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Assessment and Evaluation of Foreign Language Knowledge

Abstract

One of the most important stages of the educational process is measurement and evaluation. Assessment as a source of feedback is a topic that should be emphasized in the process of learning a foreign language. The foreign language teaching process is dynamic and open to changes. One of the main factors guiding this process and creating changes is the developments recorded in scientific meetings. Developments in this direction, which affect every element of the foreign language teaching process, also directly affect the measurement and evaluation stage. The differentiation of measurement and evaluation techniques and tools in line with the changes is a natural result of this. The reflection of the proposed innovations on the theoretical level in applications is a process that requires effort. The article deals with measurement and assessment problems.

Keywords: *measurement, innovation, assessment, methods and techniques, language acquisition*

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Xarici dil biliklərini ölçmə və dəyərləndirmə

Xülasə

Təhsil prosesinin ən mühüm mərhələlərindən biri ölçmə və qiymətləndirmədir. Geribildirim mənbəyi kimi qiymətləndirmə xarici dilin öyrənilməsi prosesində vurğulanmalı olan mövzudur. Xarici dilin tədrisi prosesi dinamikdir və dəyişikliklərə açıqdır. Bu prosesi istiqamətləndirən, dəyişikliklər yaradan əsas amillərdən biri elmi toplantılarda qeydə alınan inkişaflardır. Xarici dil tədrisi prosesinin hər bir elementinə təsir edən bu istiqamətdəki inkişaflar ölçmə və qiymətləndirmə mərhələsinə də birbaşa təsir göstərir. Dəyişikliklərə uyğun olaraq ölçmə və qiymətləndirmə texnika və vasitələrinin fərqləndirilməsi bunun təbii nəticəsidir. Təklif olunan yeniliklərin nəzəri səviyyədə təbiiqlərdə əks olunması zəhmət tələb edən prosesdir. Məqalə ölçmə və qiymətləndirmə problemlərindən bəhs edir.

Açar sözlər: *ölçmə, qiymətləndirmə, innovasiya, dəyərləndirmə, metod və üsullar, dil mənimsəmə*

Introduction

The unique complex and multi-element structure of the teaching process of English as a foreign language turns the implementation of these principles into a field of endeavor in itself. The main purpose of teaching English as a foreign language is to acquire and develop the communication skills, which consist of the skills of understanding and explaining, both in oral and written levels. In addition to listening-comprehension, speaking, reading-comprehension, and writing skills, subjects such as vocabulary and grammar have their own ways of working. This naturally requires the development of measurement and evaluation tools in their own way (Oxford, 2014).

It is this structure that complicates the measurement and evaluation stage in the foreign language teaching process.

Research

Efforts to improve the quality of teaching English as a foreign language in our country, therefore, must pay close attention to the measurement and evaluation stage, because a qualitative leap can only be realized when it includes all the stages that make up the language teaching process. Making determinations about methods, content and techniques related to measurement and evaluation applications in foreign/second language teaching requires defining teaching/learning concepts first. Assessment in foreign language teaching is a process that begins before teaching practices in order to make decisions about the planning and content of teaching. The main goal is to improve the foreign language teaching program and facilitate learning. Such decision-making processes are completed by systematically gathering information about the subject and interpreting this information in accordance with the criteria related to the field (Narrog, 2015: 28).

Traditional and Alternative Assessment Traditional and alternative education debates inherently involve traditional and alternative assessment approaches and applications. Before looking for the answer to the question of how to measure and evaluate, which is the focus of this research, it is necessary to examine traditional and alternative measurement and evaluation approaches and applications and their effects on education. In this context, first of all, it is important to define some important terms related to the field in order to avoid confusion. Therefore, first of all, the definitions brought to the concept of measurement and evaluation will be briefly reviewed. Measurement is a description (identification) process and is based on the comparison of the measurement result with a criterion (Oxford, 2014).

The terms evaluation, assessment, test/testing are used in the survey of measurement and evaluation in English teaching/learning without the distinction between measurement and evaluation in Turkish. Measurement/exam is a term that overlaps in meaning with the English term test, in the context of referring to the same activities in the application (Ismayilli, 2023: 28). The terms evaluation and assessment can be met with the term evaluation. For example, Harmer and Bachman discussed evaluation under the title of evaluation and defined it as a systematic information gathering process for decision making.

However, Nunan defined the concepts of evaluation and assessment separately while discussing the concept of measurement and evaluation. Evaluation is defined as the collection and interpretation of information in order to decide on the curriculum, while assessment is defined as the collection and interpretation of information about the student as a subheading of the concept of evaluation. Rea-Dickins and Germaine state that evaluation is done to guide classroom practices related to teaching/learning, while testing is related to the student. Bailey discussed the concepts of measurement and evaluation under one title (assessment) while listing the purposes of evaluation. Assessment is an information gathering tool used to determine a student's language learning potential and capacity and to measure proficiency in a second language (Brindley, 2001). Determining the meaning of the terms related to the concept of measurement and evaluation is important because it makes it easier to understand the content of the ongoing discussions. It can be clearly seen that this system of processes is an indispensable element of foreign language teaching when looking at some prominent evaluations related to the definitions of measurement and evaluation as a concept, its place and importance in foreign language teaching/learning.

In foreign language teaching, each of the implementation stages that must be carried out in line with goal setting, planning, and goals is interwoven with measurement and evaluation work. Foreign language exams are an indispensable part of the educational process. Determining the level of achievement of the set goals of the student and the teacher in the teaching process can be monitored by measuring and evaluation activities. Decisions on changes to be made in educational goals, content and applications and the quality of changes can be made through a series of measurement and evaluation studies. "Language tests are important as sources of information about learning and teacher effectiveness," as Davies puts it, in foreign/second language learning, measurement and evaluation (testing) is the lifeblood of language teaching.

Language tests also provide useful information to the language teaching process as a source of information, learning and teaching to evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches in language teaching. Language tests are a means of providing a method for research and experimentation in the field of language teaching and acquisition. Decision-making about success, failure level or change, goal setting and information gathering in line with this goal require method determination. The nature of the goal determines what kind of knowledge is needed and the method of obtaining it. For example, making a decision to recreate or reuse a specific educational activity without making any changes can be done with a series of measurement and evaluation activities. That is, just as the evaluation reasons are different, these reasons also determine the evaluation process and method.

Brady, one of the authors who opened the discussion of the concept of assessment from a very different angle, states that all assessments are designed to discriminate against certain ethnic and social groups based on culture, therefore curriculum content is regulated according to the interests and levels of socially dominant groups. In the definition of different approaches, Shohamy's thoughts on measurement and evaluation can also be given. In the introductory part of the author's book, the author claims that the tests (the author refers to the traditional measurement and evaluation concept as 'test') are not prepared only for educational purposes or for the purpose of measuring knowledge, as in the general discourse, but on the contrary, they are prepared and applied to achieve certain goals (Babayev, 2022:17). According to this argument, exams are not only a tool to force teachers to teach and students to learn in the educational and social spheres, but also to define 'knowledge', to include, to exclude, and to drive existing power/power to accept certain policies.

Tests are used for control, screening, classification, punishment, threat and demonstration of authority. Intertwined with political, social, educational and economic contexts, exams are a good tool to see the priorities of power and authority. Shohamy stops his meetings in this area with Foucault's explanations about the concept of 'test'. Therefore, it is important to review Foucault's concept of "test" in general terms. Traditional measurement/'test' results may not accurately and completely reflect what a student can do. They are used to select or exclude, to judge success and failure in order to perform a judicial role.

Traditional assessment used as benchmarks is often developed and administered by people outside the learning process. Rather than providing traditional measurement form factor returns, they provide discrete numerical notes. Traditional measurement can be defined as a teacher-centered, time-limited and a process that makes students passive as a series of procedures where the student has only one chance to show his abilities. Exams are anxiety provoking and this affects the test taker's learning process and self-image (Ismayilli, 2024: 18) Since they are applied to large groups of students and are not individualized applications, they are not prepared according to the needs of each student. With its strict rules and practices, it is a professional field that focuses on the exam, not the student. Tests are a tool used by the authorities to tell an individual what he should know and how he should behave as a means of discipline and control. Traditional approaches do not focus on the feelings and effects of the exam experience on the individual. In this approach, exams are used to determine the educational institutions to which the individual will be accepted, professional fields of study, the country to which they will be accepted, whether or not they will win a scholarship or the quality of the scholarship, whether or not they will be accepted as a "successful" person in society.

McNamara points out that such critical approaches to traditional foreign/second language exams given above are radical rather than reformist approaches that examine the social and political roles of exams, and do not provide an answer to what can be done for exams in which large numbers of students from many countries participate, such as the TOEFL exam. Human needs have also changed in the changing world in line with scientific and technological developments. New requirements have necessitated new needs analyses, new methods and techniques in acquiring the skills necessary to gain functionality. In this context, alternative approaches in foreign language teaching and assessment can be defined as the work of meeting new requirements.

Alternative measurement and evaluation approaches care about student autonomy and awareness and help to learn with new methods and techniques. In the alternative evaluation process that overlaps with the principles of the student-centered approach, students become individuals who can evaluate their own learning and development and plan how to learn as active participants in this process. As part of teaching and learning, alternative assessment covers variables such as student development, needs, interests, learning styles and is an ongoing process. Since there are no one-time exams, it reduces the student's anxiety level and increases the sense of success.

Conclusion

The teaching of English as a foreign/second language has undergone changes in order to respond to the changing needs of concepts, approaches, content and applications, and this process has brought about theoretical discussions in many areas. In other words, method discussions about what content to teach in English teaching and how, due to the nature of this field, also started discussions about the concept of measurement and evaluation. It is natural that the measurement and evaluation approach, content and techniques in English teaching are formed according to English teaching methods, content and applications. In this context, evaluating the change and development processes of measurement and evaluation activities as a historical process will help to evaluate today's applications more clearly.

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