

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

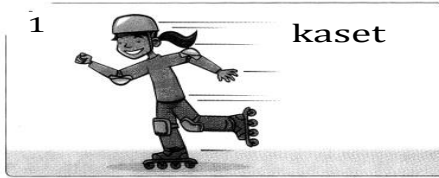
Common Practices

- **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

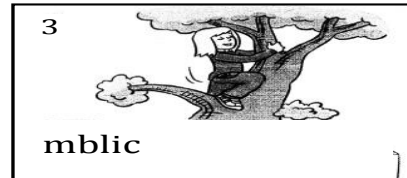
- Selected-response items dominating both in:
 - Formative tests
 - Summative tests
- Formative assessment tests primarily focusing on:
 - Grammar knowledge
 - Memorization

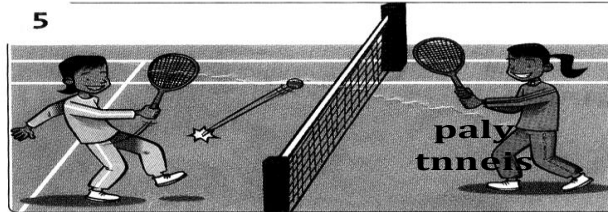
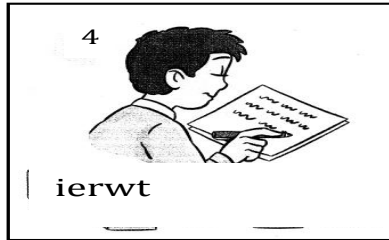
Question 5: Look at the pictures. Look at the letters. Write the words (1pt)



s k a t e

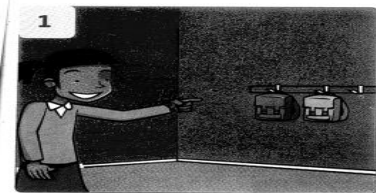






Question 6: Look and write (1pt)

This That These Those



___ are bags.



___ is a ruler.



___ are pencils.



___ is a computer.

Question 7: Write (1pt)

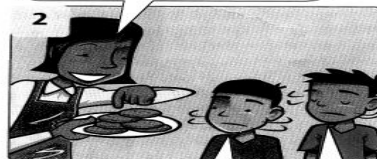
Yes, they are. No, they aren't. Yes, we are. No, we aren't.

Are they hot?



Yes, they are.

Are you hungry?



Are they cold?



Are you happy?



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

Once upon a time, if classroom assessment in practice was...



Then information about learners' learning progress and achievement would be...



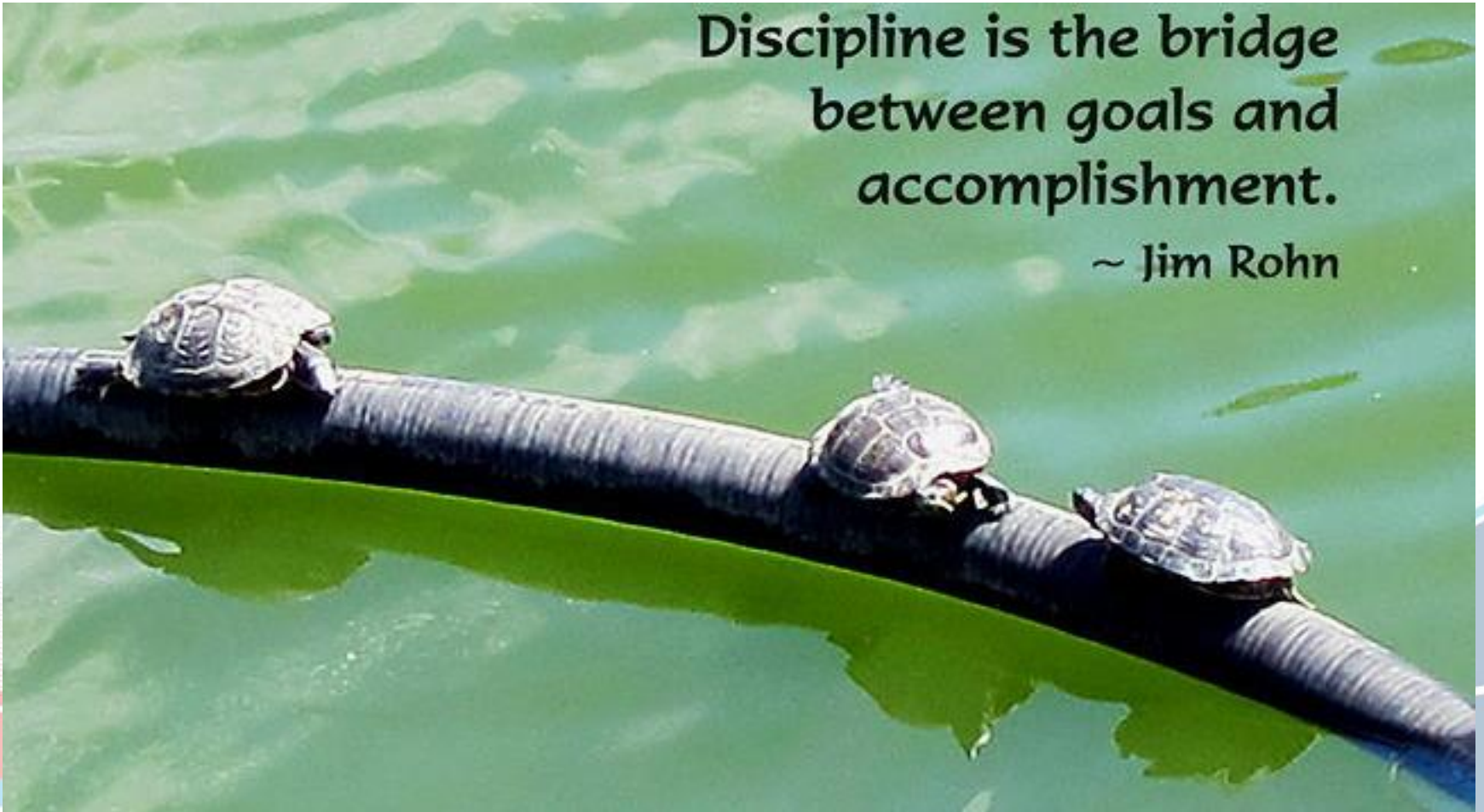
Implications

- 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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