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Баляк А. Ю.

3 курс, с/о, група «Експеримент»

ДВНЗ «Ужгородський національний університет»

Науковий керівник – канд. філол. наук, доцент Андрусак І. В.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN EFL CLASSROOM

Nowadays there are a large number of new methods which can make assessment and evaluation of students' skills and knowledge in foreign languages more accurate and credible than ever before.

Assessment is an essential part of education. It helps the teacher to evaluate the knowledge of students, estimate the progress of the learner and decide what next steps should be taken to maintain the progress. Assessment is used to affect the student's determination to learn the language and, in the future, to develop their skills.

The problem of control over the students' level of knowledge has always been relevant for pedagogical science. Henceforth, it is one of the most studied. Forms and methods of control, their functions and specifics, together with consideration of specific subject, age, and even the type of educational institution, were subject to experimental verification [1, p. 812]. Moreover, recent shift from traditional teacher-centred EFL teaching to communicative student-centred language instruction has called for search for new types of assessment that will go in line with changes in the methodology of EFL teaching. This call for a new type of assessment, coupled with the limitations of traditional assessment, stipulates **the topicality** of our research into alternative assessment in the EFL classroom.

This paper is part of wider research that focuses on exploring the state of the art of assessment in a basic secondary school in Ukraine and alternative assessment in particular. It **aims** to outline alternative assessment in the EFL classroom regarding its definition, forms and functions.

Alternative assessment offers a new vision of assessment in EFL teaching. In particular, it reshapes assessment so that its primary focus is shifted from evaluation to diagnosis, which aims to determine the level of achievement of goals and includes control, verification, evaluation, identifying the dynamics of educational change, redefining goals and adjusting learning etc [2, p. 107].

Alternative practices place a heavy emphasis on assessing both learners' knowledge and skills, thus, provide teachers with possibilities for more effective evaluation. Moreover, this could potentially deepen their relationships with learners, which would have an enormously positive impact on their learning process because a teacher's profound understanding of the students' needs would give them more trust in their teacher's work and aims.

Some researchers define "alternative assessment" as a formative assessment procedure that has a beneficial outcome, and that aims at promoting learning. It implies that language learning lets students assess themselves and their peers by the evaluation criteria that students are aware of [2, p. 107].

Such alternative methods of assessment include formative assessment, portfolio and authentic approach. Formative assessment provides feedback to students throughout the course of studies and enables students to monitor their own progress. With this approach, students are directly involved in the process of assessment and their learning at large. It focuses on helping students achieve the expected learning outcomes that are assessed during the final assessment at the end of the course [3].

The purpose of formative assessment is testing the learners' acquired knowledge and skills and identifying their learning needs, tracking learners' progress, and testing learners' understanding of their own thinking. It provides benefits for both – the teacher and learners. By monitoring their learners' progress and identifying their needs, the teacher gets valuable insights into his/her teaching practices and areas for professional improvement. Learners also get useful feedback on their language performance, their strengths and weaknesses in particular [3].

A portfolio is a specifically planned and organized individual selection of materials and documents that demonstrates effort, dynamics and achievements. This method is considered the closest one to real evaluation, focused on the evaluation process, as well as self-evaluation. Most often, in practice, three main types of portfolios are used: general portfolio, student portfolio, and teacher's portfolio [3].

Authentic assessment is a thoughtful and reflective process that responds to each situation specifically, defying what works in one situation may not work in another. Still, there are its general principles that help the teacher with choosing certain types and methods of assessment:

1. Authentic evaluation is an ongoing process;
2. Authentic evaluation is reliable and credible;
3. Authentic evaluation is comprehensive;
4. Authentic evaluation is communicative;
5. Authentic evaluation involves the use of different evaluation methods [3].

To sum up, alternative assessment is formative by its nature involving in-process evaluation and ongoing feedback. It provides an alternative to traditional standardised forms of assessment extensively practised in EFL teaching. The authenticity of alternative assessment is realised through real-life tasks and constraints as well as through establishing links between learners' knowledge and skills.

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