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Effective usage of picture-based assessment to evaluate lexical competence in primary school learners

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Annotation: Picture-based assessments present an innovative and effective approach to evaluating primary school learners' lexical competence and other skills. By leveraging visual stimuli, these assessments engage students in more meaningful ways, enhancing their understanding of vocabulary, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. This article focuses on the effective usage of these methods and particular benefits that come from them.

Key words: picture-based assessment, lexical competence, receptive skills, productive skills, word forms, syntactic properties.

Introduction:

Lexical competence is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency, involving not only the knowledge of vocabulary but also the ability to use it effectively across both receptive and productive skills. In primary school, lexical competence plays a crucial role in language development as it lays the foundation for more advanced academic skills and effective communication. Primary learners begin with basic vocabulary, which gradually expands as they encounter new subjects and contexts, thereby deepening their understanding of word meanings and their use in different situations. At this stage, lexical competence is not merely about memorizing vocabulary but also about understanding the relationships between words, their meanings, and their contexts. According to Milton¹, vocabulary knowledge is a predictor of language proficiency and academic success. Primary school learners typically progress from basic word recognition to a more nuanced understanding of word forms, their syntactic properties, and their use in various communicative contexts. This progression is key to ensuring that children can engage with increasingly complex language tasks as they advance in their education.

The dimensions of lexical competence: Lexical competence can be divided into two key dimensions: **breadth** and **depth**. Breadth refers to the number of words a learner knows, while depth pertains to the level of understanding of each word, including its meaning, usage, and connotations. As Schmitt² points out, lexical depth is crucial for understanding how words function in different contexts, while breadth ensures a wide enough vocabulary to communicate effectively.

For primary school learners, it is vital to develop both breadth and depth. A child who knows a wide range of words but lacks depth may struggle to use them correctly or flexibly. One effective way to assess both the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge is through picture-based assessments. These assessments provide learners with a visual context that helps bridge the gap between abstract words and real-world objects, making vocabulary acquisition more accessible (Hinkel 120)³. By asking students to match words with images, describe scenes, or use words in sentences related to visual stimuli, educators can more effectively gauge learners' understanding of vocabulary in context. Furthermore, lexical competence in primary school is essential for the overall development of language skills, influencing a learner's ability to communicate and succeed academically. By fostering both the breadth and depth of vocabulary, children are better equipped to engage with a variety of language tasks. As research continues to highlight the importance of vocabulary in language learning, it is essential for educators to employ comprehensive methods that capture the full range of learners' lexical knowledge. As long as the development of lexical competence is way crucial, the development of it can be achieved through various methods using picture-based assessments. Previous studies suggest that lexical competence is an important factor that influences reading skills and spelling accuracy as well, in primary school children. Understanding the relationship between these skills will provide valuable insights to improve reading and writing enhancement and intervention strategies. For both writing and reading, it is a little bit hard to catch the attention of students under the age of 10, especially remembering new vocabulary. In that phase, considering the importance of picture-based assessments can lead to effective results, making students' knowledge more broad and doing the process more engaging, interesting.

Materials and methods:

In order to clearly understand how can picture-based assessments be implemented, educators should know what exactly the picture-based assessment is. It is a method of evaluation that uses images to present information and provide specific questions relating to the topic. It is known as image-based assessment as well. Except from education, it can be used in various other fields, too, including improving the screening process, personality assessment, undergraduate dermatology and so on. Which means, this sort of assessment shows clarity, exact profitable sides and increased level of effectiveness. In educative purposes, usually the exact criteria would be set in order to evaluate students. Moving into the notion and criteria of scoring and grading in primary schools, it is the way to measure how well students are learning. Teachers use them to check students' progress, understand their strengths and weaknesses, and give feedback to help them improve. In primary schools, the main purpose of scoring and grading is to

guide and motivate students rather than judge them harshly. So let's first see and analyze how are students scored and graded?

Analysis:

Specific rules, or criteria are used by teachers to decide grades. These criteria help ensure fairness and clarity. Some common ones include:

1. In terms of how well students learn: Are they understanding and remembering what they were taught?
2. For their effort and participation: Are they trying their best and joining in class activities? (A student who participates in group work and answers questions gets positive feedback)
3. According to creativity and thinking skills: Can they think of new ideas and solve problems? (Writing a story with creative ideas earns good marks)
4. In accordance with the behavior and teamwork: Are they behaving well and working well with others? (Listening to classmates and sharing in group activities can improve grades)

Results:

The scoring methods vary depending on the assessment type. For formative assessments, which are ongoing checks for understanding, teachers might use checklists, rubrics, or anecdotal notes. A checklist might simply track whether a student has grasped specific concepts, while a rubric provides more nuanced feedback by outlining different levels of achievement for specific criteria. For example, a rubric for a picture-based assessment in science might assess a student's ability to identify parts of a plant, explain its functions, and connect it to a broader ecological concept, each with varying levels of proficiency (e.g., novice, apprentice, proficient, expert). Anecdotal notes provide qualitative observations of student performance, capturing specific strengths and areas for improvement. Picture-based assessments, when aligned with clear scoring criteria and integrated with other assessment methods, can be powerful tools for enhancing learning in primary schools. They tap into students' visual literacy skills, provide opportunities for diverse expression, and offer valuable insights into their understanding. For example, a picture prompt depicting a social scenario can be used to assess students' social-emotional learning, prompting them to describe the emotions of the characters, predict their actions, and suggest appropriate responses. This type of assessment can reveal not only students' understanding of social cues but also their ability to empathize and problem-solve. By carefully considering the criteria for scoring and grading, teachers can ensure that picture-based assessments contribute meaningfully to student learning and development. Moreover, transparency in grading criteria empowers students, fostering a sense of agency and ownership over their learning journey.

Conclusion:

In summary, picture-based assessments bridge the gap between abstract concepts and real-world contexts, particularly benefiting students with diverse learning styles and strengths. Moreover, these assessments foster both breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge, essential for developing robust language skills. Despite their numerous advantages, the challenges associated with picture-based assessments cannot be overlooked. Issues such as subjective interpretation, cultural bias, and accessibility barriers necessitate careful planning, selection of images, and the development of clear scoring rubrics. These measures ensure fairness, validity, and inclusivity, preventing disparities in assessment outcomes. Additionally, educators must invest time in designing purposeful tasks that align with learning objectives to maximize the assessments' effectiveness.

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