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Emilee Monken

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Tiered Assessment: Challenging Students While Utilizing Skills-Based Grading

Emilee Monken and Leah Nillas*

Educational Studies, Illinois Wesleyan University

Research Question

- How does tiered assessment facilitate skills-based grading within foreign language learning?

Literature Review

- Many researchers found that the more options students had, the better they scored on assessments (Kang, 2014; Tomlinson et al, 2008).
- Generally, tiered assessment bettered students' average scores, especially when students reassessed (Tomlinson et al, 2008).
- Few studies addressed tiered assessment specifically within the foreign language classroom.

Methodology

- Participants were 23 students in a Spanish I class in a rural school district.
- I created tiered assessments to better target specific learning objectives in order to better demonstrate which areas students needed to focus on.
- The concept of Vygotsky's scaffolding and Thomlinson's differentiation guided the implementation of tiered assessment in this study.
- Data Analysis included analysis of student work and field notes.

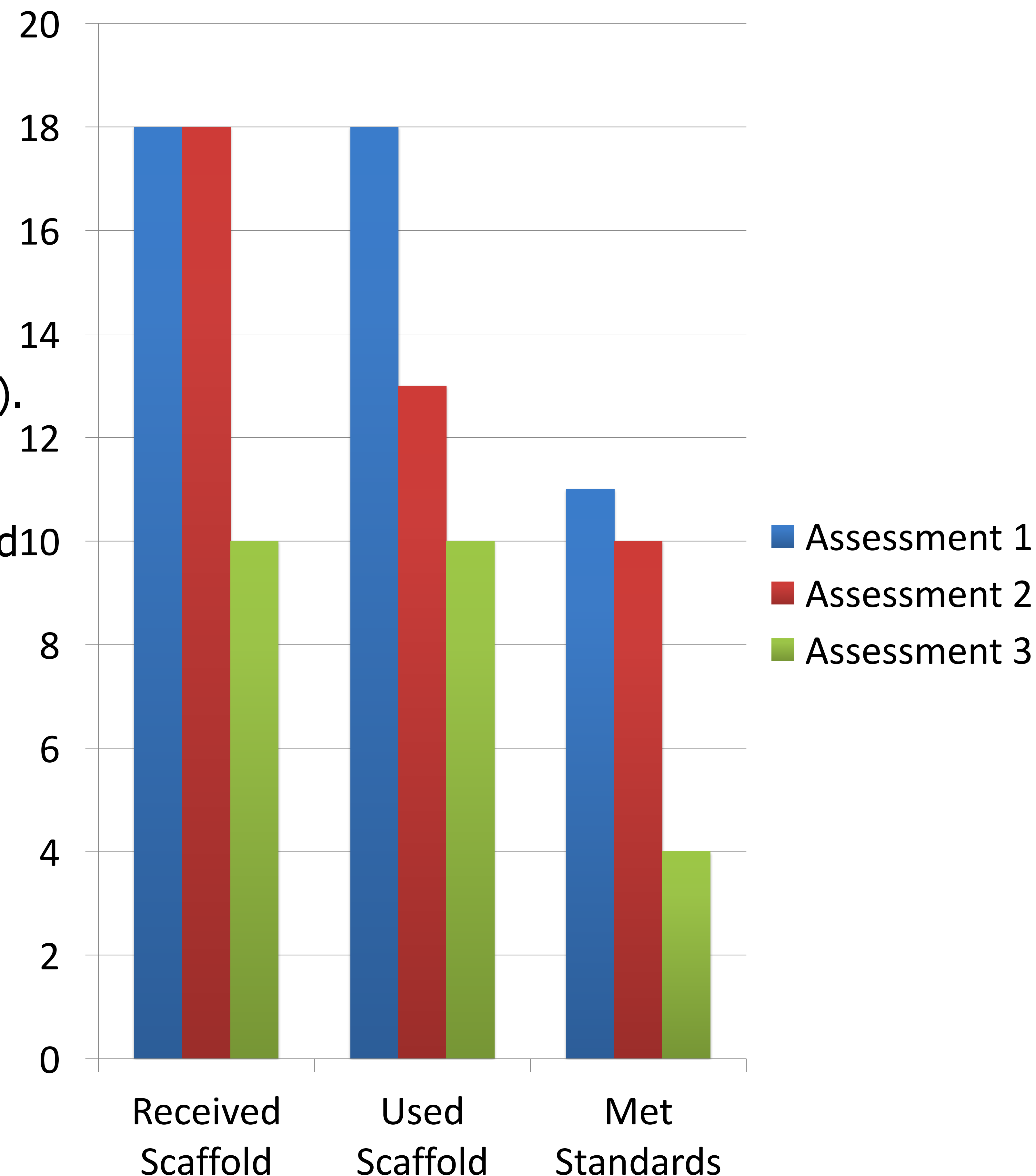


Figure 1. Data reflecting how many students received a scaffold, used a scaffold, and met or exceeded the learning objective on three assessments. Roughly 50% of students who were provided a scaffold met or exceeded the standard of the learning objective assessed on the particular assessment.

Results and Data Analysis

- Students who did not meet or exceed the learning objective were more likely to have had a scaffold.
- Students who had a scaffold the first time and reassessed without a scaffold were more likely to meet or exceed the learning objective.
- 100% of students who were originally assessed without a scaffold or were provided an extra challenge met or exceeded standards on 100% of the assessments.
- A possible reason for the improvement was that students were required to complete extra tasks to work toward mastery of the learning objective.

Conclusion

- The implementation of tiered assessment is most conducive with formative assessment.
- This study was limited to only an entry level Spanish course, so higher-level learning methods were not often implemented.
- Further research should be done keeping in mind the changes and development currently occurring within standards-based grading.