

Formative assessment as a metacognitive strategy to improve the teaching of English

Evaluación formativa como estrategia metacognitiva para mejorar la enseñanza del inglés

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ABSTRACT

Assessment has always been one of the most crucial stages of the teaching process at all educational levels. So much so that for many years the evaluation was considered as an activity addressed only to students to determine their achievements. However, to transform the teaching and learning processes, students should not only be assessed for them to identify their weaknesses or strengths. Assessment as a formative purpose should allow students to reflect on the way they learn and encourage them to improve. Metacognition applied to this process of teaching and learning English is essential because it promotes self-regulation and reflection, helps identify strengths and weaknesses, and facilitates feedback between students and teachers.

KEYWORDS:

learning,
formative
assessment,
metacognition,
teaching, self-
regulation.

RESUMEN

La evaluación siempre ha sido una de las etapas más cruciales de los procesos de enseñanza en todos los niveles educativos. Tanto así, que durante muchos años la evaluación se concebía como una actividad dirigida únicamente a los estudiantes para determinar sus logros. Sin embargo, para transformar los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje, es claro que no solo se debe evaluar a los estudiantes para darles a conocer sus debilidades o fortalezas. La evaluación como propósito formativo debe permitirles a los estudiantes reflexionar sobre la manera como aprenden y motivarlos a mejorar. La metacognición aplicada a este proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés es esencial porque promueve la autorregulación, fomenta la reflexión, ayuda a identificar fortalezas y debilidades y facilita la retroalimentación entre estudiantes y maestros.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

aprendizaje,
autorregulación,
enseñanza,
evaluación
formativa,
metacognición.

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a crucial element in the teaching process to continuously monitor the objectives set out in the curriculum and the lessons in the classroom. Assessment has been transformed to help new generations of students improve their learning through metacognitive processes in which reflection is one of the bases. Teachers have included formative assessments in the classroom that, unlike classic assessments that usually take place at the end of each term, take

place throughout the process; this transform not only the way students learn, but also teaching materials and strategies of teachers. According to Broadfoot (2007), through assessment for learning students can develop deeper levels of thinking, effectively solve their learning problems and challenges, ask intelligent and thought-provoking questions, and take full ownership of their learning.

Different points are analyzed below based on a pedagogical reflection, to explore the role of formative assessment in transforming

teaching in the 21st century. This article aims to reflect on the positive influence of formative assessment as a strategy to improve English teaching processes.

Albert Einstein uses two main words, “curiosity and stimulation;” in most cases, these two elements cannot be evaluated with a numerical or classical evaluation process.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AS A METACOGNITIVE STRATEGY TO IMPROVE THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Albert Einstein, quoted by Schilpp, (2001), said: It is in fact nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not yet entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry. This idea briefly explains how classical evaluation destroys students' intention to learn, either because of the mere interest in evaluating the content or because the emphasis on their weaknesses. From a learners' perspective, classical assessment is mainly a regulator of content for validating what is known. Albert Einstein uses two main words, “curiosity and stimulation;” in most cases, these two elements cannot be evaluated with a numerical or classical evaluation process. For example, in English teaching it is common that students trying to learn English are worried about how they will be evaluated or the possibility of failing regardless of the teaching strategies implemented; this prevents them from concentrating on developing their cognitive abilities in class.

For this reason, changing how students' cognitive processes are evaluated is necessary to improve English teaching. Therefore, formative assessments are

necessary to help students be aware of how they learn and regulate their learning, developing metacognitive skills during the learning process. English teachers should see their students from a global perspective. They should understand students' weaknesses and strengths with the aim of helping them make progress in their learning process. Evaluation in the classroom should be focused on something more than making students aware of their achievements regarding the internalization of the curricular contents. In that regard, evaluation should pave the way to improve their capacities, not at the end of their educational process but while learning occurs in the classroom or outside of it. For this reason, rather than including different assessments in English classes, formative assessments based on metacognitive principles should be included to involve students in evaluating their learning and identifying what needs to be changed to improve. According to Loveless, B. (2022), the metacognitive principles refer to the students' ability to self-criticize how they learn and adapt their thinking to improve each learning process. In this sense, not only are teachers involved in the evaluation of learning; the students can also monitor their process through the following five steps:

1. Evaluate the task
2. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses
3. Plan the learning approach
4. Apply strategies
5. Reflect

In other words, the teacher can teach students to be self-reflective people capable of evaluating their learning process to take timely measures aimed at improving, but as they learn and not until the end. In applying

formative assessment and the metacognitive process proposed by Loveless in English classes, students are more likely to participate. This is because formative assessment promotes autonomous learning by helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses and allowing them to take steps to expand their knowledge independently.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND METACOGNITION?

One of the authors who best describes formative assessment is Sanmartí (2007); in his book "10 Key Ideas. Evaluate to Learn" he suggests that evaluation must be something useful to learn and, therefore, must have a regulatory purpose, not only for the way students learn but also for the way teachers teach. Consequently, formative assessment is the stage of the learning process at which students and teachers assess themselves and use that information to review and modify teaching and learning strategies. When the teacher understands why students fail to learn and provides timely feedback, meaningful learning is more likely. In short, Argüelles (2010) suggests that one of the advantages of metacognitive or self-regulated learning is that it is always directed towards a goal that the learner controls. Therefore, if students are aware of what they should do to learn, they will do it. In addition, metacognition encourages reflection and self-assessment, helping students understand how they better learn and what strategies they can use to improve their English learning. When students are aware of what they need to do to better learn, they are motivated to seek out additional resources and work independently to improve their comprehension and language skills without teacher's intervention. In this way, learning is more meaningful than the teacher had anticipated.

Additionally, the dynamics of the class change permanently depending on the difficulties and concerns of students at each stage of the course, maintaining motivation and interest in learning. In this type of teaching, the teacher provides the objective to be achieved, and the students seek autonomously or cooperatively the best way to achieve it without the pressure of fear of failure and with the expectation of them self-dynamizing their learning. In their research on metacognition, formative assessment, and student perspective, Brady et al. (2018) suggest that self-control in learning increases the level of precision in knowledge. In this regard, evaluation is no longer considered as a classifying or regulating element of students' knowledge and becomes one of the keys to learning.

One of the teachers' priorities should be the creation of a more welcoming learning environment, whose aim objective is continuous and positive feedback to improve learning. This can be achieved by including formative evaluation as the articulating axis since it can mainly modify the attitude of learners. Personal attitude is vital to increase students' willingness and ability to share knowledge.

Another valuable feature of formative assessment is that it allows not only students but also teachers to reflect on the learning process, and activities are assessed to ensure a more effective learning environment. While students analyze the reasons that hinder their cognitive development, teachers review and evaluate the activities related to students' needs, modifying them immediately if necessary. That is why formative assessment from a metacognitive approach manages to transform and dynamize the teaching of English. For a student of English as a foreign language, it is always so challenging and, in some cases, frightening to develop their

basic skills in another language that a large percentage of students fail to develop their skills or frequently drop out of their studies.

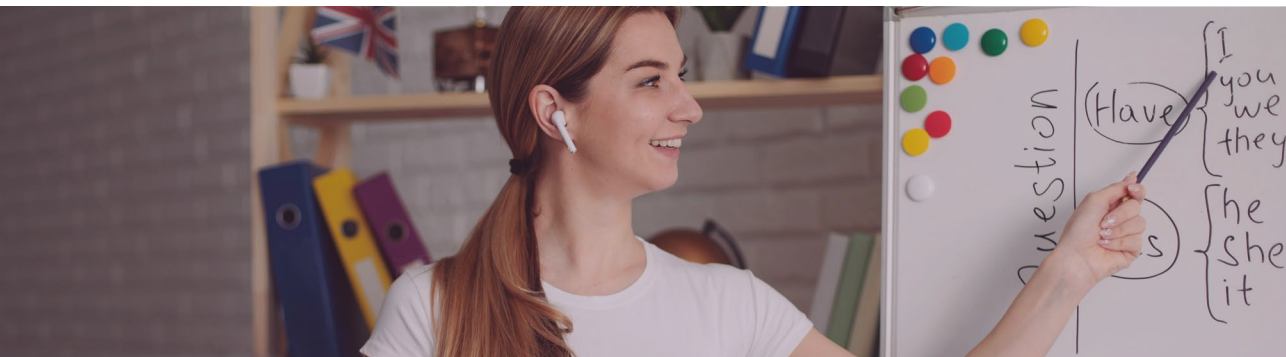
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Nevertheless, when formative assessment is used as a metacognitive strategy in teaching English, students are engaged in learning, stop worrying about grades while cooperating with others to make progress with their learning process and enjoy class, knowing that they learn since they are the ones who propose strategies to deal with their weaknesses. Moreover, since formative assessment is performed permanently while students learn, information can be collected and analyzed to understand and evaluate the different learning processes. Based on this analysis, teachers can make timely decisions to help their students while they gain knowledge, providing a significant paradigm shift in the evaluation process. Formative evaluation with a metacognitive approach allows students to evaluate themselves and commits the teacher to providing timely feedback. In this regard, evaluation contributes to developing students' competencies and, as a goal, forming self-reflective and critical people.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, as in most cases, the quality of the teaching work depends on the interaction with students and reflection on the pedagogical practice. When teachers note an outstanding commitment on the side of their students, they are also motivated to generate better learning experiences; this will improve the entire teaching process. According to Black and William (2009), from this perspective, formative assessment can be considered one of the most powerful tools to improve the quality of education at all levels. For Stiggins and Conklin (1992), the judgments that teachers make about the learning difficulties of their students play a central role in highly important decisions, such as the type of educational activities that teachers select, the type of questions they ask in the classroom, the explanations they give and the comments they make on the students' work. Teachers not only contribute to students' cognitive development; through complex learning structures, they can also guide the personal training of their students. Therefore, teachers should incorporate different types of formative and metacognitive assessments in the classroom.

In short, formative assessment with a metacognitive approach improves student learning processes and teachers' teaching, undoubtedly transforming the act of educating and all its principles.



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