

UDC 372.881.1

https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/77/67

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHER UNDERSTANDING OF FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT FOR EFFECTIVE ENGLISH WRITING TEACHING IN AZERBAIJAN AS A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: THE CASE OF ACADEMIC IELTS WRITING TASK 2

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ВАЖНОСТЬ ПОНИМАНИЯ УЧИТЕЛЕМ ФОРМИРУЮЩЕГО ОЦЕНИВАНИЯ ДЛЯ ЭФФЕКТИВНОГО ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ НА ПРИМЕРЕ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО ПИСЬМЕННОГО ЗАДАНИЯ 2 IELTS

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Abstract. This article is devoted to studying teacher literacy of IELTS writing Task 2 assessment in Azerbaijan as a developing country. The problem regarding lack of teacher literacy in this area as well as reasons lying behind it were discussed to achieve an expedient conclusion. The article also describes further plans in regard to possible solutions to this problem. Writing is a very challenging module for IELTS teachers in Azerbaijan regarding the implementation of right tools while evaluating. We are convinced of this because of our awareness of students' unfavorable writing Task 2 results in Azerbaijan. Considering the fact that ongoing assessment is an inseparable part of teaching, it appears reasonable that it is teacher's literacy level of assessment, as one of the greatly influential factors, that lies at the root of students' adverse writing test results. The reason that makes us to focus on teacher assessment literacy in regard to this issue is that both need for teaching to IELTS test as well as integration of assessment methods into teaching process are new tendencies in Azerbaijan which require some more time and efforts from teachers to adapt. So teacher literacy of IELTS writing Task 2 assessment is generally the main idea of this article.

Аннотация. Эта статья посвящена изучению грамотности учителей при оценивании письменного задания 2 IELTS в Азербайджане. Для достижения целесообразного вывода была обсуждена проблема, связанная с недостаточной грамотностью учителей в этой области, а также причины, лежащие в ее основе. В статье также описываются дальнейшие планы в отношении возможных решений этой проблемы. Письмо- очень сложный модуль для преподавателей IELTS в Азербайджане, касающийся применения правильных инструментов при оценивании. Мы убеждены в этом из-за нашей осведомленности о неблагоприятных результатах учащихся по письменному заданию 2 в Азербайджане. Учитывая тот факт, что текущая оценка является неотъемлемой частью преподавания, представляется разумным, что в основе неблагоприятных результатов письменных тестов учащихся лежит оценка уровня грамотности учителя как одного из наиболее влиятельных факторов. Причина, которая заставляет нас сосредоточиться на оценке грамотности учителей в связи с этим вопросом, заключается в том, что как необходимость обучения тесту IELTS, так и интеграция методов оценки в учебный процесс являются новыми тенденциями в Азербайджане, которые требуют от учителей больше времени и усилий для адаптации. Таким образом, оценивание грамотности учителей по написанию задания 2 IELTS, как правило, является основной идеей этой статьи.

Keywords: assessment literacy, formative assessment, IELTS writing, teacher feedback.

Ключевые слова: оценочная грамотность, формирующее оценивание, написание IELTS, обратная связь с преподавателем.

Introduction

Assessment literacy is defined as the knowledge of means for assessing what students know and can do, how to interpret the results from these assessments, and how to apply these results to improve student learning and program effectiveness [12]. "Of course, the idea that assessment can help learning is not new, but what is new is a growing body of evidence that suggests that attention to what is sometimes called formative assessment, or assessment for learning, is one of the most powerful ways of improving student achievement" [13, 14]. Despite this, according to Paul Black & Dylan Wiliam, formative assessment is not well understood by teachers and is weak in practice [15]. Highlighting the importance of teacher's assessment literacy as one of the main keys in teaching writing, Dempsey et al mention that "writing is a skill which is often ignored in L2 classrooms because teachers lack adequate training in writing instruction and assessment" [4].

Regarding Azerbaijan, in fact, despite the adoption of global assessment methods in Azerbaijan education as one of the effectively influential factors in the improvement of English writing teaching, continuous search for the key to success in this process is obviously necessary because having recently integrated into international education system, Azerbaijan education is experiencing challenges to meet the demands of this system which is reflected in all aspects of education including implementation of assessment tools. Moreover, considering the significance of IELTS instructor's knowledge and practical skills of continuous assessment of writing through preparing student to test in their test results, IELTS teacher's writing assessment literacy appears as a critical subject to investigate (<https://clck.ru/eporq>).

Teacher knowledge of formative assessment in L2 writing classroom has been addressed by different researchers who have investigated the effect of it on teaching writing. Showing the lack of training received by teachers as a reason why writing is often neglected in the classroom, Dempsey et al. emphasize the importance of providing teachers with assessment skills [4]. Crusan et al. support this view highlighting that "good assessment practices are essential to the teaching of second language writing" [3].

Subjects regarding "assessment categories in writing including formative and criterion-referenced types" [7], "teacher development and assessment literacy" [9] as well as topics such as "EFL Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy" [13] and "Diagnostic Assessment of L2 Academic Writing Product" [15] have been studied by different researchers. Moreover, various researches were conducted into Academic IELTS Writing related topics, ignoring "the impact of Teacher-correction on the performance of students on IELTS writing test" [1], or addressing "the perceptions of students regarding the writing component of the IELTS" [8]. However, obviously, the literature on the role of teacher literacy in formative assessment of IELTS writing, as Pearson cites, "has not yet been undertaken" [10]. According to him, "how teachers respond to IELTS tasks, particularly to learners 250-word Writing Task 2 practice compositions, has not been the subject of research, and is consequently poorly-understood."

Teacher literacy of IELTS writing Task 2 assessment is generally the main idea of this article which considers the following detailed points related to this topic.

Objectives:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive the role of evaluation in teaching academic IELTS Task 2? Which formative-assessment techniques do they use through this process?

2. Do [teachers] transfer feedback techniques from general EFL writing to IELTS, or approach feedback with techniques unique to the context of the task? [10].

3. To what extent can teachers implement the IELTS writing assessment criteria in formative assessment?

4. To what extent are IELTS teachers provided with relevant knowledge and skills of writing assessment.

Methodology Research Design

We intent to employ mixed — methods design using quantitative and qualitative methods to gather information for my research. These techniques are appropriate to our research aims because, as Farnsworth clarifies, the former provides the study with “an in-depth understanding of your research problem” and the latter allows you “to scale your research to provide larger sets of data for reliability and validity”. According to him, “a combination of the two provides you with objectivity” [5, 9].

Data Collection Methods

Case study research method will provide our study with quantitative data with regard to preferred writing feedback techniques (research question 2) and the extend IELTS writing assessment criteria are used (research question 3) by teachers. In details, a sample of teachers will assess students’ writing tasks by giving written feedback. Data on quantity of every type of written “feedback items” [10] will then be collected, coded and categorized. So the percentage of teachers using certain types of written “feedback items” [10] will also be determined. This will be “followed by interviews to better understand the reasons behind the trends” [11]. Semi-structured interview will also be applied to disclose facts in regard to research questions 1 and 4. Describing interview as a “distinctive research technique”, Louis Cohen et al. remark that “it may be used as the principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives” [2].

Sampling

Our study aims to implement Grounded theory using theoretical sampling. Sample size will be determined according to “larger to smaller” technique. “A quantitative study undertaken with a larger sample may give an insight for a fruitful qualitative study. In this case the sample for the qualitative study is obtained from the larger sample” [6]. We will apply “non-randomized sampling technique method”.

Data Analysis

Analysis will be realized by triangulation approach. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected will be analyzed separately. We will use coding and categorization to describe quantitative data collected. As Louis Cohen et al. remark, ground theory analysis “will proceed through a systematic series of analyses, including coding and categorization, until theory emerges that explains the phenomena being studied or which can be used for predictive purposes”. Moreover, “In abiding by the principle of fitness for purpose” [2, p. 461]. we will analyze qualitative data by using “coding and analysis of interview themes”[10]. Finally, results from both analyses will be examined to find out to what extent they converge.

Possible outcomes

Considering the fact that no researcher has addressed the topic of teacher literacy in assessing IELTS Task 2 in Azerbaijan, obviously, there is no literature with regard to this area. We believe focusing on this subject; our research will benefit language teaching in Azerbaijan education contributing IELTS teachers to overcome challenges experienced in writing assessment which, in turn, will be a great contribution for students to improve their writing knowledge and skills.

Moreover, being a valuable source of information for researchers to take advantage of, this study will encourage them to conduct further researches regarding this or related areas.

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*Работа поступила
в редакцию 26.02.2022 г.*

*Принята к публикации
03.03.2022 г.*

Ссылка для цитирования:

Ibayeva Ya. The Significance of Teacher Understanding of Formative Assessment for Effective English writing Teaching in Azerbaijan as a Developing Country: the Case of Academic IELTS Writing Task 2 // *Бюллетень науки и практики*. 2022. Т. 8. №4. С. 555-559. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/77/67>

Cite as (APA):

Ibayeva, Ya. (2022). The Significance of Teacher Understanding of Formative Assessment for Effective English writing Teaching in Azerbaijan as a Developing Country: the Case of Academic IELTS Writing Task 2. *Bulletin of Science and Practice*, 8(4), 555-559. <https://doi.org/10.33619/2414-2948/77/67>