisted of 12 EFL teachers in 6 secondary schools and 10 lecturers in English department. They were chosen randomly from Najaf city in Iraq, (males and females). They included 12 male and 10 females. They were asked to complete the questionnaire. It's noted that most of the teachers assess their students according to the traditional way which is assessment of learning.

3.4 Tools of the Study

3.4.1 The Questionnaire

The main aim of the study was to know the way that teachers use to assess their students. The questionnaire presented to 12 teachers to check their ways of assessment by using assessment for learning or not. The questionnaire consists of 18 points, one of them is optional. It parted into 3 sections.

The first one was personal information, which was about name (optional), gender, name of the school \ college, educational qualification, years of teaching, and field of specialization.

The second section was about assessment. The questions in this section were about the ways and strategies that the teachers use to assess and evaluate their students and the nature of the questions depends on Yes\No answers, and write briefly if it is required.

The third section was about teachers themselves, which related to the activities that teachers use to develop themselves and their opinions about the problems they face.

3.4.2 Questions of the Questionnaire

The first section included 6 questions which were about personal information Name, gender, name of the school\college, educational qualification(It means the degree that teacher got), teaching experience, years of teaching, and field of specialization. The second section was related to assessment, it include 7 questions each question includes two choices to answer (either yes, or no), some questions include a range to clarify the answer.

The questions were :

- If the teacher gave regular feedback or not.
- If teacher gave special attention for weak students or not.
- If he gave extra suggestions to make good students better or not.
- If he discussed the problem with parents or not.
- If he gave assignment or not.
- If he evaluate the performance of the students at the end of the class or not.
- If he tested students regularly, it include, class test (daily), weekly test, monthly test, quarterly test, and any other test if it is found.

The questions above depend on both teachers and students, because teachers can't apply these strategies if there are no students.

The last section related to the activities of teachers that they use to develop themselves, the number of questions are 5.

- If teachers like their profession or not .
- If the teacher attended programs such as refresher course, seminars, conferences, and workshops.
- If teacher made a safe environment for his students or not
- If teacher finished daily correction or not
- The last one is about the problems that they faced.

Section Four

4.1 Overview

This section discusses the analysis of the results of the questionnaire in an attempt to improve the hypothesis that is mentioned in chapter one which is “teachers use traditional way to assess the students, this way depends on collecting marks to evaluate students only”.

4.2 Demographic characteristic of participants

Table (1) Demographic data

Category	Frequency(n22)	Percentage %
Gender		
Male	12	54.5 %
Female	10	45.5 %
Educational Qualification		
B.A	9	40 %
B.SC	3	13.6 %
MA	7	31.9 %
PHD	3	13.6%
Teaching Experience		
1-10	15	68.2 %

11-20	6	27.3 %
21-30	0	0 %
Or more	1	4.5 %

Table (1) above indicates that the majority of participants were male,(54.5%) and (45.5%) were male. For the Educational qualification most of the participants had B.A (40%), then (31.9%) had MA degree, just (13.6%) had PHD and the same percentage for B.SC degree.

Most of participants had an experience of teaching from (1-10) years this category represents (68.2%) of participants. Just (27.4%) of participant had (11-20) year of teaching. Just one of the participants had (35) years of teaching which represents (4.5%).

For the specialization of teachers, all of them specialized in English.

(10) Of the participants serve in English department in Faculty of Education in Kufa university, that means (45.5%) are lecturers.

(12) Of participants serve in secondary schools in Najaf in Iraq, that means (54.5%) are EFL Teachers.

The response of the questions reveals that most of participants have good knowledge about the assessment and evaluation of the students but they don't apply the modern type of assessment which is assessment for learning for many reasons, they related to the material, time, number of students, the environment of the place of teaching, etc.

4.3 Analysis the answers of the questions about the assessment.

Table (2) Show the percentages about the teacher's answer about applying and using assessment for learning.

Items	Yes		No	
	Frequency (n22)	Percent %	Frequency (n22)	Percent %
Do you give regular feedback on student's performance?	19	86.4%	3	13.6%
Do you give extra suggestions to make good students better?	21	95.5%	1	4.5%
Do you give special attention to weak students ?	17	77.3%	5	22.7%
Do you discuss student's problems with their parents ?	7	21.8%	15	86.2%
Are you regular to give assignment to the students ?	20	90.9%	2	9.1%
Do you evaluate the performance of the students at the end of every class	14	63.6%	8	36.4%
Do you conduct tests regularly such as				
7.a Class test	12	54.5%	10	45.5%
7.b Weakly test	10	45.5%	12	54.5%
7.c Monthly test	19	86.4%	3	13.6%
7.d Quarterly test	6	27.3%	16	72.7%
7.e Any other	2	9.1%	20	90.9%
Do you like teacher profession?	19	86.4%	3	13.6%

Items	Yes	No	Items	Yes
Are you eager to attend in service programs such as				
9.a Refresher courses	6	27.3%	16	72.7%
9.b Seminars	10	45.5%	12	54.5%
9.c Conferences	19	86.4%	3	13.6%
9.d Work Shops	11	50%	11	50%
9.e Any other	0	0%	22	100%
Is there a good and friendly environment in your school \ college?	12	54.5%	10	45.5%
Do you finish your daily corrections even if you have to sit overtime?	11	50%	11	50%

In table (2) above there are the results of the questionnaire which is about assessment, and the results were as follows:

According to the responses (86.4%) of participants give regular feedback to the performance of students while (13.6%) do not do this point. (95.5%) of participants give extra suggestions to make good students better while (4.5%) of them neglect this aspect. This is point for good students. (77.3%) of the participants give special attention to weak students, while (22.7%) of them didn't care about weak students, and this will help to make fail.

Most of the participants don't discuss the problems with the parents of the students (86.2%) while just (21.8) of them discuss the problems. And this is help students to avoid their parents and still in the low level of knowledge. (63.4%) of the participants evaluate the performance of students at the end of every class while (36.6%) of them don't do this important point. (54.5%) of the participants make a class test, while (45.5%) don't do, and this is high percent .

(54.5%) don't do weekly test this don't help to apply assessment for learning. While (45.5%) do weekly test.

Most of participant the traditional way of test which is monthly test, (86.4%) of them make monthly test, while (13.6%) don't follow monthly test. (27.3%) of participants make quarterly test, while (72.7%) don't do.

Just (9.1%) of participants made alternative way of exam for example, word spelling or reading, while (90.1%) follow the traditional way of tests. Most of participants like their job as teachers (86.4%), while (13.6%) don't like teaching.

For the service programs, just (27.3%) of the participants attended refresher courses while (72.7%) did not attend. (45.5%) of the participants attended seminars, while (54.5%) didn't attend.

Most of the participants attended conferences (86.4%), while (13.6%) did not attend. Half of the participants attended workshops, while the other half didn't. No one attended another kind of service programs. (54.5%) of participants think that there is a friendly environment around students, while (45.5%) think there is no friendly environment around

students, and this high percent. Half of participants finish daily correction, while the other half don't. Most of numbers refer that many teachers don't apply assessment for learning for many reasons. For example : the way of teaching that they follow in classroom, the students, number of students, the environments, etc.

Section Five Conclusion

It is the last chapter of this study, in the theoretical study, we can conclude that formative assessment is the best way to assess students and it relates to assessment for learning, it happen through the process of learning, it helps to avoid the errors in the future, and make the correction directly.

In the practical part, we found that a large number of the participants that have chosen randomly to answer the questionnaire don't apply assessment for learning which the one that help students to avoid the mistakes after the process of learning. They don't apply it, for many reasons, for example, way of teaching, the way of dealing with problems that face students, etc.

Most of participants face problems in teaching, they wrote it in the last point of the questionnaire which is for problems. The problems relate to many difficulties one of them due to the large number of students in one class, and student's absent that make the teachers unable to apply assessment for learning. Also the negative environment around them and other problems related to the families of the students, they don't check their children. Some students don't like English lesson. Some problems related to the time of lesson and even the holidays through the year.

So, all the factors and problems above don't help teachers to apply assessment for learning and they obliged to use traditional way of assessment which is don't need much time in assessing, that is assessment of learning.

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Appendix

The questionnaire

- Name of the teacher (optional)
- Gender : Male Female
- Name of the school \ College you are serving
:.....
- Educational Qualification : B.A \ B.Sc \ B.Com \ B.Ed , MA Or M.Sc \ B.Ed,M.Ph \ B.Ed, PHD \ B.Ed .
- Teaching Experience. Kindly indicate the No. of years
- Field of specialization:
- Do you give regular feedback on student's performance? : Yes \ No
- Do you give extra suggestions to make good students better? : Yes \ No
- Do you give special attention to weak students ? Yse \ No , If Yes How ?
State Briefly
- Do you discuss student's problems with their parents ? Yes \ No
- Are you regular to give assignment to the students ? Yes \ No \
- Do you evaluate the performance of the students at the end of every class? Yes/no
- Do you conduct tests regularly such as :
 - Class test Yes \ No
 - Weekly test Yes \ No
 - Monthly test Yes \ No
 - Quarterly test Yes \ No
 - Any Other
- Do you like teacher profession? Yes \ No
- Are you eager to attend in service programs such as :
 - Refresher courses Yes \ No
 - Seminars Yes \ No
 - Conferences Yes \ No
 - Work Shops Yes \ No
 - Any other.....
- Is there a good and friendly environment in your school \ college? Yes \ No
- Do you finish your daily corrections even if you have to sit overtime? Yes \ No
- What are the major problem you face in assessing students ? Write in brief
.....

