



MONITORING AS A TOOL OF ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

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Abstract

Assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT) is often thought to be connected with tests and examinations. However, modern communicative and learner-centered approaches highlight the importance of formative assessment used in everyday classroom practice. One of the most underestimated but powerful instruments of such assessment is teacher monitoring. Commonly viewed as a classroom management technique, monitoring in fact provides teachers with real-time diagnostics information about learners' language use, task understanding, participation, and interaction. This article examines monitoring as a formative assessment tool in English language classrooms. Drawing on methodological literature, classroom observation, and reflective teaching practice, the paper shows how purposeful monitoring enables teachers to collect authentic evidence of learning, provide timely feedback, use different instruction techniques, and foster learner autonomy.

Keywords: Monitoring, assessment, formative assessment, ELT, feedback, classroom observation, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Assessment is one of the fundamental components of the teaching and learning process. In many English classrooms, assessment is still primarily associated with formal procedures such as tests, quizzes, and written assignments. Such practices represent what is commonly called assessment of learning (formal), where evaluation takes place after instruction.

Contemporary communicative methodology, however, emphasizes assessment for learning (informal), where the teacher continuously gathers evidence of

learners' progress during the lesson itself. Here, observation, interaction, and feedback become essential assessment tools.

One important classroom practice that supports this process is monitoring. Monitoring is typically understood as the teacher's movement around the classroom while students are engaged in pair or group work. While it is often associated with discipline and support, methodological literature and research note that monitoring allows teachers to see how learners perform tasks, what difficulties they face, and how effectively they use language in real communicative situations (Harmer, 2015; Scrivener, 2011).

This article argues that monitoring should not be regarded as simple classroom management, but as a **systematic formative assessment tool**.

2. Methodology

The article is based on:

- Analysis of methodological literature in ELT and pedagogy;
- Classroom observations in secondary and adult English classes;
- Reflective teaching practice during professional development courses.

The analytical framework relies on principles of formative assessment and communicative teaching (Black & Wiliam, 1998), as well as practical guidance on monitoring and classroom interaction found in both international and regional methodology sources (Harmer, 2015; Passov, 2000; Jalolov, 2012).

Observation focused on how teachers monitored learners during communicative activities and how the information gathered influenced feedback and instructional decisions on the future classes.

3. Results

3.1 Monitoring as Evidence Collection

During pair and group work, learners produce more natural language than in formal testing situations. Monitoring enables the teacher to observe:

- Use of grammar and vocabulary in speech;
- Pronunciation and fluency problems;
- Level of task understanding;
- Participation and interaction between learners.

Such evidence reflects real communicative performance rather than memorized responses in the form of grammar patterns.

3.2 Monitoring for Immediate Support and Feedback

Monitoring allows teachers to detect misunderstandings while tasks are still in progress. This makes it possible to clarify instructions, provide scaffolding, and prevent fossilization of errors. According to methodological practice, feedback based on observed performance is more meaningful for learners than abstract correction.

3.3 Monitoring for Differentiation

Through monitoring, teachers identify learners who need additional support and those who require more difficult tasks. This supports differentiated instruction and more individualized, inclusive teaching.

3.4 Monitoring and Learner Autonomy

When monitoring is unnoticeable, students work independently while still feeling supported. This balance encourages responsibility for learning and reduces over-reliance on the teacher.

3.5 Monitoring as Continuous Assessment

Unlike tests that measure learning outcomes at a specific moment, monitoring provides continuous information throughout the lesson, making assessment a natural part of teaching.

4. Discussion

Monitoring closely reflects the principles of assessment for learning. The teacher observes the learning process, interprets learner behavior, and adjusts instruction accordingly.

Traditional assessment focuses on the final product of learning, while monitoring focuses on the learning process itself. It reduces stress and provides more authentic information about learners' communicative competence.

Monitoring also provides valuable material for delayed error correction and whole-class feedback. Instead of correcting individuals during fluency activities, teachers can note common errors and discuss them afterwards, which is recommended in communicative methodology (Ur, 2012; Passov, 2000).

Furthermore, monitoring helps evaluate classroom interaction: who speaks more, who remains passive, and whether students use the target language during tasks.

5. Practical Techniques for Monitoring as Assessment

Effective monitoring requires purpose. Teachers should monitor with specific questions in mind:

- Are students using the target structure?
- Do they understand the task?
- Who needs support?
- What common errors appear?

Quick note-taking on a seating plan or notebook helps record useful data for feedback. Teachers should move quietly, avoid interrupting communication, and distribute attention equally across groups.

6. Implications for Teacher Training

Monitoring is often demonstrated in practice but rarely explained as an assessment tool in teacher education. Teachers should be trained to understand **what** to monitor and **why** they monitor. Methodologists emphasize that observation skills are part of professional teaching competence (Jalolov, 2012; Passov, 2000).

Including monitoring strategies in professional development courses can significantly improve teachers' ability to provide effective formative feedback.

7. Conclusion

Monitoring in English language classrooms is much more than a classroom management technique. It is a powerful formative assessment instrument that allows teachers to collect authentic evidence of learning, provide relevant feedback, differentiate instruction, and promote learner autonomy. When used purposefully, monitoring becomes an essential component of effective teaching and assessment for learning.

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