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## **The importance of choosing appropriate assessment tools in language teaching and its impact to second language acquisition.**

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**Abstract.** Teachers must create a comprehensive assessment system that is relevant to the students. EFL teachers should design and use assessments according to the needs of students. Assessment is essential to improve the quality of the course. I think placement tests help teachers to measure students' ability to learn the English language. However, some scholars don't agree with that theory. Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2011) stressed that teachers should prepare and develop placement tests that yield accurate results of students while assessing their performance in colleges. I chose an existing midterm test that was used at the end of the first semester among college students in Andijan professional college of tourism and service. I criticized the drawbacks of the test and modified it according to the five principles of Brown (2004).

**Keywords.** Five principles, diagnostic tests, placement tests, norm-referenced tests, formative and summative assessment.

### **Introduction.**

Assessment of language is crucial in the learning process used to obtain information on learners' proficiency in a language. It is one of the controversial issues in the teaching process. Palamba and Banta (1999) defined assessment as the systematic collection to improve the learning and teaching process. William (2013) defined it as a bridge that connects the teaching and learning process. A teacher can find the extent of test-takers achieved from the course with the results of tests. According to Llorente and Morant (2011), the assessment helps teachers identify the weak points of students' performance. Brown (2004) considered a test as a method that examines an individual's ability, it is one of the essential parts of the teaching and learning process.

Teachers must create a comprehensive assessment system that is relevant to the students.

EFL teachers should design and use assessments according to the needs of students. Assessment is essential to improve the quality of the course. The teacher can analyze the needs of students by taking diagnostic tests in the classroom which identifies the weaknesses and strengths of learners. According to Brown (2004), there are two types of assessment, including formative and summative. Formative assessment is used during the lesson to evaluate students' skills and help them to improve their knowledge. Summative assessment is used to measure what learners have learned from the course at the end of the term or academic year. I chose an existing midterm test that was used at the end of the first semester among college students in Andijan professional college of tourism and service. I criticized the drawbacks of the test and modified it according to the five principles of Brown (2004).

### **A learner assessment profile.**

This project should provide analyzing the weak points of the existing test and the modifying version of the test in it. I chose one of the students from group 1.21. The name of the student is Amurbek (the name of the learner has been changed). He is in his eighteen and studies Andijan professional college of tourism and service. The college is situated in Andijan city, in Andijan region. Students are taught English for specific purposes in this school. There are 24 students in this group. Amurbek has better English skills than other learners in the classroom. He is an active participant in the classroom as he joins all the classroom discussions, conversations and get always better results from the classroom tests. Amurbek's nationality is Tajik, but he can speak Uzbek as well. Amurbek started to learn English from his early childhood. As we know, children start to learn English from their early age in kindergarten in Uzbekistan. They learn basic knowledge of English, such as colors, numerals, and other basic words that are used in our daily life. He attended the School N: 12 when he was 7. The first English classes started with class 1 as a mandatory subject. Pupils are taught General English at schools and teachers tend to use GTM (Grammar-Translation method) during the class. They don't use CLT (Communicative language teaching) or other modern approaches to conduct the classes.

English is one of the favored foreign languages in Uzbekistan, including German, French, Korean. Teachers use different books to conduct their lessons and use CLT, GTM, and a mixture of the other methods in Andijan professional college of tourism and service. According to new decree N:393 of Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan, candidates with an internationally recognized certificate of proficiency in a foreign language (TOEFL 72, IELTS 5,5) or with a certificate of proficiency in a foreign language (English, German, French) B2 or C1 issued by the State Testing Center under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan will receive 50 points in a foreign language and will not take a foreign language entrance test. This test is mostly held twice a year. The first one is at the beginning of the academic year, September-October, the next exam is in April-May. So Amurbek takes extra courses from English in Edu-center called "Alfraganus". Every day he has extra courses after college classes and he attends these courses to improve his knowledge of English. He has participated in different online programs during the pandemic related to tourism, such as "Shaping New Ways of Teaching English for Tourism in Uzbekistan", "International Tourism issues in Uzbekistan". He earned not only certificates but also got noble ideas about tourism issues in Uzbekistan from those online courses.

Last month, group 1.21 had a placement test. Teachers believe that placement tests allow them to find more proper and effective instruction. I think placement tests help teachers to measure students' ability to learn the English language. However, some scholars don't agree with that theory. Hughes and Scott-Clayton (2011) stressed that teachers should prepare and develop placement tests that yield accurate results of students while assessing their performance in colleges. The Placement tests are not valid not to determine the precise level of students in English. Shimizu (2001) stressed that EFL teachers should utilize placement tests in the classroom according to its criteria such as objectivity, validity, and reliability. As English teachers, we have to deliberate carefully when it comes to testing students' level of proficiency. The main purpose of this test is to identify the academic level of students. The standardized or norm-referenced test was used to compare students' proficiency levels. Norm-referenced tests

provide information about our students' performance.

### **The educational setting.**

According to the standards of the Ministry of Public education, college students' level of proficiency should be A2+ in English. The college is specialized in Tourism and service. There are four English lessons conducted every week. The lessons are designed with new methods, such as CLT, as students should be able to communicate clearly with tourists. Thompson (1996) argues that some teachers have a misconception about this method as they think that method does not involve teaching grammar. Grammar is taught indirectly by using various communication activities. English classrooms are equipped with technical tools that help teachers to have a better teaching process. English teachers conduct control works after 3 or 4 lessons to analyze students' comprehension level of the topic. Control works are designed by school English teachers to check the knowledge of students.

Andijan professional college of tourism and service is a public college. It specialized to prepare young cadres for the tourism and service sector of our country. Students can work in different areas related to service and tourism, such as hotels. Students should pass the entrance exam to study at this college. Students' should know history, mother tongue, and English. Students are divided into three groups according to their academic ability.

### **Critique of an existing test.**

The first president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, signed the 18.75 decrees "On measures to further improvement of foreign language learning system" on December 10, 2012. The law aims to improve teaching English standards in rural areas and other areas and to implement new ways of teaching methods in Uzbekistan. Teachers should use new ways of evaluating students' performance. Students of the college are trained in the specialties - tour operator, - travel agent, - ecotourism, - excursion. According to the curriculum of the college, teachers should evaluate the grammar and communicative skills of learners as the graduates of the college should be able to communicate with English native speakers.

English teachers of the college use formative assessment to provide specific feedback for students during the learning process. Using formative assessment allows a teacher to measure their own learning process and to improve their knowledge. Besides, teachers also have benefited by using formative assessment as it helps teachers to monitor students and comprehension level of students. Formative assessment findings help teachers to design the lesson, find different teaching and differentiating strategies in the classroom, according to learners' needs. Giving coherent feedback and using multiple forms of formative assessment are also good ways to motivate students and enhance their performance. Brown (2004) suggested that evidence should be precise for teachers. For instance, small group or peer observation, providing feedback in the form of a comment during the class, etc. Classroom discussions, questioning students, and constructive quizzes are the samples of formative assessment. On the other hand, summative assessment is used to assess learners' overall performance at the end of the term or year, including portfolios, final essays, structured midterm exams.

The midterm test was designed by college teachers to identify what have students learned during the first semester. There are two parts in it. The first part checks grammar-based, gap-filling tests to check the grammar knowledge of learners, the second part is a speaking test to evaluate their oral ability. There are given different questions in it which are related to the tourism industry of Uzbekistan. Students should answer both questions. Students had no difficulty with the grammar-based test as it is easy to cheat and find the answers to this type of assessment. All the questions are very easy as it consists of only 15 questions related to tenses in English. On the other hand, all the students had difficulty with speaking questions. As they were a bit complicated questions for newcomer students, they couldn't manage to answer the questions.

**Questions:**

*“What is the aim of sustainable tourism?”*

*“What are the specific factors affecting tourism development in Uzbekistan?”*

Do you support the tourist openness announced by some countries, knowing that the world has



not yet found an effective treatment or vaccine?

Amurbek and other students can't answer the questions as they have no idea about the topic. Teachers didn't take consideration into test specifications. Questions are given to assess the communication skills of students, the ability to use both knowledge and the capacity to implement that knowledge in communicative language use and to evaluate the productive skill of learners. The test is improper for students as it includes information that is not relevant to the level of students. The test should be modified as it is not valid in terms of practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback. It is sometimes quite difficult to select the right way to assess our students because each of them brings a specific condition of learning and each teacher his/her way of assessing his/her students. Summative assessment encounters a barrier which is developing a set of criteria to help describe students' performance.

The first part of the test contains very easy questions about tenses in English. The structure of the test is poor and it isn't appropriate for students' level. Terrell (1991) suggested that grammar knowledge plays a greater role in second language acquisition, but teachers should design grammar tests that are useful and effective for students learning process. Savignon (1991) suggests that teachers should test the grammar knowledge of students as it is necessary to know the structures for communication. On the other hand, Freshman students of college can't answer the speaking questions as it is so difficult and improper. There isn't given any assessment criteria in it. But it makes students think critically about the current situation of tourism in Uzbekistan. I found some improper principles when it comes to criticizing the existing test. The doability of the test is not considered as the test doesn't provide any clear instructions about how/what to do and both parts of the existing don't include any clear instructions. Teachers didn't consider if it can be fulfilled in a reasonable time in terms of **practicality**. Speaking questions are very difficult for students. It may not be expensive and time-consuming to take this test but it should consider time, resources, and of course, administration problems. It should also include the instruction about how to evaluate test takers' work. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) argue that practical tests



should consider budget, appropriate time, and have clear instruction for administration.

A valid test should measure the chosen skill of students. For instance, if teachers want to check the grammar knowledge of students, they may give well-designed grammar tests. Teachers should check the test in terms of **validity**, including content, construct, criterion, consequential, and face validity. The test results can't measure the full grammar knowledge of students in terms of content- validity as it includes only 4 or 5 tenses in it. It doesn't offer any meaningful information about learners' ability. Mousavi (2009) cited that a valid test should include the topics that students have learned.

There aren't given any clear directions and rubrics in terms of reliability, so the test is not reliable. But the condition and the atmosphere of the testing room were good in terms of **test administration reliability**. But test designers didn't consider the text reliability as it is not appropriate for test-takers ability. I think speaking is the most difficult to assess. Assessor or rater should consider learners' characteristics and needs while designing speaking tasks. However, the speaking tasks were designed correctly in terms of **authenticity** as all questions were based on the real-world situation. The questions were designed according to students' specialty and related to tourism issues. On the other hand, it is much difficult for students to answer questions.

***For instance:***

*Most local hospitality and tourism enterprises hardly engage in corporate social responsibility programs within their location. Is this entirely proper?*

**Advantages of the existing test.**

One of the advantages of the speaking task is that it makes students to think deeply about the current issues of tourism and helps teachers to check students' critical thinking ability.

Secondly, the task is related to the real-life contexts and teachers can evaluate the real oral ability of students. The task is also useful for students as it provides meaningful information it. The questions were designed according to students' specialty and related to tourism issues.

Third, the test helps students to consolidate their grammar knowledge and it is very useful to improve their communication accuracy in the learning process.

### **Disadvantages of the existing test.**

First, the test results can't provide accurate information about test takers' ability, and raters have no clear criteria for how to evaluate the speaking performance of students.

Second, the rater should consider students' levels and needs while designing speaking tasks. Both tasks are not suitable for the proficiency level of freshman students of the college as the first one is too easy and the second is too difficult to answer. A student may not be able to answer the questions as they have lack vocabulary related to tourism.

Third, assessors didn't consider the assessment principles while designing the test. Brown (2010) suggests that all types of assessments can be successful when they meet the requirements of learners. It is not checking just the speaking ability of test-takers as it should identify students' ability how they can interact with the target language.

### **The modified version of the test.**

According to Kosimov (2021), teaching foreign languages and assessment are inseparable processes. They compliment each other. Brown (2010) differentiated two types of assessment, including formative and summative assessment. As we know, each type of assessment should help students to improve their learning process and consolidate the topics that they have learned. The existing test missed the most important aspects of testing and assessment, of course, the principles of assessment, including washback, practicality, validity, authenticity, and reliability. Teachers can't provide proper feedback for students as the tasks are not relevant and appropriate. Nancy Harris and Laura Kuehn (1994) stressed that using **appropriate rubrics** helps students to specify their learning objectives and providing a set of instructions for assessing learners' oral performances makes it easy for teachers to grade learners with valid scores. However, teachers should design tests that include familiar topics for students, as it may lead to dissatisfaction of

students from the assessment.

Hughes (2016) stressed that a speaking test can be utilized in the classroom when it includes several factors, including **reliable scoring**, and it should be based on real-life context. All the assessment types, including language testing, formative and summative assessment in the classroom should be reliable in terms of reliability. The format of assessment doesn't suitable for students in terms of **student-related reliability**, since teachers haven't explained their expectations from students and the requirements for students' responses. The second speaking task is impractical, since it may take a longer time to answer such complex questions.

For example,

*Most local hospitality and tourism enterprises hardly engage in corporate social responsibility programs within their location. Is this entirely proper?*

First, students should answer tell some information what are the local hospitality and tourism enterprises? Second, why they don't want to engage in corporate social responsibility programs? Third, what are the social responsibility programs? Finally, students should answer whether these programs are entirely proper or not and why. It is invalid for students in terms of **content and face validity** since students haven't had such topics in their first semester and it can't assess the speaking skill, since it measures students' critical thinking ability not the level of their oral speech. On the otherhand, it helps learners to develop their critical thinking ability.

The grammar test doesn't involve any clear instructions in it, which may cause the failure of students from the exam. There were given only test questions, and students should fill the gap in the table with their answers. The teacher should follow several significant steps while creating the assessment, including determining what skills should be evaluated according to the objectives of the curriculum and analyzing the results of the previous assessment. So I tried to modify half of the grammar and the speaking part of the test.

#### **Original version of the existing test.**

#### **Grammar test.**

N	Tenses	Time	Auxiliary verbs	Sentence
1	Present simple	_____	_____	I do not like dogs _____
2	_____	_____	Am, is , are	I am reading a book _____
3	Present perfect Continuous	Past up to now	_____	_____
4	_____	Now	_____	I am not sleeping _____
5	Future Simple	_____	_____	I will do it.

### Speaking questions.

#### Card 1

1. “What is the aim of sustainable tourism?”
2. “What are the specific factors affecting tourism development in Uzbekistan?”
3. Most local hospitality and tourism enterprises hardly engage in corporate social responsibility programs within their location. Is this entirely proper?

#### Card 2

1. “What is the aim of sustainable tourism?”
2. Do you support the tourist openness announced by some countries, knowing that the world has not yet found an effective treatment or vaccine?
3. What do you prefer the most when traveling to another place?

### The modified version of the existing test/assessment.

#### Instructions for the grammar test.

Complete the table below. There are given ten questions about grammar tenses in English. Some parts have been removed from the text. Put the correct words from the box into the gaps. Complete the task in 20 minutes. Read the following sentences and identify the tense and use the appropriate form of the verb. Each question carries one mark. The modified version of the speaking task. First part.

*You will be given questions about tourism. You should answer all three questions. You will need to speak for 6 minutes (2 minutes for each question) Keep talking as much as you can. I will stop you when time is over. Start your answer as soon as you listen to the questions. Each question carries two marks.*

**Card 1.**

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the tourism industry?
2. What are the main factors affecting tourism?
3. Is it possible to book a holiday to a seaside resort on the other side of the world from home?

**Card 2.**

1. What means of traveling do you know?
2. What countries depend mainly on tourism?
3. Why is it essential to develop the tourism industry?

**Card 3.**

1. What problems caused by tourism?
2. What countries depend mainly on tourism?
3. Why do most travelers carry a camera with them?

**Card 4.**

1. What does traveling give us?
2. How does tourism affect society?
3. What are the positive and negative effects of tourism?

Score	
1	Student doesn't seem to understand, and... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No response given. Respond in English</li> </ul>
2	Student seems to understand, and... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can respond with one word answers</li> </ul>
3	Student seems to understand and respond... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• But answer incorrectly.</li> <li>• With lots of guidance and support</li> <li>• In broken speech or w/English interference</li> </ul>
4	Student can understand and respond... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately, but minimally.</li> <li>• With some hesitation, but clearly</li> <li>• With some repetition/guidance</li> </ul>
5	Student can understand fully and respond... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriately and sufficiently</li> <li>• And correct him/herself when he/she speak</li> </ul>
6	Student can understand fully and... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond appropriately</li> <li>• able to correct himself as he speaks</li> <li>• elaborate and extend with his response.</li> </ul>

## **Second part.**

**You will be given a topic card. You will have 2 minutes to prepare your talk, and you can take notes if you want. You will be given a sheet of paper and a pen to take notes. You will need to speak for 2 minutes. This part of the speaking carries four marks, and you will be evaluated according to your response to the question.**

Do you think Uzbekistan is a good place for a vacation? You should say:

1. explain why it is/ it is not a good place
2. describe a place where tourists should visit
3. Describe what is the best season for traveling in Uzbekistan.

Designing an applicable and practical test for students is the most significant part of the teaching and learning process. Tomlinson (2005) stressed that a good grammar test provides a chance to reflect on the knowledge and improve the grammatical ability of students. The grammar test measures the grammatical knowledge of students. A new modified version of the test can be more practical than the existing test as it is easy and include clear instructions. There are several advantages of the modified version of the test.

**1. Clear instruction.** The grammar test and speaking tasks include clear instructions to follow. It increases the practicality (a reasonable amount of time, instructions can easily be understood) and validity (content-related validity, consequential validity) of the test, backwash (assessment helps learners to consolidate the previous topics and provide crucial information about tourism)

**2. Diagnostic test.** The test is a diagnostic that helps teachers to find the weaknesses of students. Since it provides a general assessment of test-takers and helps identify specific ways to improve the teaching process.

**3. A clear rubric.** Clear rubrics, on how to evaluate students' performance. Students will beware of assessing criteria, and the teacher can assess the modified version of the test without

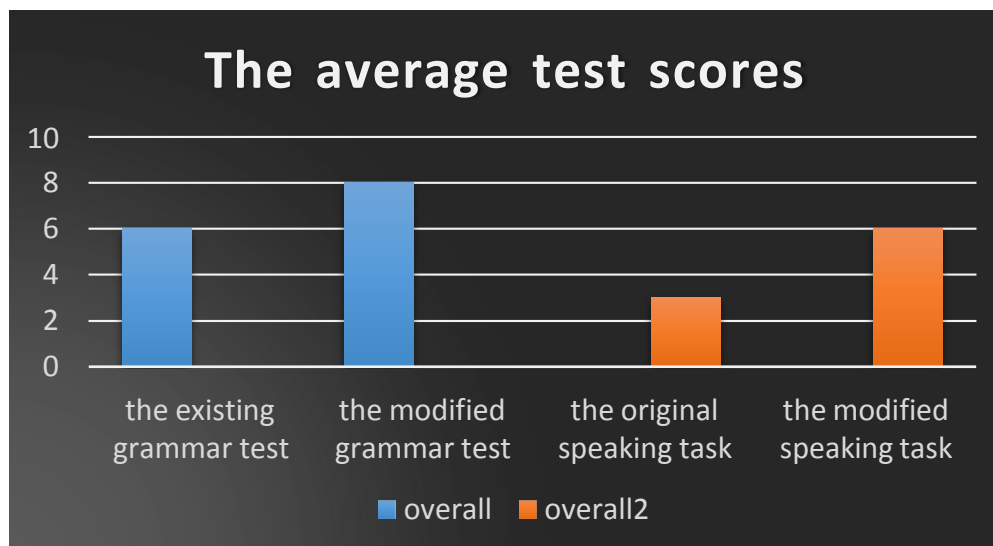
difficulty.

**4. Based on real-life.** Authenticity is the most important aspect of the assessment. The speaking tasks include linguistic items in context and correlate to the target language and curriculum of the program.

EFL teachers should know the level of proficiency of their students and lead them to increase the learning process. All the tasks, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing should be based on the real-world situation in terms of authenticity. Listening tasks should involve different situations and design by considering the cultural background of students. Speaking tasks should elicit various features, including monologue speech, the interaction between test-taker and examiner. According to Lindsay Miller (2003), teachers should provide pre-listening, while-listening, and post-listening activities. They should also involve visual cues in the classroom to improve the English listening skills of students. Brown (2010) stressed that teachers should focus on the structure and criteria of tests. He also claims that placement test is important since it can support teachers to identify the level of students.

I changed the first grammar test from a paper-based test into an online test. I used Kahoot online tech tool as it is easy for students to use it. I took the new modified version of the test in the group and surveyed students to know their opinions about the new version of the test. Amurbek and his groupmates were satisfied with the modified test since it includes direct instruction in it. The results of the tests were better than the previous one. Amurbek noted that the test was more engaging and effective for him. He also claimed that the form of grammar test was well-organized and clear. In addition to this, he was pleased that students were interviewed individually during the speaking test since they didn't lose themselves. The questions were simple than the existing test.





	Types of students responses	What this response represents about the student's knowledge or skill
<b>Level 4</b>	The student uses strong delivery to respond to the question and include strong information to support the conclusions.	<i>On Target:</i> Student has the knowledge or skill represented at the learning progression level that this item aligns with.
<b>Level 3</b>	The student uses generally correct delivery to respond to the question, but does not include much supporting information.	<i>Below Target:</i> Student has <b>slight misunderstanding/incomplete</b> knowledge
<b>Level 2</b>	The student's delivery is understandable and he/she states the question but fails to provide support.	<i>Substantially Below Target:</i> Student <b>substantial misunderstanding/ large gaps in</b> knowledge
<b>Level 1</b>	The student's delivery is difficult to follow and he/she does not state the question nor does the student provide much support.	<i>Irrelevant/Off topic answer</i>

### Conclusion.

To reach the conclusion, I have to admit that modifying the existing test or another types of assessment is one of the most difficult tasks for me, since you should consider five assessment principles (practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback) while designing your test. Brown (2010) stated that “Quizzes, tests, final exams, and standardized proficiency tests can all be scrutinized through these five lenses.” Designing appropriate and authentic tests in language testing is one of the main issue in teaching process, since you should consider your learners’ cultural background, age, levels, and their needs. As I mentioned above, I modified the diagnostic grammar test to evaluate students’ weaknesses and strengths. My participant informed that using such modified tests can improve learners’ knowledge in grammar and vocabulary. Brown (2010) stated that integrating assessment with its instruction is very crucial to design effective tests in language testing.

Teachers should also consider the conditions in the classroom in terms of reliability, including the quality of test papers, temperature and lighting conditions in the classroom. Time setting, the cost

of test should be suitable for students in terms of practicality. Content objectives of the test need to be clearly identified. I think most of the tests and other types of assessment are invalid for students in Uzbekistan. Modern educational centers and modern private schools consider the principles of assessment. Ordinary public schools use the tests without checking whether it is effective or not, since most of them don't know how to design and prepare formative and summative assessment. I think Ministry of higher and secondary specialized education need to develop principles of language testing to improve the educational system of our country. I have gained a lot of information on how to design the test and its features. I will use the knowledge in the foreseeable future career that I have learned in this course.

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