



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES (TFL)

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Abstract: the following article illustrates data about significance of alternative assessment in learning and teaching foreign languages.

Key words: assessment, types of assessment, language learning, authentic tasks, critical thinking.

Obviously, assessment plays one of the imperative roles in teaching foreign languages. Since educators estimate learners' strengths and weak points, assessment is considered to be the key element to see the holistic picture of students' learning results. It should be stated that alternative assessment is any classroom assessment practice that focuses on continuous individual student progress. Besides, it is the counter to traditional forms of standardized assessment. At the present time, alternative assessment has become an imperative part of learning and teaching foreign languages as methods of alternative assessment are based on learners' evaluation of their own learning and allow students to reflect on their linguistic expansion. Besides, alternative assessments involve a higher order of critical thinking skills in students through designing authentic tasks. According to Hoffman, Assaf, and Paris (2001, 482) alternative assessment illustrates several distinguishing characteristics:

- Alternative assessment is situated in the classroom with teachers making choices in the measures used.
- Alternative assessment is based on a constructivist view of learning whereby the student, the text, and the context impact learning outcomes.
- Alternative assessment is predicated on the view that learning processes are equal to, if not greater than, the resulting products

In comparison with traditional paper and pencil tests, alternative assessment provides various rewards. Initially, this type of assessment stretches a chance to the teachers to comprehend their students' weaknesses and strengths on target issues. With the help of alternative assessment, learners are facilitated to have more opportunity to provide their own skills and abilities rather than doing just regular tests. Moreover, alternative assessment habitually does not demand limited period of time as traditional paper and pencil, short answer tests which make learners feel permitted and more confident during assessment. Furthermore, it focuses on what learners are capable to do without emphasizing their weak points that is profitable for instructors to clarify a holistic picture of learners' capacities and infirmities. In this way, it assists tutors to find out if the learners need improvement in their target knowledge.

It should be stated that alternative way of assessment mostly utilizes activities that reveal what students can do with target language, emphasizing their facilities rather than pointing

lacks. Alternative assessment instruments are not only designed and structured differently from traditional tests, but are also graded or scored differently. Since alternative assessments are performance based, it helps instructors to highlight the point of language learning is communication for meaningful purposes and the methods work well in learner-centered classrooms as they are founded on the idea that students are able to appraise learning process themselves. This demonstrates learners' opportunities to reflect on both linguistic development and learning procedures. This type of assessment offers instructors a way to connect valuation with review of learning strategies. Utilizing alternative assessments in Learner Centered Classes offers much benefit for both students and instructors as a primary aim of learner centered classes is encouraging learners to play a focal character in the classes with active participation. With this in mind it requires learners to accomplish and illustrate learners' aptitude. For this reason, currently majority of educational institutions prefer working out alternatively as it has been shown its benefit.

There are various terms in use to set out alternative assessment strategies such as: portfolio, reading logs, role plays, case studies, rubrics and checklists. Nevertheless, all of the estimations that are counted have in common that learners produce a response rather than choosing the correct answer or doing multiple choice questions. These ways of appraisal demand learners to generate response, observe, giving feed-back and interaction with the group which make learners creative and independent. Portfolio is considered to be one of the functional forms of alternative assessment which is a collection of students' activities and achievements over a specific period of time in areas of the curriculum. As an educational portfolio two forms: showcase portfolios and developmental portfolios are common which both enable faculty to assess a set of complex tasks including learning process and the capacity of learners. As portfolios are individualized assessment, they give a chance student to work on themselves and improve their learning skills. On the other hand, they offer an opportunity for instructors to check the learners' enhancement and progress.

The other useful and rather widespread type is making presentations. This way of alternative assessment gives a chance to instructors to observe and monitor the learners both performing and knowledge skills that were gained during the classes or the semester. Besides, making presentations can encourage learners to investigate on target issues effectively.

However, alternative assessments are rather innovative method than traditional assessments in foreign language teaching system (FLT), they could provide various effectiveness and success in education. Besides, many language centers and institutes utilize alternative assessments and get benefit to promote an authentic estimation of learning process. It is obvious that assessing students alternatively makes students to feel free and confident as it emphasizes high level of student engagement and promotes critical thinking of individuals. At the same time instructors have an occasion to clarify students' demonstration of applied knowledge.

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