English language classroom assessment in Vietnam: From policy to practice

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This presentation

• Addresses English classroom language assessment policy in Vietnam
• Presents how these changes in policy are translated into practice
• Makes implications for teacher training
The NFL 2020 project

- Setting standard for each educational level
- Shifting from a stress on knowledge to language competences
- Making advances in language proficiency assessment

The need to reform classroom assessment for improving learning outcomes
Assessment for learning & Assessment of learning
Classroom Assessment: Changes in Policy

- More training curriculum on classroom assessment for in-service teachers
- More instruction on classroom assessment
- Timely provision of guidances
Shift from focus on knowledge to proficiency assessment

- Testing and assessment should strictly follow the objectives, content and the required standard regarding *English language knowledge* and skills (emphasis added) (Decision 50, MOET, 2003).

- Shifting from primarily providing knowledge to developing competences for learners, prioritizing assessment of English language *learner proficiency* (Dispatch 5333/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)

- Establishing assessment plan for developing and *assessing communicative competence* for secondary school learners (Dispatch 4235, MOET, Jul, 2016)

- Prioritizing tasks *assessing different levels of using language for communication*, not tasks assessing language knowledge (Instructions for EL classroom assessment – GDTH, MOET, 2017)
More detailed guidance on assessing all language skills

• Assessment involves all listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Decision 50, MOET, 2003)

• Summative assessment focusing on oral skills. Grade 3: Listening: 40%, Speaking: 20%; Grade 4: increasing proportion of Reading, Writing and Speaking, reducing Listening proportion; Grade 5: 25% each skill [...]. The use of 4 skills English proficiency test Level 1/A1 for end-of-semester II assessment for grade 5 students or for grade 6 students for placement purpose (Directives on summative assessment for primary school students, BGDDT-GDTH, MOET, 2017)
Focusing more on formative assessment

• The teacher needs to pay attention to students’ progress and *end-of-year assessment [summative] is most important* (emphasis added) (Circular 32, MOET, 2009)

• Formative assessment: at least 5 times/semester/learner (Dispatch 7972/BGDĐT-GDTrH, 2013)

• Practice (task) assessment (formative) *can be added* to learners’ final score as one time of summative assessment (Dispatch 5333/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)

• Good practice assessment (formative) *can replace* summative assessment (scheduled tests) (Dispatch 588/SGDĐT-GDTrH, Tuyen Quang DOET, 2014)
Shift from tests to alternative assessment

- Introducing formative assessment as: oral assessment & written test of less than 20 minutes (Circular 32, MOET, 2009)
- Combining formative with summative assessment, teacher assessment with student self assessment and peer assessment, school assessment and students’ family assessment and social evaluation (Dispatch 4099/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)
- Assessment needs to be implemented by different forms relevant to teaching methodology, varying from speaking/oral assessment (dialogue, monologue), to written, integrated skills tests and to other forms (Circular 5333/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)
Shift from quantified to qualitative feedback

• Assessment must be based on test scores and participation evaluation (Decision 50, MOET, 2003)

• Assessment feedback can be delivered through different forms: quantitative (score) and qualitative (comments, ranking) (Dispatch 5333/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)

• Using assessment for facilitating students to learn, boosting their motivating, encouraging them to learn [...] combining quantitative and qualitative feedback, providing suggestions for students to improve their learning outcomes (Dispatch 5555/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2014)
Linking classroom assessment with set outcomes

- Classroom assessment should promote the achievement of learning outcome set for each level of education as below:
  - Students finishing grade 6: A2.1;
  - Students finishing grade 7: A2.2;
  - Students finishing grade 8: A2.3;
  - Students finishing grade 9: A2;
  - Students finishing grade 10: B1.1;
  - Students finishing grade 11: B1.2;
  - Students finishing grade 12: B1

(Dispatch 7972/BGDĐT-GDTrH, MOET, 2013)
Classroom assessment practice: The case of primary school teachers

• The participants:
  – 173 PELTs of 4 provinces in Central Vietnam
  – Having 1- to 19- years of teaching experience
  – None receiving university formal training on teaching YLLs
  – 74 Junior college degrees + 90 BA degrees + 9 MA degrees
  – 131 receiving at least intensive 15-hour training

• Research methods
  - Questionnaire
  - Artifacts: Test corpus: 297 (8 are summative tests + 289 formative assessment) + portfolio: 13
  - Interview: 18 teachers

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Common Practices

- **Assessment # Tests** (summative-driven)
- The most popular assessment form: tests
- Scarce use of alternative assessment (cf. observation, comprehension checking, previous lesson review)
- 1 35-minute test/month (8/a year for formative)
- Formative assessment items for four skills are provided (speaking tested in summative tests)
- The summative large-scale end-of-semester/year tests covering all language skills, administered on the same day, at the same time (*not speaking test*)
Nature of language assessment tasks

• Selected-response items dominating both in:
  • Formative tests
  • Summative tests
• Formative assessment tests primarily focusing on:
  • Grammar knowledge
  • Memorization
Question 5: Look at the pictures. Look at the letters. Write the words (1pt)

1. kaset
2. ried a bkie
3. mblic

4. ierwt
5. play tennis

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Question 6: Look and write (1pt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This</th>
<th>That</th>
<th>These</th>
<th>Those</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

___ are bags. ___ is a ruler. ___ are pencils. ___ is a computer.

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Question 7: Write (1pt)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, they are.</th>
<th>No, they aren't.</th>
<th>Yes, we are.</th>
<th>No, we aren't.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are they hot?</th>
<th>Are you hungry?</th>
<th>Are they cold?</th>
<th>Are you happy?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, they are</td>
<td></td>
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Strong impact of summative test format

• Formative assessment tests mimicking summative large-scale test by the DOETs
• Using summative test-like materials in formative assessment
  - Adopting test items from English practice test – YLL module
  - Most commonly used: Starters, Movers, Flyers by Cambridge
Making little use of assessment feedback

• Recording scores with limited comments
• “Peer-assessment”
• Limited use for teaching improvement
• Reasons:
  - Time constraints
  - Characteristics of the selected tasks
  - Large class
  - Heavy teaching load
  - Limited access to adequate resources

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Once upon a time, if classroom assessment in practice was...
Then information about learners’ learning progress and achievement would be...
Implications

• More substantial training and guidance on:
  - Formative assessment – *Assessment with a purpose*
  - Practical assessment techniques
  - Choosing and evaluating assessment tasks
  - Making use of assessment results
  - Using assessment to support the expected learning outcomes

• More support and guidance for PELTs:
  – To practise language assessment properly
  – For their continuous commitment in language assessment
The difference between policy and practice

Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment.
~ Jim Rohn
THANK YOU

Questions & comments?
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