

# Skill Assessment And Alternative Assessment In Improving English Language Teaching And Learning

Dr. D.VIJAYA LAKSHMI<sup>1</sup>, S. JATHIN SINGH<sup>2</sup>, R. SAI SREE<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Vishnu Institute of Technology,  
Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh.

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Vishnu Institute of Technology,  
Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Vishnu Institute of Technology,  
Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh.

## Abstract

A skill assessment is a process that evaluates an individual's knowledge, abilities, and competencies in a specific area or field. It involves comparing a person's actual performance with a specified standard and evaluating whether it meets or exceeds the requirements. Alternative Assessment is a method of evaluation that measures a student's level of proficiency in a subject as opposed to the student's level of knowledge. The overall goal of alternative assessment is to allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and execute tasks. Alternative assessment is also called a performance test or authentic assessment because it is deeply rooted in one's ability to do something by leveraging newly-gained knowledge. As part of the assessment, the student will need to perform meaningful tasks that reflect a clear understanding of the teaching and learning objectives. Competence assessment is a process in which evidence is gathered by the assessor and evaluated against agreed criteria in order to make a judgement of competence. Skill assessment is the comparison of actual performance of a skill with the specified standard for performance of that skill under the circumstances specified by the standard and evaluating whether the performance meets or exceed the requirements. Assessment of a skill should comply with the four principles of validity, reliability, fairness and flexibility. Formative assessment provides feedback for remedial work and coaching, while summative assessment checks whether the competence has been achieved at the end of training. Assessment of combinations of skills and

their foundational knowledge may provide greater efficiency, and in some cases competence in one skill may imply competence in other skills. The thoroughness required of assessment may depend on the consequences of occasional poor performance.

**Key Words:** assessment, competencies, language, performance, practice, skill, student

### **Introduction**

Brown and Hudson state that alternative assessment has gained a degree of acceptance in the field of TESOL due to the fact that language-testing practices associated with language learning are necessarily different from testing practices predominant in other fields. This situation has arisen from the fact that both the process of English language learning and the assessment of that learning are by their very nature complex, and English language teachers and administrators have traditionally employed a larger variety of assessments to deal with this complexity. However, Brown and Hudson warn that the term alternative assessment itself may carry several negative connotations, which impact upon its acceptability and subsequent implementation in EFL/ESL instruction. These connotations include the suggestion that such forms of assessment involve completely new procedures, which are untried and not supported by research, and that they do not require rigorous approaches to test construction, implementation, and decision making. For these reasons, the authors recommend using the term alternatives in assessment.

Given the challenging nature of large-scale standardized assessments due to the complexities, it is vital to obtain equitable assessment practices for enhancing English language learning and ability during instruction and course of study. Moving beyond standardized tests, we can use alternative assessment to incorporate learning, instruction, and measurement and develop a practical assessment approach for learning purposes regularly. Alternative assessment results from the mentioned research move have brought various alternatives to standardized tests for enhancing the quality of instruction and shifting scholarly attention toward learning rather than testing. Specifically, during technology-based assessment practices, the insufficiencies of existing traditional tests for different students' needs and purposes have created the must adopt a

more user-friendly approach to assessment that can incorporate multiple intelligences, approach students' preferred learning styles, involve language learners' higher-level thinking skills, use more of authentic and real-world tasks and activities. Thus, this aims to illustrate the benefits, processes, and outcomes of alternative assessment practices in technology-based environments for enhancing the quality of language education.

Alternative assessment practices can offer numerous benefits for language learners and teachers in different ways. According to the one such example can be the authentic attainment of complicated results by measuring higher-level skills, namely reflecting, creative thinking, problem-solving, and synthesizing. The alternative assessment can possess genuine, performance-oriented activities conducted in a real-life, authentic context and inform teachers of how assessment and instruction can interact to obtain a clear vision of students' abilities. It can also foster the connection between learners and teachers, teaching and assessment, objectives and outcomes, and stakeholders and parents. According to alternative assessments pay attention to language learners' progress over the course duration, add adaptability in time and performance, and decrease the anxiety learners' experience. Furthermore, it can provide a non-intrusive approach to everyday classroom practices, implement tasks that are linked with meaningful instructional activities, concentrate on both the process and product, become keen on various cultures, and boost clarity in the anticipated assessment standards and criteria. Although the term alternative assessment has been extensively mentioned in the literature, further investigations are required to comprehend the depth, process, and results alternative assessment can have, specifically in a technology-based environment.

### **Purpose**

1. Alternative assessment is tailored to the specific needs and abilities of individual students. You should not think of it as a one-size-fits-all process.
2. It is an instructor-led assessment process. This means the teacher develops a unique method to measure the student's ability.
3. Alternative assessment methods are flexible and continuously adaptable.

4. Alternative assessment or authentic assessment explores different learning styles and preferences in a bid to measure learners' abilities.
5. Alternative assessment methods are seamlessly aligned with the learning goals and objectives of the course, class, or training.

### **Methods of Alternative Assessment in improving Language**

#### **1. Performance Test**

Since alternative assessment is all about putting knowledge to work, design effective performance tests to help you rate a student's level of skill or knowledge. A performance test requires the learners to execute complex tasks while the instructor observes how they go about them. As an instructor, you should have well-defined scoring criteria to effectively measure each student's ability and arrive at a valid conclusion. Depending on the type of performance test you choose to adopt, you can create a quiz on Formplus for this purpose.

#### **2. Open Tests**

An open test is a method of assessment that allows learners to refer to course materials as they take on tasks or write tests and examinations. The questions in an open test require the student to provide responses that show how well they understand the course. Instead of memorizing the content of the training guide or course materials, the student has to apply the knowledge in the material(s) to provide the best response to the stated questions.

#### **3. Crib Sheet**

This is another form of open-book evaluation. Instead of bringing the entire course materials to a test or examination, the student selects important information from these materials to create some sort of abridged version called the crib sheet. While it's up to the student to decide what makes it into the crib sheet, you should provide some level of guidance as their instructor. You can subtly suggest the type of information that will be helpful during the assessment but you should not impose your ideas on the students; if you really want to know how much they know.

4. **Take-Home Assessment**

Another way to assess your students' abilities is to give them take-home exercises. Take-home exercises typically check 2 boxes. Firstly, they require multiple references, and secondly, there isn't enough time for learners to do them in class. With take-home exercises, you really cannot tell if the student received some help from their guardian(s) but you can ask the students to work with materials that are strictly relevant to the course or training.

5. **Collaborative Testing**

This happens when you put the students in groups and get them to work together on different tasks. Ideally, you should pair them or place the students in small groups of 3 or 4, to get the best results from this exercise. As the name suggests, collaborative testing empowers the students to brainstorm together, solve challenges, and execute ideas. At the end of each brainstorming session, you can ask your students to make individual submissions or submit collective responses as a group.

6. **Summaries**

Instead of making students go through tests and assignments, you can ask them to summarise class readings, lectures, and discussions. A good summary tells you 1 thing—the student has an impressive understanding of key concepts and ideas from the classroom. Besides from helping you track a student's knowledge in real-time, summary writing also does the magic for knowledge retention. Summary writing is a powerful way to improve learning and memory in the classroom.

7. **Reports**

Reports work just like summaries; they require the student to show how well they understand key concepts from class discussions. However, reports take things a step further as the student needs to communicate his or her knowledge in a way that presents a clear picture to whoever reads the report; even if such a person wasn't part of the class.

8. **Interviews**

Pair students and ask them to perform interviews about different subject matters discussed in your class. For

instance, if you had a class discussion on a historical event, one student can roleplay as a key event player while the other person becomes the interviewer; asking questions about that event.

**9. Concept Maps**

A concept map is a visual representation of the relationship between ideas and concepts. To test your students' level of understanding, ask them to build concept maps from scratch to show their knowledge or fill out existing concept maps.

**10. Portfolio**

You can ask students to build out a portfolio that demonstrates their knowledge of what has been taught in a class or training. A portfolio is a collection of the different tasks a student has executed in the course of the class or training. If you're handling learners in beginner classes, you can ask them to create a paper portfolio using a notebook; for advanced learners, an online portfolio is the best bet.

**Advantages of Alternative Assessment**

1. It gives the student an opportunity to apply his or her knowledge to real-life situations and to solve practical problems.
2. Alternative assessment is an effective method of evaluating a student's problem-solving skills.
3. It is a cost-effective method of assessing a learner's knowledge within the training context. Sometimes, all you need is a Formplus online form to allow you to measure a student's proficiency level.
4. Alternative assessment methods are simple and straightforward.
5. It makes the teaching and learning processes more effective because teachers can identify and support students who need more guidance easily.
6. Alternative assessment encourages learners to step out of their comfort zones and think outside the box. Students learn to think, analyze, apply their knowledge to create solutions to different problems.
7. It is a fair and transparent process of determining student proficiency levels.
8. Alternative assessment is an effective method of building learners' logical reasoning and communication skills.

9. It eliminates the unreliable evaluation process that is typically associated with traditional methods of assessment like tests and examination.

### **Disadvantages of Alternative Assessment**

1. The results of alternative assessments can be largely affected by the teacher's bias or preferences.
2. It is a time-consuming assessment method because the teacher has to pay specific attention to every student in order to provide an almost-precise evaluation of the student's ability.
3. Alternative assessment methods can be difficult to develop and grade.
4. It is difficult to collate and interpret results from alternative assessments. This is because the results are mostly qualitative.
5. In situations where the teacher isn't familiar with alternative assessment, it becomes expensive for the school to train teachers on alternative assessment methods and set up test preparations.

### **Conclusion**

In this paper, we have discussed different examples of alternative assessments plus how you can recreate them in your classroom during a course. Interestingly, some of these examples can boost parents' involvement in their wards' learning process. For instance, parents can help out with take-home assignments. Alternative assessment can be a type of formative assessment because it evaluates the learner's progress as the course goes underway. Formplus has multiple features and options that can help you to create and administer effective alternative assessment surveys for your course. Highlighting the significance of alternative assessment practices for solving educational problems and boosting the quality of education, instruction, and learning in a practical manner for learning purposes has altered the focus of educational purposes, so as to link learning, instruction, and evaluation. Hence, when language teachers involve learners with alternative assessments, students engage their different intelligence, favored learning styles, and analytic, reflective, creative, and higher-order thinking with real-world and authentic tasks and activities.

### **References**

1. Aschbacher, P. A. (1991). Performance assessment: State activity, interest, and concerns. *Applied Measurement in Education*, 4, 275–88.
2. Brown JB, Hudson T. The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*. 1998;32(4):653-675.
3. Brumfit Ch.T. *Communicative Methodology in Language Teaching*. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. -176 p.
4. Byram M. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. - Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 1997. -136 p.
5. Byram M. *Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning*. - London: Routledge, 2000. -736 p.
6. Cameron L. *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. - Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. -274 p.
7. Canale M., Swain M. Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing// *Applied Linguistics*. 1980. 1 (I).-Pp. 1-48.
8. Dikli S. Assessment at a distance: Traditional vs. alternative assessments. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*. 2003;2(3):13-19
9. Elliott SN. Creating meaningful performance assessments. *ERIC Digest*. 1995;E531:ED381985
10. Figueroa RA. Assessment of linguistic minority group children. In: *Handbook of Psychological and Educational Assessment of Children: Intelligence and Achievement*. 1990:671-696
11. Herman JL, Aschbacher PR, Winters L. *A Practical Guide to Alternative Assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; 1992
12. Hancock CR. Alternative assessment and second language study: What and why? *ERIC Digest*. 1994;1994
13. Hamayan EV. Approaches to alternative assessment. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*. 1995;15:212-226.
14. Lakshmi, D.V. ( 2019). "Engineering Education: Redefining the Roles of the Teacher," vol. IX, no. I, *International Journal of Innovative Research & Studies* p. 17-21.
15. Lakshmi, D.V. ( 2020). *Establishing Symbiotic Relationship between a Teacher and a Student with 8 Pillars of Success, Digital Age Teacher*, Book Chapter, p. 175-189, Jan., 2020.
16. Lakshmi, D.V. ( 2020). "Innovative Online Assessment Tools in Higher Education," *Proceedings of National Level*
17. Lakshmi, D.V. ( 2021). "Integrated Technological Tools for Effective Blended Learning," 2020 IEEE Bombay Section Signature Conference (IBSSC), Mumbai, India, 2020, pp. 163-168.
18. Lakshmi, D.V. & Latha P. M. ( 2021). *Leveraging Prominent Digital Instructive Tools in Higher Education for Teaching and Learning. A Plethora of Thoughts*, p. 21-38.
19. Meyer C. What's the difference between authentic and performance assessment? *Education Leader*. 1992;48(5):60-63



20. North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction. Assessment, Articulation and Accountability: A Foreign Language Project. ERIC. 1999
21. Solano-Flores G, Nelson-Barber S. On the cultural validity of science assessments. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*. 2001;38(5):553-573.
22. Virtual Conference on E-Education, E-Learning, E-Management and E-Business (NC4E) p. 10-15, Nov., 2020.