

Sound Bites for Better Teaching

Is This Going To Be On The Test?

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Assessment and evaluation are important parts of every teacher's lessons and can be excellent indicators of student progress if done correctly. Often, though, the test sends a clear message to the students about what is important and what is not: if there are no speaking portions to the test, then the students will pay no attention to the need to speak in L2. If the four language skills are equally important, then they should be evaluated regularly. The ideal curriculum includes both what students know and what they can do with the language. The ideal evaluation schedule includes achievement, prochievement, and proficiency tasks. The first are the regular vocabulary and grammar tests so prevalent in classrooms. The second contains both achievement and proficiency tasks. The latter asks the student to demonstrate what they can do in the foreign language.

Self Evaluation (no right or wrong answers)

Does your testing program evaluate mostly the students' knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and cultural facts?

Do you evaluate your students' skill in listening, reading, writing, and speaking? How do you do that?

If you do, are the four skills evaluated equally or do you favor one over the other?

Do you evaluate the listening skill per se or by means of the other skills, i.e. speaking?

Does knowledge of L2 count more for you than what one can do in L2? Explain.

Do you use rubrics in determining how well students perform the four language skills?

If so, are the students aware of those rubrics?

Do you agree that the final exam is too late to determine what students know about the language? Explain.

Which is easier to assess: achievement-based or proficiency-based tests? Explain.

TIP

The following guide will help teachers evaluate both what students know and what they can do with what they know:

Achievement-based: homework assignments, daily quizzes, weekly tests

Prochievement: unit tests, chapter tests

Proficiency-based: daily classroom performances, semester tests, final exams