MODULE 5
5.6 – COLLECTING MEANINGFUL DATA FOR ASSESSMENT

In the last video, we talked about how to carry out a needs analysis and determine learning outcomes. In this video, we will see together how to collect meaningful data for assessment and we will identify criteria so as to evaluate students' performances.

However, first of all, we would like to point out a couple of principles concerning the role of the teacher in task based assessment. First, we as teachers do not evaluate or correct learners in the course of the task. We take notes of the mistakes, but in order not to disrupt the fluency and the flow the learners, we are to address the mistakes and evaluate a task in the "post-task" stage, which is focused on the language usage (form, meaning, pronunciation etc.) Moreover, the assessment process needs to be continuous, feedback and evaluation after each task are essential for learners to build upon fluency and accuracy of their language usage. Hence, every task entails a post-task stage, during which students can either get peer or teacher assessment.

However, how we can collect meaningful data for assessment? As we have already said in the previous videos, task-based assessment should be as close to real life as possible. For this reason, role plays and imaginary situations are common practices in TBLT. Learners are not only evaluated on being linguistically correct, but also if they manage to complete the task (e.g. if they created a list of worth-seeing films, or if the audience understood their presentation, and if the content had an impact on the group´s activities). Production tasks such as case studies, role plays, project works and simulations are among the most common activities. Simulations and project work are often more open-ended, creative and subjective, which means they are suitable for advanced students, while case studies are problem-based with the outcome being problem solved or not, hence the result is clearer to evaluate.

Among the other methods used in task-based assessment, it is worth to mention observation schedules, journals and portfolios. Observation schedules are simple checklists that enable teachers to look at one aspect of the classroom during a lesson or a series of lessons. Some of them are very complex and aim at investigating interaction patterns and dynamics among students. These schedules are extremely useful to collect data in order to improve both teaching and learning. As for journals, it is a excellent means to monitor students' writing skills as well as assess their progresses during a course.

Finally, we will talk about portfolios which are a popular and effective way of motivating learners, providing a fun way to review language and helping them to reflect on their own journey. They are a collection of individual students' work and can be updated as language learning continues. They are a useful tool to help students to self-evaluate their written production and identify their weaknesses and strengths, organize and collect their learning experiences, and monitor their own progresses.

In the end we should talk about the criteria we can use so ad to judge task results. It is important to take into consideration real-world criteria according to the given task and the product which will be eventually be produce. Moreover, it is essential to evaluate the main steps of task production. We need to evaluate linguistic and paralinguistic items (accuracy, fluency, gestures, non-verbal communication features), content and other characteristics (such as visuals and efficacy).

This is an extremely complex and important topic; therefore we invite you to have a look at the document we have prepared for you. In the next and final video we will talk about reflective practice in order to think about your way of teaching and improve your skills.

References

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