INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS OF FORMING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Zhorabay Asem
assem.zhorabay@gmail.com
4th year student in "Foreign Languages: Two Foreign Languages"
L.N.Gumilyov ENU, Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan
Supervisor – R.F. Zhusupova

Formation of intercultural communicative competence, readiness to participate in foreign language communication, is central purpose of the teaching of foreign languages. Competence is understood as ability to perform activities on creatively formed motivation, personal qualities, ability to use regulatory acceptable patterns of behavior in the professional field. Mastering competence creates a basis for the development of professionalism and skill [1, p.33].

The term communicative competence was created by Dell Hymes [2, p.35] on the basis of specific concept of N. Chomsky "linguistic competence", which is used by scientist to nominate a inner mental grammar of the individual, arguing that language is presented here in the form of an abstract sets of rules, which is most clearly reflected in the individual unconscious intuitive representations of language [3, p. 154]. The communicative competence D.Hymes defined as inner knowledge situational appropriateness of the language.

The primary purpose of assessment is to support student learning. The process of assessment when it is done well it engages students in behaviors and activities that support them to learn. The important point is that well-organised and thoroughly thought assessment tasks also provide scope for students to show their level of achievement, the extent to which the learning objectives have been achieved.

The orientation of the education system of Kazakhstan to the competence approach in the content of education is reflected in the teaching of foreign languages in the formation of cross cultural competence as an indicator of formation of a person's ability to participate effectively in a foreign language on intercultural communication level.

There are always be some subjectivity in assessing IC but, our goal is to give some guidelines to educators who want to consider language teaching in terms of the appropriation of another culture that is the development of cultural awareness, respect of other cultures, openness of oneself to diverse cultural experiences, etc. Hopefully, this chapter takes us one step forward in the discussion of assessment issues and proposes guidelines to help teachers with IC evaluation. Until recently, assessment of IC had focused generally on the assessment of learning or knowledge, carried out primarily by means of so-called objective testing of knowledge, the most common instrument of which is pen and paper examinations; the objective tests are then used to measure the degree to which students have learned certain cultural facts. But, assessing IC should imply that we take into consideration all three dimensions of IC: not only knowledge but also the skills "knowing how" and the attitudes "being" as described in the previous section.

Culture has been taught as bits and pieces of information included in foreign language studies. Culture testing has traditionally measured the scattered factual knowledge of culture, rather than insights or awareness of the essence of a culture. Despite of many efforts over the last three decades, the language teaching profession has not succeeded in developing a valid standardized measuring process for culture learning. However, difficulty doesn't mean impossibility in assessing IC. As long as reasonable goals for intercultural communication are set up for high school students, it is

feasible to assess their competence in intercultural contacts.

In traditional terminology, this makes classroom assessment formative, rather than summative. As Brookhart argues, assessment and learning are integrated within the classroom [4, p.7]. She sees this in terms of Vygotsky's notion of the zone of proximal development, or 'that space between what the individual can accomplish independently and what he or she can do with assistance' [5, p.34-41]. Teachers are constantly assessing, but the primary purpose of the assessment is to inform better teaching and more efficient learning. In the classroom the assessor is therefore deeply involved in the assessment, and cares about the outcomes of the assessment. There is nothing distant or neutral about intervening in the lives of learners.

Language tests are designed by teachers with a particular skill and training in test design, or by people who specialize in test design. This is not because a test task always looks different from a classroom task but because a test task is usually designed with certain properties in mind. These are not necessary in the class, where any task is an opportunity for assessment that leads to an adjustment of the learning process.

Formative assessment has not always been the focus of attention in ESL/EFL studies. Before 2000 a number of studies were done about classroom assessment in regular school programs, but very few studies were conducted about this topic in EFL/ESL context [6, p.20-25]. Dickins and Gardner pointed to this neglect too and said that in compare to other topics in language testing, formative assessment had received less attention [7, p.215-243]. However, it should be said that Bachman 1990 was one of the first scholars who discussed about the complexities and difficulties of formative assessment. He stated that types of feedback received by the students could affect the results of future formal tests. Bachman put more emphasis on was formal tests, and the construct of formative assessment were not discussed by him [8, p.63]. In his later book with Palmer, he focused on feedback and the relation between "formative evaluation" [9, p. 98] and formal tests. Shohamy was another scholar to take an initiatory step in discussion of formative assessment. He named some methods such as portfolios and projects which teachers used to put less reliance than on formal tests and to capture different aspects of language competence [10, p. 188-211]. However, the construct and practices of formative assessment in EFL/ESL context were roughly discussed before 2000 in spite the fact that its usefulness and help had been long been recognized by both teachers and researchers.

Generally there are methods of Intercultural Competence Assessment as known as three components of IC: knowledge, attitude and skills. All these skills involve cognitive science, affection and behavioral science, therefore, the ways of assessing each of them varies.

Since the students are usually exposed only to "sample" cultural incidents, the observations must, therefore, be followed by teacher-guided explanations. Factual knowledge on the history, geography, religion, art and so on of the target culture has long been included in English teaching and traditional written examination with blank filling, multiple choices, true or false questions can effectively assess students' mastery of this knowledge. Cultural knowledge on the micro level such as life style and cultural values can directly influence people's verbal and non-verbal communication and should be the key objective of culture teaching in school education. However, this type of cultural knowledge is hard to assess because of its vast content and subtleness of perception. For the assessment of cultural knowledge on the micro level, this paper gives the following suggestions.

First, assessment of cultural knowledge on the micro level should be placed in specific situations. Cultural knowledge and the situation in which an intercultural encounter happens are inseparable. The explanation of a communicative behavior varies with situations. The situation decides whether a communicative behavior is appropriate and consistent with cultural norms.

Second, the content of cultural knowledge should be clearly defined. What have been taught should be assessed. The content of assessment limits the tasks that the students are realistically asked to perform on a test. Cultural knowledge assessed should focus on the knowledge which can influence intercultural communicative behaviors.

Third, knowledge on host culture should be included in the assessment. For a long period of time, host culture is ignored in culture teaching. However, without a deep understanding of one's

own culture, a person's knowledge on intercultural communication is incomplete and unsystematic, which will in turn affect the efficiency of his intercultural communication.

Students should use the language in order to learn it, and if they are graded all the time, they do not have the opportunity to do so. They should receive feedback, analyze it, and have the chance to test their hypotheses based on the feedback received. This is the very basic requirement to learn a language. Summative formal assessment makes use of traditional paper-and-pencil tests and is just followed by scores without any further feedback. They are usually done at the end of a course which is so stressful for students and teachers. Lack of feedback results in lack of diagnostic information, and students do not clearly know about their weak points. But, students' performance highly depends on appropriate feedback from the teacher which is the defining feature of formative assessment. Teachers can make use of formative assessment to prevent negative wash back effect of formal testing; which is the separation of teaching and learning in the eyes of students.
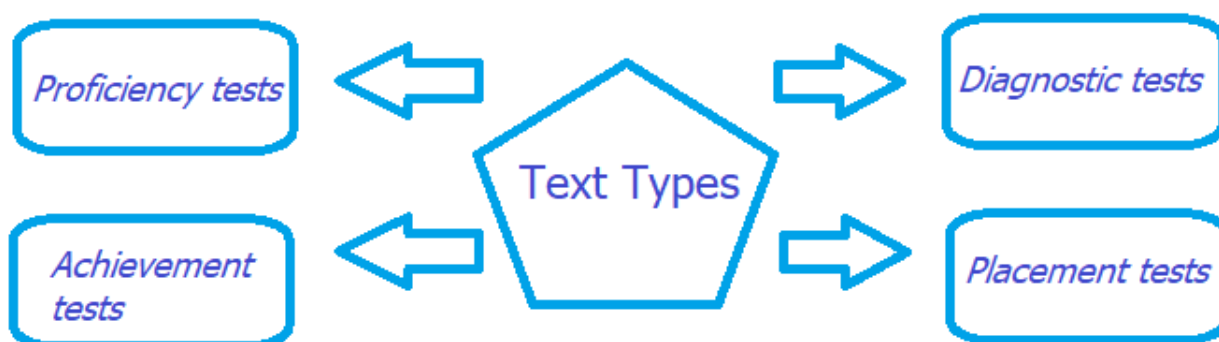

Figure 1. Test types

Pic.1 Types of testing

Proficiency tests measure learners' language ability regardless of the training they may have had or the vocabulary and topics they may have studied. Proficiency tests are not based on the contents of a language course but rather on the general knowledge of the target language and culture. These tests check learner levels in relation to general standards. They provide a broad picture of knowledge and ability. In English language learning, examples are the TOEFL and IELTS exams, which are mandatory for foreign-language speakers seeking admission to English-speaking universities.

In addition, the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) checks students' knowledge of Business English, as a prerequisite for employment.

Achievement tests are directly related to the language courses taught to examinees. The purpose of achievement tests is to judge upon the success of individual learners or groups in achieving the objectives of the language course. Achievement tests are always "course related" and refer to course contents and objectives. Achievement or progress tests measure the students' improvement in relation to their syllabus. These tests only contain items which the students have been taught in class.

Methodological recommendations for Summative Assessment are designed to assist teachers in planning, organizing and carrying out Summative Assessment in "English".

Summative Assessment Tasks for unit/cross curricular unit will allow teachers to determine the level of the learning objectives achievement planned for the term. Methodological recommendations comprise tasks, assessment criteria with descriptors and marks for conducting Summative Assessment across the unit/cross curricular unit. Also this document includes possible levels of the learners' academic achievement (rubrics). Tasks with descriptors and marks can be considered as recommendations. Methodological recommendations are designed for high school teachers, school

administrations, educational departments' seniors, regional and school coordinators in criteria-based assessment and others.

Now we show sample of summative assessment for the unit "Communication and Technology"

Learning objective:

– understand specific information and detail in texts on a range of familiar general and curricular topics;

– ask complex questions to get information about a limited;

– range of general topics and some curricular topics;

– use appropriate subject-specific vocabulary and syntax to talk about a growing range of general topics, and some curricular topics.

Assessment criteria:

– to realize particular facts and details in reading passage;

– to make up complex interrogative sentences to get information about the topic;

– to apply topic related vocabulary in speech appropriately;

– arranging words and phrases into well-formed sentences.

Level of thinking skills:

– Knowledge and comprehension

– Duration: 20 minutes.

However, alternative assessment or authentic assessment also has gained popularity in the field of second language teaching during the past few years. The main purposes of alternative assessment include assessing students beyond the traditional testing and encouraging students to participate in open discussions about standards and criteria of successful performance.

IC is a concept that seems to be transparent, universally accepted, understood and used, but which has received many differing definitions and never been assessed comprehensively inside and outside academia. Intercultural communicative competence is not permanent and its practice and learning never end. Students should bear in their mind that IC acquisition is a lifelong learning. School students' competence in intercultural communication should be assessed in both a summative and a formative way with the combined use of written test and formative assessment methods like performance assessment and portfolio assessment.

Literature

1. Маженов Б.Т. Concept and essence of intercultural communicative competence. Современные научные исследования и инновации. Алматы, 2014. с.33
2. Hymes D. On Communicative Competence. In J.B.Pride and J.Holmes (eds.), Sociolinguistics. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, pp. 29-43.
3. Chomsky N. Aspects of the Theory of Syntax. Boston: MIT Press, 1965. C.154
4. Natalie Regier, Mathew Ed. 60 Formative Assessment Strategies, p.121-140;
5. Brown, H. D., Abeywickrama, P. Language assessment, principles and classroom practices (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc. 2010p.88;
6. Fulcher G., Testing Second Language Speaking. Pearson/Longman, 2003, 2003: p.142–152;
7. Brookhart S. M. Developing measurement theories for classroom assessment purposes and uses. 2003, p.7;
8. Выготский Л.С. Interaction between learning and development. Readings on the development of children, 1978 - p.34-41;
9. Chapelle C. A., Brindley, G. Assessment. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), An Introduction to Applied Linguistics. New York, USA: Oxford University Press. 2002, p.281–282
10. Kaulfers W.V. Wartime Development in Modern-Language Achievement Testing. Cambridge University Press. 1944: p.137