

Case Study: Summative Assessment Design, Commentary and Feedback

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Abstract. This case study project follows the English-speaking learning process of a student named Lee, a senior student studies at Dalian Polytechnic University. The tutee has already received classes that last for 12 weeks, and each class is two hours. The paper focuses on introducing the basic information, such as his personal information, English level, and difficulties faced during the learning process, some contents about the 12-week class. All the information collected from the pre-assessment and interview. Then, the paper intends to design a summative assessment based on Five Principles and provide some comments about the assessment. Finally, it will provide feedback on the student's performance and some improvements to the future design of the assessment.

1. Introduction

The tutee, Lee, is a 24-year-old male student who comes from Dalian, China. Lee's first language (L1) is Chinese. He is a senior student, majoring in Machinery in the Dalian Polytechnic University, and is preparing to study abroad after graduation. During his class time at the university, both teachers and students speak Chinese, and only one or two of the thirty students can communicate fluently via English. He has learned English since he was eight years old and passed the College English Test Band 4 (CET 4) which is a standardized test in China, aiming at testing the English ability of Chinese college students.

Actually, he still has the problem that many Chinese students have: mute English. During a short interview, I found that it is hard for him to speak because firstly, he knows little vocabulary words that can be used in the university life of the United States. Secondly, he doesn't know how to organize the language to respond. In other words, he could only answer my questions with basic words and phrases. Finally, he has some difficulties to fully understand the listening materials due to the first reason. Due to the result of the pre-test, he has low English language proficiency. This situation is probably caused by his cultural and educational background. He has been living in China and hardly has the opportunity to communicate in English. At the same time, according to his major, he doesn't need to utilize English in his daily life. Based on CASAS (2009) ^[2], he is an EFL beginner at level A2 (See Appendix A).

During three months, I have concentrated on practicing the vocabulary, the utilization of signal words and cohesive devices, the employment of sentence structures, and a mock assessment. Firstly, during the 12 sessions, the students will get the vocabulary words he can use in the university when studying abroad, such as words related to the library, bank, curriculum, etc. The student will practice these words to answer questions in class and be tested in the next class. When it comes to the utilization of signal words and cohesive devices, the student learned to add signal words and conjunctions (e.g., firstly, furthermore, what's more) into sentences. This content will help him speak in a more logic way. He will paraphrase the listening materials with these two approaches. Finally, the employment of sentence structures. The student acquired how to diversify the sentence structure to avoid using "I..." all the time. He will be accustomed to using "There be...", "It is...", "Not only..., but also...", etc. Before the assessment, I will provide the student with a mock assessment to let him adjust the form of it. The mock assessment also provides a positive washback to the tutee in that he can supplement the knowledge based on the result of the mock assessment.

2. Summative Assessment

According to the Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) ^[1], the assessment is a formal assessment to test the responsive speaking, including the comprehension of the listening material and interaction with the teacher. First, the assessment evaluates the tutee's ability to utilize vocabulary words learned in class into sentences cohesively and logically. Second, the assessment tests whether the tutee can use different sentence structures during the speaking. The assessment will take about 30 minutes to check the tutee's responsive speaking skill. The assessment are based on CASAS standards of Speaking Content Standards (2009) ^[2] S2.4: Use simple words, phrases, and idioms drawn from functional life skill topics (e.g., shopping, housing, health, transportation, employment), S 3.12: Use signal words and cohesive devices that give clues to organization and content of message (e.g., first, then, however, it's important that, well, anyway, that being said etc.) and S6.3: Communicate the topic, main idea or gist while speaking. The assessment provides the tutee with two conversations and each conversation has a micro question and a macro question. Responsive micro speaking skills are "expressing a particular meaning in different grammatical forms and using cohesive devices in spoken discourse" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 186) ^[1]. Macro speaking skills are defined as "developing and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words [...] how well your interlocutor is understanding you" (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 186) ^[1].

3. Analysis

The purpose of the assessment is to check whether the tutee has made improvements in employing new vocabulary words into sentences in a cohesive and logic way, utilizing diverse sentence structures after the lessons were taught. If he can absorb the knowledge and get three or four points on this assessment, it means we can move on to the next topic of the speaking section. "Using five principles is the way to figure out whether the assessment is effective, appropriate and useful" (Brown & Abeywickrama 2010, p. 25) ^[1] and I will be analyzing these five principles based on my assessment. First, the assessment is highly valid. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) ^[1], face validity means the test should be formal and let students believe that the test can evaluate their ability. Before the assessment, I provided the tutee with a mock exam, which allowed the student to be familiar with what will be on the assessment. Also, the assessment was made similar to the speaking exam in China – the teacher plays a recording and then asks students questions related to the material. Therefore, the exam looks more familiar to the students making face validity higher. In addition, the assessment is content validity. Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) ^[1] states that content validity is to ensure the tests are related to the contents which students have learned. In the assessment, the tutee answered the questions using vocabulary words (e.g. data, reference, inter-library), different sentence structures (e.g. there are..., it is..., not only..., but also...) and various signal words, such as besides, what's more, in addition, etc. Second, the assessment is authentic. Both two conversations in the assessment come from the real situations of the United States. The materials are the matters that happened in the universities which encounter the tutee's needs. In this assessment, I choose the academic paper discussion between a professor and a student, the introduction of the library between a librarian and a new student. The tutee can experience natural conversations as a preparation to study in the US. Then, the assessment and the result are highly reliable. The assessment has a clear holistic rubric that helped me evaluate the tutee (See Appendix B). At the same time, the speaking assessment doesn't have objective answers. To guarantee the reliability of the assessment, the responses of the tutee will be evaluated by three teachers at the same time. If there is a gap among the three scores, the responses will be discussed and scored again. What's more, the assessment is full of Practicality. The assessment uses 30 minutes to assess the two aspects mentioned in the objectives. The student can see the questions on his computer. Without any printed materials, the cost is little. Due to the speaking form and clear rubric, scoring can be finished during the answering process. Last but not least, the assessment also provides positive washback. The assessment has positive washback on both teacher and student. The teacher can know how to revise the lesson plan and syllabus in the subsequent classes.

The student will be offered a detailed analysis of his answer, which can help him correct the problems and improve his ability.

3.1 Scaffolding

Scaffolding is a beneficial assistance for students as well, such as a rubric, teacher's explanation a sample paper (Walqui, 2006) [3]. With the improvement of the student, scaffolding can be withdrawn (Walqui, 2006) [3]. For instance, the tutee also has a low-level listening ability. In order not to affect the reliability of the assessment, I decided to read the listening materials rather than playing the records making by native speakers.

4. Feedback

The tutee finished the speaking assessment (See Appendix C) and he did a great job. Based on the result of the test, he got a 3.5 out of 4.0. For example, the first assessment question asked, "what needs to be included in the student's report"; the question focused on the students' use of signal words. The tutee answered by responding,

"The student needs to include three kinds of resources in his report. First, the meteorological records. Second, the research needs includes the climate charts. Finally, she uses different methods for analyzing the data, like certain statistical tests and this also need to be written into the report".

It is clear to see that the tutee can utilize the contents we learned during the past sessions. After the assessment, I played his recording and tried to let him realize and correct the answer on his own. If he failed to correct the error, I explained the right answer to him. The self-correction can help him study more efficiently in the future. However, there are some grammar errors. The student in the first conversation is a male student, but my tutee always used "she" when answering questions. Thus, he also has some challenges with personal pronouns. What's more, there is also some problems of fluency. This time, the assessment didn't evaluate the grammar and personal pronouns, so these problems didn't affect his score. However, these two aspects can become the topic of discussion for the next class.

If I have the chance to teach again, I will provide the tutee with a rubric. It can help the tutee know what needs to be included in his speaking. At the same time, I will modify the rubric I design in the *Summative Assessment Design*. It will be better to offer an analytic rubric to the tutee so that he can exactly know which part he has problems and needs to improve. Then, I will employ some games to introduce vocabulary words, such as the Taboo Game and Frayer Model, which can promote his enthusiasm for learning English. During the process, he needs to acquire vocabulary words through guessing, looking up the dictionary for the definition and finish the model. This process can leave him with a deep impression, which can assist him to comprehend and remember these words. Also, I will present some background knowledge in the form of videos and pictures. Once he knows the background knowledge, it is more possible for him to talk about this topic logically.

In my assessment, I only concentrate on the question type of Q&A. Next time, the questions should be more diverse and attractive. It would be better to ask students to do a presentation or an interview. He will not feel dull and more active to attend the class.

References

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