

APPLYING CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES (CATs): REFLECTION ON TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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The given paper presents the reflection on teaching with the application of various CATs (Classroom Assessment Techniques). CATs belong to formative assessment and are aimed mainly at monitoring of learning progress. The detailed and deepest study on CATs can be found in the book by Tomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross "Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers" (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Based on Angelo and Cross's classification we delivered teaching with the application of some CATs (one or two CATs were selected from five CATs groups). The selected CATs were validated during the second term of this academic year (2019-2020) within master degree students of the Department of English language and literature of the Faculty of Philology in Gavar State University (Armenia) within two courses – "Multilinguistic Didactics" and "Intercultural Communication". In the view of COVID-19 pandemic and the sanitary situation in the country we switched to distance learning as soon as the state of emergency was announced in March 2020. As a result, both academic programs were updated (topics covered, assignments, class activities, learning materials and tools, etc.). The application of CATs gave us the opportunity to evaluate the changes and improvements made in the programs. The detailed overview of the techniques used, their benefits and procedures are presented in the given paper.

Keywords: *assessment, formative assessment, Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), application of CATs, feedback.*

INTRODUCTION

Classroom assessment is a formative rather than a summative technique to evaluate. Its main goal is not to grade students, but to develop and improve their learning process. It gives feedback about teacher's effectiveness and provides students with the idea of their progress. Due to classroom assessment we get a great deal of information on what, how well and how much students are learning.

The deepest study on classroom assessment techniques can be found in a book written by **Tomas A. Angelo** and **K. Patricia Cross** “Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers” [1]. Fifty CATs are presented in this book with examples of how they have been used, pros, cons, time commitment, and ideas of adaptation. “The central purpose of Classroom Assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom” through an approach that is “learner-centered, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context-specific, and firmly rooted in good practice” [1, p. 4].

It is of utmost importance to understand that CATs are formative in nature. In contrast with final exams or term papers, CATs give feedback on student’s learning when the teaching/ learning process is ongoing. In this way, academic staff, instructors, counsellors, etc. are still able to interfere during the academic period in order to help students learn more effectively. CATs are speedy, and the results are figured out during a few minutes. They give a clear report about learner’s progress, which can be read by the faculty easily and quickly. Besides, these CATs are flexible, as they can be adapted to the specific cases of the instructor. Sometimes they can be anonymous, because students are ashamed of their own thoughts or drawbacks, so it is easier to get feedback in an anonymous way. Simply put, the purpose of classroom assessment is not to grade students immediately, but to provide the teacher or supervisor as well as faculty and department with the information about student’s learning.

The selected techniques listed below represent CATs which we have taken into consideration and applied during the teaching sessions:¹

- ✚ Assessment of Prior Knowledge, Recall, Understanding;
- ✚ Assessment of Skill in synthesis and creative thinking;
- ✚ Assessment of Skill in application and performance;
- ✚ Assessment of Skill in analysis and critical thinking;
- ✚ Assessment of learners’ reaction to class activities, assignments and materials.

Angelo and Cross recommend educators (teachers, lecturers, instructors, etc.) to take into account a set of recommendations while using CATs [1]. Some of these tips are exemplified below:

- ✓ To use only those approaches which are appropriate to their judgment and professional experience,
- ✓ To start with simple and fast methods that are comfortable and friendly for learners and teachers,
- ✓ To use the CATs that they have used previously on their own,

¹ Out of the multiple CATs suggested by Angelo and Cross we have listed just a few here.

✓ “To close the loop” by announcing to the class what the students have discovered from their feedback and how they can utilize the material.

METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration the aforementioned tips, during our teaching sessions the emphasis was placed on some CATs which were appropriate to us and our class, were easy to apply and could provide us with the necessary data.

The CATs were applied during the spring term of this academic year (2019-2020) in Gavar State University (Armenia) within two courses (namely, “Multilinguistic Didactics” and “Intercultural Communication”) for Master students of the Department of English Language and Literature of the Faculty of Philology.

The methodology of the CATs implementation included the following steps to be taken:

1. From a wide range of CATs to select those which were going to be implemented into the teaching.
2. To explore the selected CATs in order to understand their importance, role and process of implementation (step-by-step procedure).
3. To develop a work plan for the implementation of CATs for a particular topic or/and module, course, etc.
4. To implement CATs into the teaching process.
5. To reflect on the results of the CATs application.

APPLYING CATs

CATs applied during the teaching sessions belong to all five groups of CATs mentioned above. From each group we chose one or two CATs to be implemented.

1. Assessing Prior Knowledge, Recall, and Understanding

Two CATs from this group were selected to be applied: the One-Minute Paper and the Muddiest Point.

Applying the One-Minute Paper. While using this CAT we stopped the lesson two or three minutes earlier and asked the students to answer briefly the following questions (the questions can be modified slightly according to the class needs or other reasons):

✚ “What was the most important thing you learned during this class (today, during this week, month, etc.)?”

✚ “What important question remains unanswered?” (Or, “What are you still confused about?”).

This method gives a quick feedback on what learners hesitate or what is least intelligible. This method lets the supervisor evaluate the match between the instructional aims and learners’ reception of these purposes and their own learning. And because the instructor knows what learners perceive to be their own learning problems, the possibility that the learners will get responses to those questions in the next class period is increased.

Applying the Muddiest Point. While applying this technique students have to write down a speedy answer to the following question: *“What was the muddiest point in the lesson, the homework assignment, the reading passage, the test, the film, etc.”?* This method gives a quick feedback on what learners hesitate or what is confusing. This information can be very useful as it gives an excellent opportunity to the lecturer or curricula designer to understand how much time is needed to spend on a particular topic(s) or module(s) and to modify the teaching materials according to the students’ feedback. Learners should also speedily evaluate what they misunderstand and should be able to express their confusion. Sometimes it is just enough to gather the answers according to the specific muddy point.

Within the course “Multilinguistic Didactics” one of the muddiest points was the topic on competences when students had to deal with various models and classifications of competences. The result of the CAT was devoting more time to the given topic and developing a practical assignment which was aimed at better understanding of the issue. The practical assignment was *to analyze exercises from English textbooks and try to understand the goal of each exercise in the perspective of the competence they enhance.* The assignment itself was rather difficult for the students due to the fact that they had never reflected on the overall goal and specific objectives of the assignments before. The conclusion that the students drew upon the completion of the assignment was that *each assignment, task, exercise should be designed and developed bearing in mind which competence it improves.*

2. Assessing Skill in Analysis and Critical Thinking

A CAT called **Pro and Con Grid** was selected to be applied. Students are asked to make lists of pros and cons, costs and benefits, or advantages and disadvantages of an issue of concern. The main advantage of this assessment technique is that it forces students to go beyond their first reactions, to search for at least two sides to the issue in question, and to weigh the value of competing claims. While studying the topic “Types of Communication: Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication” within the course “Intercultural Communication” the Pro and Con Grid was applied. The students were assigned to find at least two advantages and disadvantages of verbal and non-verbal communication and complete the grid. They were required to draw up a short list of pros and cons on the given topic. The assignment can be completed individually or as a group work. In our case it was an individual assignment. After completing the task the students were asked to compare the results with each other by mentioning the points that they had placed forth as pros and cons. The next step was to create a grid which contained the most frequent points the students had put forward. It is worth mentioning here that each student’s contribution is valuable and cannot be ignored. This CAT enables to involve all the

participants of the educational process into active discussion which is a great asset in itself. The completed grid is presented below.

Table 1: Pro and Con Grid completed in class.

THE ADVANTAGES (BENEFITS) AND DISADVANTAGES OF VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION	
VERBAL communication	NON-VERBAL communication
<p>Advantages (benefits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has less chance of confusion or/and misunderstanding the message. • Leads to prompt interchange of information. • Does not require the presence of both parties at the same place. • Long conversation is possible. • It saves time and money. • It is the most common and widely adopted means of communication globally. 	<p>Advantages (benefits)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information can simply be demonstrated through using noticeable, audio-visual and silent means of non-verbal communication. • Non-verbal message may be alternative for spoken message when needed.
<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can be costly sometimes, especially when you have to communicate in a language you do not speak (translation and interpretation costs). ▪ Can create misunderstanding sometimes (subtle hints, implicit meaning, etc.) ▪ Too many ways of communication (a wide range of languages). 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has more chance of confusion or/and misunderstanding the message (especially if the communication is happening in the intercultural context). ▪ Can take more time in some cases especially when there are cultural differences. ▪ Requires the presence of both parties at the same place. ▪ A long conversation is not possible.

The Pro and Con Grid helps to draw conclusions since the issue can be explored from different viewpoints. In our case the students came up with the following conclusion. *Verbal communication is the most efficient way of communicating between two individuals or groups of people. In spite of its benefits it has some disadvantages as well. Therefore, it is very important for an individual to be able to demonstrate good or excellent verbal skills in order to overcome misunderstanding the distortion of the message.*

3. Assessing Skill in Synthesis and Creative Thinking

The **One-Sentence Summary** was selected to be applied from this group of CATs. While applying this CAT the students reply queries, ***“Who does what to whom, where,***

when, how, and why? (WDWWWHW)” on a provided topic and then build a single concise, grammatically correct and long overview sentence. The purpose of this CAT is to assess the degree and depth to which students are able to interpret a large amount of knowledge in a detailed and full way. The CAT can be modified according to the topic covered, aim and specific objectives of the lecture, etc.

This CAT is very beneficial for the students as they practice the skill to condense a large amount of information into tiny and interrelated pieces which are much simpler to organize and recover. For instance, after the lecture on the Theory of multiple intelligences the students were assigned **to express the main idea of the lecture in one sentence**: *The lecture is about Howard Gardner who first outlined his theory in 1983 in his book “Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences”, where he suggested that all people have different kinds of “intelligences” and proposed that there are eight intelligences (visual-spatial, linguistic-verbal, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic).* This CAT is aimed at improving the skills in synthesis which can be useful while writing summaries for papers, drawing conclusions, coming up with suggestions and recommendations, etc.

4. Assessing Skill in Application and Performance

Application Cards CAT was selected to be applied from this group. After students have heard or read about an important principle, generalization, theory, or procedure, the instructor has them submit at least one possible, real-world application for what they have just learned. For instance, while studying the Theory of multiple intelligences by H. Gardner and the Theory of Learning styles the students were to answer the question where they could apply the gained knowledge on the aforementioned theories. The students came up with the following answer: *The theory of multiple intelligences can be applied while teaching any subject and discipline. While teaching foreign languages we should take into consideration multiple intelligences our students possess as well as different learning styles they prefer and, hence, develop class activities, assignments, teaching materials, etc. accordingly.* While studying Language learning strategies the students were assigned to suggest various learning strategies for a particular lesson from English textbooks. Therefore, their skills in application and performance were assessed.

5. Assessing Learners’ Reactions to Class Activities, Assignments, and Materials

A CAT called **RSQC2 (Recall, Summarize, Question, Connect, and Comment)** was selected to be applied from this group. This technique is best used at regular intervals. Students submit the instructor their recall, understanding, and evaluations of a class session. The students may also include any questions or comments they have about the session.

We used this CAT after the completion of two courses – “Multilinguistic Didactics” and “Intercultural Communication” by the end of the spring (second) term of this academic year. Since we switched to distance learning due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in March

2020, a new set of activities was designed and delivered during the lecture sessions. The whole teaching was organized with the help of the MOODLE and ZOOM platforms. All teaching/learning materials were uploaded onto MOODLE, and students had an opportunity to use them according to their needs and at their own pace.

By the end of the courses the students were kindly asked to evaluate the learning materials which were used during the second term grading them from 1 to 10. The list of the learning materials is presented below:

- Lecture materials (script of the lectures),
- Power Point Presentations,
- Short Videos (from YouTube),
- Self-evaluation (self-assessment) tests,
- Interactive presentations,
- Cases,
- Useful links (additional material: scientific papers, articles, websites, e-books, etc.).

It turned out that students liked videos, self-evaluation tests (e.g. to assess their level of foreign language proficiency according to CEFR, to understand their own learning style(s), to assess their level of intercultural competence with the help of MPQ (The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire), Multiple Intelligences Quiz, etc.), Interactive presentations (on the process of communication, the Theory of Multiple Intelligences by H. Gardner, etc.) as well as cases (some examples of cases will be presented further in the paper) best.

Next, students were asked to evaluate assignments grading them from 1 to 10. The list of the assignments used during the teaching is presented below:

- Video time with discussions,
- Movie watching with discussions,
- Your (the students') presentations (for instance, on constructed language /conlangs),
- Your (the students') survey (for instance, on multilingualism around you),
- English textbook analysis (on competences) conducted by the students,
- Resolving cases.

It turned out that students really enjoyed short videos (from YouTube) with the discussions (the videos were uploaded on MOODLE, the questions for reflection and discussion were developed beforehand and suggested to the students to be discussed at the next lesson). During the course "Intercultural Communication" two movies ("My Big Fat Greek Wedding", Parts 1 and 2) and a cartoon movie ("Coco") were watched and discussed with the students. The students were provided with question points to concentrate on, e.g.

- ✓ *What are the main communication barriers the characters of the movie face?*
- ✓ *How did they manage to overcome these communication barriers?*
- ✓ *Would we face similar barriers if the characters were Armenians?*

✓ *What new information did you get from the movie and the cartoon on Greek and Mexican cultures?*

✓ *Are there any similarities between Greek and Armenian, Mexican and Armenian cultures in the perspective of traditions, habits, beliefs, celebrations, holidays, etc.?*

The feedback provided by the students came to prove that movie/cartoon watching with the discussion was one of the most enjoyable tasks.

Resolving cases proved to be very beneficial for the students as they were able to see how to implement the knowledge they acquire during the teaching sessions into everyday activities. Generally speaking, cases are aimed to link the theoretical knowledge and practical skills. They are used by teachers in order to see how students apply received knowledge in daily situation related to their professional career. Below are examples of some cases developed and applied within our courses during the teaching sessions.

Case #1

Sona Harutyunyan is an adult student of English at one of the language centres in Yerevan. At present she can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., she can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken, she can also produce simple connected text on topics that are familiar or of personal interest and describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Define her level of English proficiency according to CEFR. What is the next level she can take after completion of this level?

Case #2

Aram Sargsyan is a student at Gavar State University. He wants to continue his studies in one of European universities within Erasmus+ programme. He took a TOEFL IBT last year and got 98 out of 120.

Define his level of English proficiency according to CEFR. Consult equivalence charts if needed.

The last part of the feedback included three open questions:

- 1. Name at least 3 topics from each course that you enjoyed most.*
- 2. What would you like to change in both courses?*
- 3. What would you like to add (teaching materials, assignments, activities, etc.) in order to improve the courses?*

This part of the feedback was of utmost importance for us as it gave the opportunity to reveal the strong and weak points of the courses. It turned out that students enjoyed the second module of the course “Multilinguistic Didactics” best where we discussed the **Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Howard Gardner** and its application during foreign

language classes, followed by a lecture on **Learning styles** and their application in a foreign language class and a lecture on **Language learning strategies** (definition and various classification models). It is worth mentioning that this module was added to the course this year and the results of the feedback showed that the decision to include these topics into the course was well justified. Concerning the second course “Intercultural Communication” the students liked the topics related to **Communication barriers** (definition, types of barriers, ways to overcome these barriers) as, according to the students’ feedback, this topic not only gave them theoretical knowledge but also provided them with some practical skills on how to overcome various barriers to effective communication. The lecture was followed by a movie watching and discussion on the same topic which provided additional practice for the students.

Answering the third question (*What would you like to add to the course?*) the students mentioned online quizzes after each lecture or at least after each module. Taking into consideration the opportunities that MOODLE provides, we think that quizzes can be added to both courses. The course material itself enables us to include various types of questions while developing quizzes on MOODLE (multiple choice questions, true/false questions, drag and drop questions, etc.). Hopefully, by the next academic year, our students will have the opportunity to test their knowledge and skills with the help of quizzes created on MOODLE as well. It is worth mentioning that some assignments which were called “cases” but actually were a combination of cases and multiple choice questions were developed and applied during classes. Besides, we are considering developing quizzes not only on the MOODLE but on other quiz-makers as well (e.g. Kahoot, Quizlet, Mentimeter, etc.).

CONCLUSION

To sum it up, frequent use of CATs is beneficial in different aspects. The basic reasons to use CATs are the regular feedback about the learners’ improvement, possibility to provide help in order to overcome difficulties with assignments like tests, quizzes, projects, etc., the opportunity of self-evaluation (self-assessment), to name just a few.

It goes without saying that these techniques are flexible, therefore, they can be used in different classes for different purposes. Which technique, when, how often or why to apply depends on the academic course, class, particular topic and/or module, and the main reason for assessing students’ learning progress.

References

1. Angelo, Thomas A., & Cross, K. Patricia. (1993). *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

ԼՍԱՐԱՆԻ ԳՆԱՀԱՏՄԱՆ ՁԵՎԵՐԻ ԿԻՐԱՌՄԱՆ ՀԱՐՑԻ ՇՈՒՐՋ (դասավանդման փորձի ներկայացում)

ՍԱՐԳՍՅԱՆ ՌՈՒԶԱՆՆԱ

*Մանկավարժական գիտությունների թեկնածու, դոցենտ,
ԳՊՀ օլտար լեզվի և գրականության ամբիոնի դասախոս*

Սույն հոդվածում ներկայացված է մեր դասավանդման փորձը լսարանի գնահատման մի շարք ձևերի կիրառմամբ: Լսարանի գնահատման եղանակները ձևավորող գնահատման մասն են կազմում և միտված են առաջին հերթին ուսումնառության առաջընթացի մշտադիտարկմանը: Լսարանի գնահատման ձևերը ներկայացված են Թոմաս Անջելոյի և Պատրիցիա Քրոսի գրքում (Tomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993)։

Հիմնվելով Անջելոյի և Քրոսի առաջարկած դասակարգման վրա՝ մեր կողմից իրականացվել է փորձարարական ուսուցում լսարանի գնահատման մի շարք ձևերի կիրառմամբ /հոդվածում ներկայացված ձևերի հինգ խմբերից ընտրել ենք մեկ-երկուսը/: Դրանք փորձարկվել են սույն ուսումնական տարվա երկրորդ կիսամյակում Գավառի պետական համալսարանի բանասիրական ֆակուլտետի «Անգլերեն լեզու և գրականություն» բաժնի մագիստրատուրայի ուսանողների հետ երկու դասընթացի շրջանակներում /«Բազմալեզվադիդակտիկա» և «Միջմշակութային հաղորդակցություն»/: COVID-19 համավարակի և դրան հաջորդած Արտակարգ դրության հայտարարումից հետո ս.թ. մարտին անցում կատարվեց հեռավար կրթության: Դրանով պայմանավորված՝ մեր կողմից վերանայվեցին վերոնշյալ դասընթացների առարկայական ծրագրերը /թեմատիկ բովանդակության ընդլայնում, նոր առաջադրանքների մշակում, ուսումնական նյութերի թարմացում և այլն/: Լսարանային գնահատման ձևերի կիրառումը հեռավար դասերի ընթացքում հնարավորություն տվեց պարզելու, թե որքանով էին արդարացված վերոնշյալ փոփոխությունները: Հոդվածում ներկայացրել ենք կիրառված տեխնիկաների մանրամասն նկարագրությունը, դրանց հնարավորությունները, առավելությունները, ինչպես նաև գործարկման ընթացակարգը:

Բանալի բառեր. *գնահատում, ձևավորող գնահատում, լսարանի գնահատման ձևեր, հեղադարձ կապ:*

ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕ ТЕХНИК ВНУТРИКЛАССНОГО ОЦЕНИВАНИЯ: ИЗ ОПЫТА ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ

САРКИСЯН РУЗАННА

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В данной статье представлен опыт преподавания с применением различных техник внутриклассного оценивания. Техники внутриклассного оценивания относятся к формирующему оцениванию и направлены в первую очередь на отслеживание прогресса учащихся в процессе обучения. Техники внутриклассного оценивания детально разработаны и представлены в книге Томаса Анджело и Патриции Кросс (Tomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross, *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993).

Взяв за основу классификацию Анджело и Кросс, нами было проведено опытное обучение с использованием некоторых техник (из каждой группы /было рассмотрено 5 групп/ были выбраны одна-две техники). Техники были апробированы в течение второго семестра этого учебного года (2019-2020) среди студентов магистратуры отделения английского языка и литературы филологического факультета Гаварского государственного университета в процессе прохождения двух дисциплин – “Мультилингводидактика” и “Межкультурная коммуникация”. В связи с санитарно-эпидемиологической ситуацией в стране из-за пандемии КОВИД-19 и последовавшим переходом на дистанционную форму обучения (март 2020 г.), программы дисциплин были пересмотрены нами (тематическое наполнение, задания, учебные материалы и пр.). Техники внутриклассного оценивания предоставили возможность понять, насколько оправданными были изменения в программе. Подробное описание использованных техник, их возможностей, достоинств и процедуры внедрения представлено в данной статье.

Ключевые слова: *оценивание, формирующее оценивание, техники внутриклассного оценивания, применение техник внутриклассного оценивания, обратная связь.*

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