

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING AND MOTIVATION IN PRIMARY BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

EVALUACIÓN PARA EL APRENDIZAJE Y MOTIVACIÓN EN COLEGIOS BILINGÜES

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1. Objectives of the Study

This paper presents research carried out on the evaluation practice of Assessment for Learning (AfL) and its impact on student motivation in primary bilingual classrooms in Madrid, Spain. The purpose of this pilot study was to determine whether the use of AfL as an assessment strategy allows teachers to provide increased second language (L2) motivational techniques in the classroom than the use of traditional assessment practices. The second objective was to determine whether the presence of AfL techniques in the classroom increased student motivation to learn a second language.

2. Theoretical Framework

Assessment for Learning is an alternative approach to traditional summative assessment that encourages teachers to describe basic learning objectives at the beginning of a unit and provide continuous feedback (Sutton, 1995) in order for students to fill learning

gaps as they arise and continue setting new goals (Black & Wiliam, 1998). AfL developed out of a push for assessment reform implemented by groups such as the Assessment Reform Group (ARG, 2002) in Great Britain and the Pearson Assessment Training Institute (ATI, 1992) in the United States.

The consensus of these groups was that schools and governmental programs must move away from standardized testing which may be emotionally damaging to students (Shohamy, 2001) and instead use assessment as a tool to empower and motivate students (Stiggins, 2007). Previous studies have connected summative testing to lowering students' motivation and self-esteem (ARG, 2002), whereas research has proven that formative assessment has the potential to increase overall student marks (Black & Wiliam, 1998). However, there are no previous studies examining how Assessment for Learning influences L2 motivation using empirical classroom data.

3. Methodology

Data for this study was obtained by recording one full didactic unit from two bilingual schools in the Madrid Community led by one teacher trained in AfL strategies and another trained using traditional summative assessment techniques. The two groups were in Year 5 (ages 10-11) of primary school and each class was comprised of 22 students. The recorded units came from Citizenship classes; the theme of the AfL unit was “emotions” and the topic for the non-AfL unit was “democracy.” After each unit was recorded, the students were asked to fill out a questionnaire measuring their motivation.

The instrument used to measure motivational features present in the classroom recordings was the MOLT Classroom Observation Framework (Dörnyei & Guilloteaux, 2008), which includes several motivational strategies for second language learning. These strategies are grouped into five categories including: learner's motivated behavior, encouraging positive retrospective self-evaluation, activity design, participation structure and teacher discourse (Dörnyei & Guilloteaux, 2008). The codings focused on the four latter categories, as it was observed that the level of learner's motivated behavior was similar for both groups. After the recordings were completed, they were transcribed and coded according to the MOLT Observation

scheme using the UAM CorpusTool (O'Donnell, 2010). The datasets were then compared in order to analyze motivational techniques used by the AfL and non-AfL teacher.

The student questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part was based on the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) and measured student motivation based on five categories; self-efficacy, self-regulation, intrinsic value, cognitive strategies use and test anxiety (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1989). The second part of the survey was designed to measure intrinsic (internal) motivation by asking students how they felt in certain classroom situations, asking them to select from a list of positive or negative adjectives. The questionnaire was given to the students in their native language, Spanish, in order to ensure that they felt comfortable expressing their opinions.

4. Results

	AfL Teacher	Non-AfL Teacher	T-Test	Chi Square
Teacher Discourse	183 (51.0%)	196 (74.0%)	5.97+++	33.78+++
Encouraging Self-Evaluation	85 (23.7%)	52 (19.6%)	1.21	1.46
Feedback	48 (56.5%)	52 (100.0%)	6.28 +++	31.01 +++
Peer and Self-Correction	15 (17.6%)	0 (0.0%)	0.00	10.30 +++
Classroom Applause	22 (25.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0.00	16.03 +++
Activity Design	88 (24.5%)	13 (4.9%)	6.80 +++	43.20 +++
Personalization	78 (88.6%)	9 (69.2%)	1.91 +	3.57 +
Tangible Reward	0 (0.00%)	1 (7.7%)	0.00	6.84 +++
Group and Pair Work	3 (0.8%)	4 (1.5%)	0.79	0.62
Totals	359 Techniques	265 Techniques		

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Fig.1. Results of Motivational Strategies Present in AfL and Non-AfL Classrooms⁴

Based on the codings, the AfL teacher used a total of 359 motivational techniques throughout the didactic unit and the non-AfL teacher used 265 techniques. While 74% of the techniques used by the non-AfL teacher were from the category of teacher discourse, the AfL teacher used a more varied distribution of techniques throughout the four categories (Fig.1). One of the most notable differences was the use of peer and self-correction, which was present only in the AfL classroom.

The results of the motivational surveys demonstrated that the non-AfL students showed a stronger sense of self-efficacy, use of cognitive strategies and intrinsic value than their AfL counterparts. However, the AfL students felt less test anxiety when taking an examination. Results from the second part of the survey demonstrated a greater sense of intrinsic motivation in AfL students.

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of this pilot study, it is clear that the presence of AfL techniques led to an increase of motivational strategies found in the classroom. While the effect of these techniques on increasing student motivation was not proven, this pilot study showed that AfL plays a part in providing students with higher levels of intrinsic motivation and decreasing anxiety related to examinations. While AfL may never replace traditional summative assessment, which has become ingrained into classroom culture worldwide, when integrated alongside traditional assessment has the potential to positively affect student motivation to learn a second language.

6. References

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⁴ In relation to t-test and ChiSquare, +++ signifies strong significance and + signifies weak significance

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