Teaching and Learning: Additional Languages:
Articulating teaching and testing
Presentation outline

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• Some Inadequate Practices in Teaching and Testing
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Key terms
Main Test Types

- **Entrance Test (Exam)**: It is used for admission of students at educational institutions, mainly universities.

- **Placement Test (Exam)**: It determines the level at which a student would be admitted (e.g. beginner level, low intermediate, intermediate...) at an educational institution.

- **Achievement Test (Exam)**: It measures the skills and knowledge acquired following a period of instruction (e.g. End of semester exam, A level exam, Baccalaureate exam...).

- **Progress Test**: It is longitudinal and feedback oriented. It takes place at regular intervals (e.g. twice a semester).
Test Criteria

- **Reliability:** A test is consistent within itself and across time. It is not a “faulty balance”.

- **Validity:** A test measures what it sets out to measure (i.e. outcomes), (e.g. a test in reading comprehension measures students’ reading strategies, not memorised answers).

- **Adequacy:** An adequate test is both reliable & valid.

- **Test Results:** An adequate test allows teachers (researchers and decision-makers) to make inferences, reach conclusions, and then opt for future actions.
Test Washback

• **Positive washback:**
  - Test (Tests) corresponds to the syllabus goals.
  - **Consequences:**
    - Reliability and Validity are ensured.
    - Motivation is affected positively: success breeds success.
    - Confidence in achieving better results.

• **Negative washback:**
  - Mismatch between syllabus goals and test focus.
  - **Consequences:**
    - Test Validity is undermined.
    - Motivation is affected negatively:
      - Feeling of helplessness.
    - Test Results are of little consequence for future actions.
Problematic

• Newly enrolled University students of English and of other subjects have a very low linguistic competence.

Consequences:

• English Language Teaching programmes at the university level are often remedial programmes.

• Though Saudi University students obtain high grades, they often fail most Entrance tests and Placement tests.
Questions

1. What are the main causes for the discrepancy between students’ grades and their proficiency level?

2. Which teaching and testing strategies can teachers adopt to reduce this discrepancy?

3. How can teachers reduce negative Test Washback?
Aims

- **This presentation seeks to:**
  - Raise teachers’ awareness about the importance of articulating teaching and testing within the lesson and across lessons.
  - Invite teachers to revise their practices in producing and implementing progress tests and achievement tests.
  - Invite teachers to consider introducing dynamic teaching-testing.
  - Invite decision makers to consider possible reforms?
Teaching as a cyclical process

In Theory teaching and testing follow:
• A Cyclic / Helical progression

1. Low Learner autonomy
   1. Beginners’ Level/Micro-context
   2. Advanced Level / Macro-context
Assessment for Beginners & Intermediate Level Learners

Assessment is:

i. At the micro-level: (“progress tests”):

A. Assessment is at each phase of the lesson(s)
B. Progress tests follow each unit and or set of units.

Both A and B are part and parcel of the teaching learning processes.

ii. At the macro-level (“achievement tests”):
Assessment follows and (or) precedes each syllabus implementation and each Educational Level.

(l) contributes to (ii)
Inadequate Practices in Teaching and Testing:

• Teachers and students do not often cover the syllabus (textbook).
  • Gaps in the students’ competencies (skills).
    → • A fractured interlanguage

• Teachers negotiate with their students the pages on which the tests will be about.
  • Students memorise (revise from) the agreed upon pages.
    • Reliability and validity jeopardised

• Neither high grades nor low grades reflect students’ actual competence.
  • Tests are polluted
• Students do not become autonomous; they do not take initiatives.
Suggestions and Recommendations

For Teachers:
• Concentrate more on inductive teaching.
• Articulate teaching and testing (adopt a cyclical progression)
• Evaluate students’ mastery of skills and knowledge at the junctures of activities in the lesson and across lessons.
• Introduce challenging exercises/activities while teaching-evaluating.
• Produce adequate progress tests (that are valid and reliable).
• Analyse students’ results in progress tests to introduce remedial teaching activities.

For Decision Makers:
• Consider introducing regional exams at the end of Elementary School Level.
• Consider introducing national (or regional) exams at the end of Intermediary School Level.
Useful References


