

Assessment for improving learning

Han Yan

Abstract: This paper will present that assessment for improving young learners' learning. For young learners who are 6-12 years old, the purpose of assessment for below 12 years old is different from those over 12 years old. According to character and cognition of young learners, the purpose of assessment is to build confidence on learning up, gradually be more interested in learning and enhance learning in the future. This paper will analyze the style of assessment for young learners in , including which mode of assessment of young learners is be choose, how to product question paper, how to give awards, how to give feedback to young learners. After assessment, for young learners, the situation of learning which means that ability of learning and attitude of learning will be changed. The assessment of Cambridge Young Learners English (CYLE) will be example of analyze and the resources of analyze come from candidates of CYLE. This paper will put forward ideas on how to improve the function of assessment on learning.

Keywords: young learners, character and cognition, confidence and interesting, style of assessment, situation of learning, Cambridge Young Learners English

Reference:

- 1) Juliet Wilson ResearchNotes 22 published by ESOL Cambridge Assessment
- 2) Wang Qiang Teaching methodology for young learners
- 3) Ellen Weber Student Assessment That works: A practical Approach

Through assessment, two functions should be gotten. One is to get back and encourage and improve the teaching, another is to choose excellent student and find some problems in teaching and learning.

In basic education, the assessment should be different from other assessments. Through assessment, we should know what knowledge the students have mastered and what knowledge they haven't mastered. This way of assessment can really help students to learn better.

So, what way of assessment we adapt can lead to positive or negative results. Available assessment can improve learning.

Now I will analyze how assessment for improving learning according to Cambridge Young Learners Test which was designed by Cambridge Assessment.

These tests are an enjoyable and non-threatening way of assessing the English of children between the ages of 7 and 12. The tests are currently taken in about 55 countries around the world. There are three levels:

Flyers	(at Level A2 of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)
Movers	(at Level A1)
Starters	(below Level A1)

The tests provide a gentle introduction to public exams and research shows that children find the tests highly motivating. They aim to:

- sample relevant and meaningful language use
- measure ability accurately and fairly
- present a positive impression of international tests
- promote and encourage effective learning and teaching

The tests include three components which are Reading & Writing, Listening, Speaking.

There is no pass or fail. Every child who attempts all three components will receive an Award showing a number of shields (Cambridge crests) up to five for each component. For example, a child may obtain three shields for Reading and Writing, four shields for Listening and five shields for Speaking. The minimum Award for children who have attempted all three components is an Award with one shield for each component.

Cambridge YLE Test was introduced into China in 1996 and held

firstly in 1997. Until now, Cambridge YLE Test is covered all over China except Tibet. 6,000,000 children have been learned in training school and 1,300,000 have been taken part in the test. For developing more widely and meaningfully, we established two-level's management system which means that local examination authorities are responsible of Cambridge Young Learners in their own province. we also edited Students' Course Books \ Teachers' Book and established teachers and oral examiners training system. Any teachers who want to teach Cambridge Young Learners should attend teacher training and pass the relevant test. If pass the test, they can have qualification on teaching Cambridge Young Learner. Through the training, the teachers can really understand how to teacher young learners and how to prepare the test. Cambridge YLE Test has deep impact on children, teachers and English teaching reform in primary school in China. On below, I will analyze these factors which impact on.

With regard to children:

Since the experience of taking a Cambridge YLE Test may be a child's introduction to formal assessment, the impact of the tests is a key issue. Not only should the tests give a positive first impression of international testing but they should also have a positive impact on individuals, classrooms and society in general.

1, to build self-confidence on learning English up:

YLE can help children to build self-confidence on learning any subject. This function shows that two factors: one is certificate, another is encouragement in Speaking test.

YLE tasks are designed to be not-threatening, fun and reflect activities that the children would do in the classroom. There is no pass or fail of the test receive an award. The ethos of the tests is to reward the children for what they do know rather than penalize them for what they don't. When they get the award, they feel honor of award. Not like before, when they fail, they cannot get certificate and feel ashamed of that. Now

The examiner's role is to assess the candidate's performance accurately and to ensure all candidates are treated fairly. In the introductions to Oral Examiners, examiners are specifically told to

'take special care to be encouraging to the candidates.' Unlike other Cambridge ESOL examinations where examiners are asked to avoid responses such as 'good' or 'that's right', examiners for the Cambridge YLE Tests are asked to include these positive interjections. In addition, examiners are given scope within their 'script' to repeat questions that the candidate might not understand and ask back-up question.

Various measures are in place to ensure that the Speaking test is a comfortable experience for the child and offers conditions where they can perform to the best of their ability. Firstly, there is always an usher on hand who speaks the candidate's first language and who ideally is someone known to him or her. The usher's duties are specifically laid out in the administration guide for Centres. The duties include ensuring that each child knows what to expect and is not over anxious about taking the test; telling each child the name of the examiner and assuring them that s/he is friendly; and accompanying them into the test room at the appropriate time and introducing them to the examiner in English before leaving.

2, to raise interest in learning English:

The style of test papers is also important for children. In China, it is more popular to print test papers in white and black. Children feel boring and anxious. The test papers of YLE are colourful and attractive. When children read the test papers, they feel happy and relaxed.

In the Cambridge YLE Tests, children demonstrate their understanding and learning through 'doing', for example by colouring, drawing lines or pointing. The tests are short, but with plenty of time allowed for each task as it is important that lack of time is not a source of stress during the tests. Within the test, tasks are short and varied to keep children's attention focused as children perform best when they are engaged and motivated. All tasks are based on colourful graphics. Children are less likely to feel anxious and will be able to perform to the best of their ability if the materials are attractive and fun and do not have the appearance of traditional test materials.

3, raise the ability of learning \ be participant in activities \ practicing \ researching

Designing the YLE Speaking test presented particular challenges. This is a face-to-face Speaking test where one oral examiner assesses one

child (a 1:1 format). This could be seen as potentially a stressful experience for the child. A range of formats for the test were considered. Most of the Cambridge ESOL Speaking tests are 2:2 format (i.e. two candidates and two examiners). However, young children may well have not developed the turn-taking strategies which make the paired format successful for the adult exams. Having two examiners was also considered. Overall it was felt that having two adult strangers in the room could be unnecessarily intimidating. In the 1:1 format the examiner does in face act as the child's 'partner', demonstrating and carrying out the various Speaking test activities with the child.

Through attending this challengeable test Children are brave to communicate voluntarily and enjoy in researching activities and so on. Their own character is gotten to be developed.

With regard to teachers

1, change teaching method\ teaching idea and build "pleasure teaching" up:

The colourful and practical assessment leads teaching method and idea to be changed. Teachers pay much attention to raise ability of speaking & listening in order to communicate more easily. Student-centred with teachers' leading is new teaching idea at present in China. In classroom, teachers provide more opportunities to children to speak and jointly take activities. With these activities, teachers can improve enthusiasm of children on learning. Teachers design many chants \ songs\ activities in order to make class more lively and attract the attract children's attention. The results of teaching is more effective than before. This teaching idea is to make learning English more practical. When children finish learning, they can really communicate each other or with foreigner. The results is the real aim of learning English.

The Cambridge YLE Tests test the four macro skills, with the emphasis on oral and aural skills as these are the skills that children develop first. Topic areas are chosen which are relevant to children's lives, e.g. school, food, sports and animals. Additionally, all language which is used in the tests is placed in a clear context, as this is how children process language; there are no discrete questions testing grammar. Syllabuses and wordlists are published so teachers can fully prepare children for the tests.

The design of the Speaking test means that in the initial tasks, the candidate is not required to speak at length but to respond either by pointing or placing cards on a picture. This gives the child the chance to get used to the examiner's voice before producing language themselves.

2, improve the organization of classroom

The new teaching method is obviously to influence the organization of classroom. In order to provide more opportunities, the numbers of children in each class have been reduced to 30 from 40 or 50. In order to make children learn in easy situation, the decoration of classroom is also more popular than before.

3, through teacher training and monitoring, to improve the quality of teaching young learners English

With regard to Reform of Teaching Young Learners English

Now, in China, State Education Committee is developing Reform of Teaching Young Learners English. YLE make teachers change teaching idea and method. The new teaching idea and method have been introduced in New Students' Course Books which are been editing by experts. Hopefully, it can be speeded up the Reform of Teaching Young learners English and to improve the quality of teaching English.

Through CYLE, provide the new way of assessment for young learners in China.

The contents and style of assessment have been changed after YLE developed in China. Teachers began to realize what functions of assessment so that they changed the way of assessment.

All in all, it's very important to adapt practical assessment. In China, Cambridge Young Learners' Test improve the reform of teaching young learners English and plays key role in improving the quality of teachers.