Students' perceptions about assessment in English second language learning with emphasis on writing in 10th and 11th grades of a public school.

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Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en el siguiente trabajo son responsabilidad

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Mario Guerrero

San juan de Pasto, 26 de Febrero de 2021

RESUMEN

En el siguiente documento se realiza una investigación acerca de las percepciones que los estudiantes de grados superiores,10 y 11, tienen acerca de la evaluación en el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua, en este caso el inglés, específicamente se centra en la habilidad escrita que está presente y es una de las más usadas durante el aprendizaje en la educación media. La problemática radica en que por mucho tiempo la educación en este país ha estado centralizada siempre en que el estudiante vea las notas como algo mucho mas importante que el mismo aprendizaje y de esta forma quitar valor a los comentarios que los profesores dan para retroalimentar el aprendizaje. Se pretende analizar las percepciones de los estudiantes para así mejorar las estrategias usadas para un mejor aprendizaje en el desarrollo de la habilidad escrita.

Se verá también una amplia lista de autores y estudios con rasgos similares a este trabajo de investigación en donde se ampliará conocimiento y terminología empleada. Así mismo, se encontrará la población elegida para desarrollar la investigación, la Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto, ubicada en Pasto-Nariño, el método utilizado y los instrumentos de recolección de información.

ABSTRACT

The following paper is focused on knowing the perceptions that students in grades 10 and 11 of the Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto have about the assessment and the way in which they are assessed with the purpose of implementing strategies to improve the learning process of a second language. It is necessary to clarify that this paper focuses on formative and summative assessment, seeking a balance in the use of the two or choosing the best one. The information will be collected through interviews directed to students and professors in charge of these grades, where they will be able to express their opinions about the assessment given.

Table of contents

PROBLEM

PROBLEM STATEMENT

This research is based on the perceptions that students have about assessment in the English second language learning with an emphasis on the written skill. Assessment plays a crucial role in the learning process and, accordingly, on the impact of new teaching methods (Brown et al. 1994; Gibbs 1999; Scouller 1998). The different views and opinions that students have can help to improve the teaching process given by the English teachers, and in this way contribute with an adequate environment where English is satisfactorily learned by students through the amelioration of some aspects of the assessment that need to be implemented, such as feedback that has to be present during the English learning process, the way students prepare themselves for an assessment depends on how they perceive the assessment (before, during and after the assessment), and these effects can have either positive or negative influences on learning (Boud 1990; Gielen et al. 2003; Nevo 1995). It is also important to highlight that the assessment evaluates the knowledge obtained to know if the proposed objectives were achieved or not. To develop this research the main instruments are going to be interviews; the ones to be apply for some of the students from the Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto, specifically students from 10th and 11th grade randomly to developing an observation about different perspectives of written assessment and their experiences with the type of assessment they receive.

Description of the Problem

The education system in Colombia for many years has been under the domain of summative assessment, which is that assessment that is given only at the end of a course or subject. This type of assessment allows the qualification of specific basic competencies, such as analyzing,

arguing and proposing, but excludes the valuation of the human being as a thinking being who possesses values, feelings, and attitudes. Generally, the most common strategies in summative assessment processes are the following: Assignment of final work, elaboration of essays, application of written or oral final tests, and the application of standardized (Díaz, 2018); on the contrary, the formative assessment is the constant assessment during the learning process. 'Formative assessment takes place day by day and allows the teacher and the student to adapt their respective actions to the teaching/learning situation in question. It is thus, for them, a privileged occasion for conscious reflection on their experience' (Audibert 1980, p. 62). As Audibert says, formative assessment is a type of assessment which is carried out during the development of the entire teaching-learning process, so it constitutes a frequent or systematic assessment, in which the purpose is to locate the deficiencies to fix them.

In this way education makes students worry more about the grades they get than the comments given to a certain activity. The traditional structure of written tests insofar as they demand at minimum level thinking skills for analysis and reflection obstructs the pedagogical function while the inclination to accredit knowledge rather than to implement it becomes noticeable. Taking into account the aforementioned aspects, the problem identified in this research project is the negative or positive perception that students have of the assessment in general, which of the two types of assessment should be the most accepted in education that they are receiving or if there should be a combination of them.

Objectives

General objective

To identify some of the students´ perceptions about the assessment of writing at 10th and 11th high school levels.

Specific objective

- To identify what aspects of assessment can affect students' writing learning process.

- To explore how can some aspects of assessment be improved to enhance the students' writing learning process.

Justification

Assessment is a process that is linked to education and also a difficult activity to carry out. The assessment allows to give quality to the teaching-learning process by improving it. The perceptions that students have of the way they are assessed has a great influence on the results they receive. For these reasons we have given an important value to these perceptions that will allow to make a change in the education system and in the satisfactory learning of a second language contributing in this way to managing and improving the perceptions at the time of being assessed. The term assessment causes more negative feelings than positive ones. Most of the young people who study have a negative perception at the time of being assessed since their knowledge is measured in grades that are more important than the knowledge itself. Also, the traditional way in which assessment has been given for a long time prevented the student from taking risks with learning. The perceptions that the student takes are also influenced by the communication that exists between the members of the educational community and that affects the interaction. These negative perceptions can be transformed from a positive change in the way of assessing including meaningful feedback and thus giving students confidence in teaching and learning.

Definitions of terms

Assessment

Assessment for learning is all kind of assessment for which the principal purpose in its design and practice is to promote scholars' learning; therefore; it varies from assessment designed principally aim is to serve for accountability. Assessment for learning helps to acquire in a better way the information for the reason that it provides data to be used as feedback by teachers and students in assessing themselves and each other to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are involved (Fulcher ,2010).

Summative assessment

Assessment of learning is used to evaluate the learning of the students at the end of a defined course or period; therefore, a student's knowledge can be measured; The results in this type of assessment are recorded as grades that are then separate into a student's academic evidence, whether they end up as letter grades on a report test score used in the college admissions. While summative assessments are classically a major component of the grading process in most schools, colleges, etc, not all assessments considered to be summative are graded (Amidon, Monroe, & Ortwein, 2013).

Formative assessment

Formative assessment in L2 is a variety of methods that teachers use to manage inprocess assessments of student comprehension of a specific topic, unit, etc. it helps teachers to know the weaknesses scholars can have, it could be in a specific skill, or specific standards that they have not achieved yet. One of the main points in the formative assessment is the feedback Learners can test each other on the language they have been learning.

The principal aim of formative assessment is to collect complete data that can be used to improve the education in the classroom learning while it's happening. What makes an assessment "formative" is not the design of assessments or tests; on the contrary, in the way that is used to ameliorate the way of teaching and learning (Partnership, G. S, 2014).

Feedback

Feedback is an indispensable fragment of teaching and learning procedures in the classroom. It helps learners to increase their abilities at different periods of education, raise their awareness of strengths and areas for development, and identify actions to be taken to improve performance (University of Reading, n.d).

Writing

Writing is defined by experts as the process of expressing the ideas, information, knowledge or some information to share and learn (White,1986) for Tarigan (1994) writing is an activity to produce or draw graphic symbols a language that is understood by people will understand the graphic symbols presented if they understand the language and the graphic itself.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to give a general review of the literature related to the explanations, strengths, and weaknesses of the 2 different types of assessment (formative and summative), according to different studies conducted previously.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Weigle (2007) emphasizes that writing assessment is one of the most important responsibilities of a SL teacher even if there are teachers that do not recognize this ability as something fundamental, forgetting the fact that the writing ability is a quiet difficult skill to be asses due to the complexity that it takes. To understand better the complexity, we have to check the history of writing assessment. According to Hamp-Lyons (2001) the history is divided into four generations; she suggested the first three generations, in which we find direct (essays), indirect (multiple choice), and portfolio assessment, and places the fourth emerging generation in both the humanistic and technological. Also, it is important to identify when a writing test is useful or not. Bachman and Palmer (1996:17) argue that " the most important consideration when we want to design and develop a language test is the use for which it is created, the purpose behind this, so that is what gives us the quality of a test; what is useful and what is not" that's why they define a test usefulness in six potentials: reliability, construction, cogency, interactive-ness, genuineness, influence, and practicability.

Srivastava (2014), investigated the perceptions of students towards formative assessment (FA) and analyze and compare these perceptions according to gender. The study involved 46 final year undergraduate students of dental faculty who decided to participate voluntarily. These students present 3 formative exams in which upon receiving their final score they receive feedback and also receive feedback individually. At the end of the third exam, perceptions were obtained using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as a research tool. The topics that were taken into account were format and need for FA, students' reactions to

feedback, and other suggestions and comments. The information, in a descriptive analysis, was analyzed and tabulated. In the results, it was possible to see that the great majority see the FA as an aid for them to keep studying and also see that FA improves their skills and knowledge. On the other hand, few students were neutral and mentioned that they could study even without the need for FA. The conclusions obtained were that FA is of great importance for students including problem-solving and application of knowledge within it, so the implementation of teaching strategies for better learning is necessary.

Ahmad & Mussawy (2009), studied the students' perceptions about assessment in classrooms and the analysis of educators about their teaching processes at Baghlan Higher Education Institution in Afghanistan. In this study, the main objective is to explore preservice teachers' points of view of classroom assessment and the expectations that teachers have about their students in addition to the researcher's interest in knowing what use teachers give to the results of the assessment to improve learning and classroom training. The researcher used a contrast between the opinions of students and teachers about the assessment in classrooms. The participants are the third- and fourth-year teachers and students of this institution. 19 interviews (13 individual, 6 in pairs), 3 group focus (2 for students, 1 for teachers) and 16 hours of class observation are applied. The data is qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative approach, a phenomenological approach was taken. This study contributes data to the area of teaching and assessment. With the study, it was concluded that the students presented more positive perceptions in the quantitative approach rather than in the qualitative one in which he sees that current practices have limited their learning.

Struyven, Dochy and Janssens (2006), examined the perceptions of the students towards the assessment, helping in this way in the understanding in this field. The methodology that the researchers used was the selection of documents and files related to this topic that were taken from different sources. Suitable documents were carefully investigated

and selected in libraries and the electronic library of the University of Leuven: 35 documents

met the criteria by reducing the search including the term "higher education", in which 36

empirical studies are discussed. Both qualitative and quantitative researches were wisely

chosen for attachment. Students' perceptions of standard methods and student preference over

a multiple-choice exam versus essay exams, assessment expectations were considered. What

could be concluded from this review was that the perceptions of students are strongly related

to learning approaches and the characteristics of the assessment have an impact on student

approaches in learning that is reflected in an influence that can be negative or positive.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Perceptions

According to Alan Saks and Gary Johns (2011) there are three components of

perception, the first one is the perceiver that makes reference to the person who focuses his

attention on the stimulus, it can be affected by motivational and emotional states and by

experience, the second is the target that is the object or person who is being perceived, and

the last component is the situation that includes different environmental factors that affect this

process of perception. Perception is a process where a person selects, organizes, identifies

and interprets the sensory information he receives in order to understand his environment

(Kenyon 2015), Kenion says that perception acts as a filter that allows us to exist and

interpret the world without becoming overwhelmed by the abundance of stimuli.

Assessment

Perception of assessment is defined as the students' act of perceiving the assessment

in the course under investigation (Van de Watering et al. 2006).

Ralph, T. (1994) was the first to be interested in what is the educational assessment,

that is why he is called the father of educational assessment and defines the assessment as the

process to determine to what extent the curriculum and teaching really meet the objectives of

education. In assessment, Tyler includes elements such as: What to evaluate, how to evaluate, when to evaluate and who to evaluate and in this way achieve one of its objectives, which is to improve the educational system (Crooks, 1988; Madaus, 1988; Black & Wiliam, 1998a, b; Assessment Reform Group, 1999, 2002). The considerable effects identified have suggested that it is important to think about how assessment can be used to support and improve students learning and motivation.

Within the assessment we find two types of this that are common in education, these are summative assessment (assessment of learning) and formative assessment (assessment for learning). Over the past several years, summative assessment has been comparing students' knowledge against standards; Summative assessment is a measure of an end product (PereraDiltz, 2009) this type of assessment was described as the assessment of assessment-based data for the targets of measuring academic progress at the end of specified time period for the purposes of establishing a student's academic reputation relative to some established criterion.

On the other hand, there is another type of assessment called formative assessment, here teachers and learners use information about student achievement to make adjustments to the students learning that improve their achievement (Buchanan, 1998). Scriven (1991) was one of the first to make contributions to the educational assessment and recommend the development and use of standards for the assessment of educational programs proposing the Formative Assessment and the Summative Assessment. Also, considering the assessment as a valuation science in 1967. This type of assessment permits the student to identify strengths and weaknesses and to better prepare for the "real" exam. One important dissimilarity between those two is that the usefulness of formative assessment is partly reliant upon the way through which the feedback is delivered to the pupil meanwhile the summative assessment does not care how pupil acquired information as long as they get good results to be measured. Also, teachers

in summative assessment have fewer responsibilities and commitments with students since this type of assessment does not commit the teachers to extra work so, that their students receive all the necessary input because only the output matters; furthermore, the intensity of the final examination in summative assessment causes a critical anxiety for some students resulting in the bad grades on their tests, and there are major boundaries in the range of types of outcomes that can be assessed in a final assessment. A less obvious disadvantage is that because the examination often has been set by someone other than the students' usual teachers, the syllabus and supervision are given by the instructors may be poorly matched with the actual requirements of the examination. While the resulting student performances may accurately reflect what the students knew about something, they may not be very valid for the purposes for which the result is to be used. For example, admitting students to different stages of education. Students who have had ideal leadership and, good guidance through college may be unfairly advantaged over those who have not.

In the world it is well known that summative assessment plays an important part in the field of education rather than formative assessment. Scholars look for being the ones who have the best scores than being the ones who are learning the most. Nonetheless, Black and William's extensive review of the literature (1998) has changed the view towards assessment. They reviewed more than 250 articles and books to examine the effect of formative assessment on students' performance. Formative assessment enhances the appearance of new methods and increases an effective feedback. Motivation and self-assessment are also encouraged in formative assessment (Black & William, 1998). Unfortunately, this type of assessment has been neglected because we live in a society who gives overemphasis on giving scores rather than an emphasis on the feedback. Also, low achieving students start to believe that they cannot learn as the ones who are on the top. These ones are just some problems mentioned in Black and William's review (1998).

Rea-Dickins and Gardner (2000) were the ones who focused on the characteristics of formative assessment. They interviewed English as an Additional Language teachers and observed their classes; They questioned the consistency and validity of classroom assessment "the validity of the inferences about the way in which the children use language seems to be equally important, whether the aim is assessment for learning, i.e., formative assessment or assessment for establishing levels of achievement, i.e., summative and evaluative" (ReaDickins and Gardner, p 238).

Wei (2010) conducted research which shows that formative assessment is effective encouraging motivation and performance in learners. He also suggested some advices to improve the quality of formative assessment. For example, performing needs analysis and formulating assessment plans.

Brookhart (1996) raises the question: can summative and formative assessment be mixed? The argument given in this case in which the formative and summative assessment cannot be mixed is that the assessment could interfere with learning and motivation, and when a grade and feedback is provided, the latter is set aside and grades have more consideration. In many investigations of the effects of the grades vs. comments (Butter & Nisan, 1986; Page, 1958; Steward & White, 1976) conclude that comments are better for learning.

A concept discussed in this article is the feedback that can be taken in an evaluative or descriptive manner. Evaluative feedback is judgment such as: excellent, good, poor. While when the feedback is descriptive it could work in a better way for the learner because the quality of the work is described without judging. Exactly how much description is involved will vary by situation, but the feedback should describe student work in terms of the learning target that is the object of the students' endeavors (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Crooks, about the issue whether feedback and summative assessment are better separated, wrote that "McPartland (1987), Miller (1976) Sadler (1983), and Slavin (1978) presented strong arguments. They argue where the assessment is significant for the student's grade, the student tends to pay less attention to the feedback and consequently learn less from it, but this could be reduced if there are several opportunities to evaluate their achievements by taking the last opportunity into account for the student's grade" (p.457).

Writing

Byrne (1988) defines writing as the act of forming graphic symbols then making marks on a flat surface of some kind. But writing is clearly much more than the production symbols, just a speech is more the production of sounds. Tarigan (1994) concludes that writing is a tool communication by using symbols to understand a language in written. Writing is turning your mind inside out. When we put our thought and feelings into words and put those words into paper, we are writing. Writing is more than that, however. Thoughts on paper must make sense to someone else-a reader. Writing is communication:

communicating thoughts and ideas to another (Olson, Miles C., *et. al.* 1982) .According to Lauer, Janice M., *et. al.* (1981) writing is a process by which we make meaning of our experience. One of the chief ways of responding to experience is, of course, by speaking and writing by using language to express yourself. It means that information is provided not only in spoken but also in written form.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter of the research project we will explain the design, the method chosen, the population, the sample and their respective analysis of it. Also, important information about the research which will help in the process to achieve our objectives.

DESIGN

To begin with the design, it is necessary to know that our research project is qualitative in nature, which means that we will focus more on knowing the reasons for a specific social phenomenon taking into account the understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the human being. "Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world" (Mason, 2002, P.1) the qualitative research tries to understand how things work in a social context; hence, the qualitative research attempts to Comprehend the several experiences and point of view of our participants, the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships works, and the significance of the meanings (Mason, 2002).

METHOD

The method we chose is phenomenology that is based on the lived experiences of a particular group. The relation between the method and this research is the analysis of the experience that students have with their assessment with an emphasis in the written skill, study perceptions and understandings. The central aim of the approach is to reach at a description of the nature of the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

POPULATION

For this study, the population that we decided to consider are the students of the upper grades (10th and 11th grade) because they are young people who perceive the assessment in a different way, and need more than just a grade for example feedback, explanations of things they do not understand and also expand their knowledge to use it outside the classroom.

The Institution selected for this research is Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto, known as one of the best public institutions located in the south-western part of Colombia, in the municipality of Nariño; this institution receives students of almost every part of the city especially the ones located in the south- western. The school has 4 courses of 11th and 10th grade in the morning and 4 in the afternoon, with 124 students in total.

SAMPLE

To develop this research, we choose 10 students from each grade 10th and 11th of the Institution Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto, those ones are randomly selected. These students are in a range between 15 and 19 years old. Also, gender and academic level will not be a key point in this study.

DATA COLLECTION

In this study we are going to apply interviews to the tenth and eleventh-grade students, these ones are designed focusing on the major issues that are visible in the teaching and learning process of English in the public schools.

Also, for reinforce the information provide for the students, we decide to apply a second instrument which is an interview to the teachers involved in the teaching process to our participants

To develop this research, we decided to choose the qualitative method because we will do interviews to some students of 10 and 11 grades and teachers of Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto with the objective of interpreting the perceptions that these students have about the way in which their teachers evaluate them focusing these perceptions on the acquisition of English as a second language in the writing skill.

INSTRUMENTS

Our first instrument is an interview for students that consists of 7 open questions in which we will know the opinions of them about the assessment and how they feel. The second instrument is an interview directed to the teachers in which we will reinforce the information provided for the students. It also consists of 7 open questions (See Appendix A for the instruments)

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

In qualitative research, categorization becomes an important part of the analysis. and interpretation of the results in our research project. This process consists of the identification of patterns in the data coming from the places that are selected for developed a particular study. Categorization constitutes an essential mechanism in reducing the information collected categories (Chavez, 2005).

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APPENDIX A

University of Nariño
Linguistics and Languages Department
English and French

Students' perceptions about assessment in English second language learning in 10th

and 11th grades of IEMCP.

Dear student, this interview consists of 7 questions related to the evaluation that takes place in 'Institución Educativa Municipal Ciudad de Pasto' to students of 11th and 10th grades. the purpose is identifying the perceptions that students have about assessment in their English classes focus on written evaluation. Please be honest when answering and provide as much information as possible. We thank you very much for your collaboration.

Instructions
Please, answer all the questions as clear as you can. If you do not understand a question or some terminology, ask to the interviewers. Also, if you need more space to provide more information to the questions, use the back of the paper or ask for a new one.

Background information

Age:
Female ___ Male___ Date:
Hour:

Interview

1. Do you think that a grade can define how much you know? Yes/No Why?

_____
_____
_____

2. How does the teacher give you the grades? (Orally, written, with comments, numbers, others)

_____
_____
_____

3. What type of questions does the teacher provide you when you take a written test?

_____
___

_____
_____

4. Do you think that the way your English teacher evaluates the written tests is
    adequate? Yes/No Why?

_____
_____
_____

5. Which conditions can affect you at the moment of presenting a written exam?

_____
_____
_____

6. What is your opinion about the evaluation in the written part?

_____
_____
_____

7. What type of written activities are the most commonly used? What do you think is the
    most effective one? why?

_____
_____
_____

Nariño University
Linguistics and Languages
College of Human Sciences
Department

Students' perceptions about assessment in English second language learning in 10th

and 11th grades of IEMCP.

Interview for teachers

Teacher: Grade:

Date:

1. Do you evaluate the writing skill? how?

_____
_____
_____

2. According to your experience, what are the most effective methods, ways, techniques, etc. to evaluate the writing skill?

_____
_____
_____

3. Do you provide feedback to your students after a written evaluation?

_____
_____
_____

4. Do you provide the days that the evaluation, quizzes, tests are going to take place?

_____
_____
_____

5. Do you attend your students who seem to have difficulties when are presenting a written test?

_____
_____
_____

6. Do you explain each point to be developed in the written test before students begin to develop it?

    _____

    _____

_____

_____

7. Do you think that the class environment changes every time a written evaluation is done? How?

_____

_____

_____

Comments and observations: