Abstract

This paper focuses on points of assessment items for Japanese language courses. Mainly by reviewing the points of assessment items adopted in different phases of the post-war Showa era, and exploring what characterized each phase, the paper aspires to find out if there is anything of significance that can contribute to improving and enriching today's assessment procedure.

First, we examine the period between the post-war 1940s, when the ideas on assessment items were initially formed, and the early 1970s. This was the period when the major emphasis was on the teachers’ comments on individual students in their Cumulative Guidance Record. From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, the points of assessment items were based on the ultimate goals of the subject, whereas in the late 1960s the basis was expanded to include the goals set for each grade as well as the content of instruction. These changes in focus show us that, the points of assessment items were centered on the course of study throughout the period, albeit it to an insufficient extent.

On the basis of the above shift in focus, the paper then observes the period after the late 1970s. In this period, the assessment was done through educational development status on each assessment items, which fitted in with the course of study. During this phase, the points of assessment items were reviewed in accordance with the revisions to the course of study, and at each revision, the emphases characteristic to the revision were specifically indicated. As a result, the points of assessment items put higher priority on the systematic continuity of education in primary, junior-high and high schools. It is also found that the points of assessment items relating to affective aspects exerted an overall influence of the goals of the subject.

This paper concludes that, to form a more well-developed assessment standard for Japanese language courses that fully takes into account the unique characteristics of the subject, it is helpful to encourage teachers to learn about the historical shifts in the assessment focuses for the subject, and deepen their understanding on the framework of assessment built around the points of assessment items.

As for the assessment of affective aspects, this should be reviewed in the light of historical shifts in the assessment focuses, to shape a more desirable form of assessments of “interest, willingness, and attitude”, something which should be on the agenda.