

## ASSESSMENT AND TESTING IN ELT : THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ASSESSMENT AND TESTING

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### Abstract

*Assessment is often associated with testing, so speaking of assessment methods, many teachers immediately think of tests. However, there is an important difference between assessment and testing. Assessment is usually based on information collected about the learners' current situation. Testing is only one of the different ways to collect information. Testing is a single-occasion, undimensional, timed exercise, usually in multiple choice or short-answer form. Testing is formal, and is often standardised, which means that everyone takes the test under the same conditions. In other words, everyone is given the same procedures for administering and scoring, the same test materials and item. This article is aimed at providing English lecturers at viewing another point of view of how evaluating the student's achievement in-ELT, as well as leads the lecturers to a comparison of assessment and testing in ELT.*

*Keyword: assessment, testing*

### Abstrak

Assesment sering diartikan sebagai Testing atau ujian, sehingga ketika kita membicarakan metode assesment, banyak para pengajar serta merta berpikir kearah Test. Padahal, ada suatu perbedaan yang penting antara assesment dan Testing. Assesment biasanya berdasar kepada informasi yang berhasil dikumpulkan mengenai keadaan peserta didik pada saat ini. Testing hanyalah satu dari cara lain untuk mengumpul informasi tentang peserta didik pada saat tertentu saja. Testing tidak berdimensi, kegiatan latihan sesaat, biasanya dalam bentuk pilihan berganda atau bentuk jawaban pendek. Testing bersifat formal, dan sering berstandar yang artinya setiap orang yang mengikuti test itu berada dalam kondisi yang sama. Dengan kata lain setiap orang yang mengikuti test itu diberikan prosedur yang sama dalam mengadministrasi dan dalam menilai, materi test dan butir-butir soal sama juga. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk melengkapi pandangan kita para pengajar khususnya pengajar bahasa Inggris dalam memandang dan mempertimbangkan cara lain dalam memberi evaluasi kepada peserta didik kita dalam upaya pencapaian English language Teaching (ELT) serta juga membimbing para pengajar untuk mencoba membanding antara Testing dan Assesment dalam ELT.

Kata kunci : Assesment, Testing

## INTRODUCTION

*Assessment* is a broader term. It implies evaluation based on a collection of information about what students know and can do. This involves many ways and methods of information gathering, formal and informal, at different times and in different contexts. Testing is part of assessment, but it is only one means of gathering information about a student. The focus in testing is on finding the norm. Assessment is broader than testing. The teacher is looking at progress over time in a variety of contexts

It has been known that assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning. Thus, the understanding on what, why, and how on assessment seem really urgent for teachers. Related to that, this essay is aimed at comparing the differences lies between assessment, evaluation, and testing. Further more comparing assessment with testing needs further atteion on the discussing some key concepts in assessment, types and approaches to assessment, assessment on language competence, some principles for good assessment, and take a look at testing: why and how. Finally, the conclusion will be drawn in the end of the discussion. It is expected that the overview on the assessment principles will guide the assessment training and professional development of teachers and administrators to run more productive assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT).

To put it simply, assessment in ELT means to discover what the learners know and can do at a certain stage of the learning process. Learners are observed mostly in every parts of learning process rather than it is a testing. Testing is very limited to a certain time only.

Assessment purposes

Assessment as mentioned above is to discover what learners have known and are able to apply on a certain stage of learning process.

However we can generate the purposes of assessment as follows :

- To give learners feedback on their progress and to motivate them to study
- To certify a person's ability or determine their suitability for selection
- To demonstrate achievement to external parties such as parents, school boards, etc

### 1. Criterion-referenced assessment

Criterion-referenced language assessment is based on a fixed standard or a set criterion. The national or local educational authority may have this standard or criterion. A school or several schools in a district may have their standard or set criterion for whatever purposes they might have. A fixed standard is usually the ultimate goal which the students are expected to achieve at the end of the course.

#### *Grading the four different aspects of class work*

- C.P. = How active is the student in class? How often does he speak?
- Oral = How good is the student's spoken English? Can he/she communicate well? How good is his/her fluency, accuracy and pronunciation?
- List. = How well can the student understand spoken English, in particular, that of native speakers
- Wr. = Does the speaker produce good written work including homework)? Does s/he write clear, accurate English?

#### Meaning of grades

- A = 98 - 100
- A- = 91 - 97
- B+ = 86 - 90

- B = 80 - 85
- B- = 71 - 79
- C+ = 65 - 70
- C = 61 - 64
- C- = 55 - 60
- D+ = 51 - 54
- D = 0 - 50
- A = really outstanding
- A- = excellent
- B+ = very good
- B = good
- B- = quite good
- C+ = satisfactory
- C = borderline
- C- = weak
- C+ = satisfactory
- C = borderline
- C- = weak
- D+ = serious problems
- D = very weak indeed

## 2. Understanding criteria

*What would you assess this student?*

- A student has poor attendance; however she's actually smart and active. Would you assess her class participation as poor?
- This student is active and always tries to express herself well although it's quite erratic
- Normally after a couple of attempts, this student is able to respond to questions well
- Although she's active and responds well to all questions, she has problem with grammar

## 3. Norm-referenced assessment

Norm-referenced assessment is designed to measure how the performance of a particular student or group of students compares with the performance of another student or group of students whose scores are given as the norm. A student's achievement is therefore interpreted with

reference to the achievement of other students or groups of students, rather than to an agreed criterion.

## 4. Individual-referenced assessment

Individual-referenced assessment is based on how well the learner is performing relative to his or her own previous performance, or relative to an estimate of his or her individual ability. For example, if a student could only say a few words in English after a few months of the course, and now after another month's study, he is able to speak with some fluency (although there is some inaccuracy), we can surely say he has made great progress.

## 5. Assessment principles

The heterogeneity of assessment methods and assessment criteria does not mean assessment has no principles to follow. On the contrary, some vital principles have to be observed if effective assessment is to be made.

*Generally speaking, assessment should:*

- assess authentic use of language in reading, writing, speaking, and listening;
- assess literacy and language in a variety of contexts;
- assess the environment, the instruction, and the students;
- assess processes as well as products;
- analyse patterns of errors in language and literacy;
- be based on normal developmental patterns and behaviour in language and literacy acquisition;
- clarify and use standards when assessing reading, writing, and content knowledge;
- involve students and parents, as well as other personnel such as the ESL or mainstream teacher, in the assessment process;

- be an ongoing part of every day. (Law and Eckes, 1995)

6. Methods

Research shows that the teacher’s knowledge of children and their strengths and weaknesses is more accurate and sound than testing (Law and Eckes, 1995:44). Very often the teacher’s subjective estimate of the learners’ overall performance or achievement can be quite accurate and fair. The teacher can get information by observing the students in class and by looking at their work.

The final grade given to the student is not his or her mark on the final exam paper; rather, it is some kind of combination of the grades the learner has received for various assignments during the course. It can also include the grades that the teacher has given for students’ performance or participation in the class activities. It could also be a written report rather than just a grade.

The students themselves are given the chance to evaluate their own performance, using clear criteria and weighting systems agreed on beforehand. Kohonen (1999) asserts that students are able to make quite accurate assessments of their own achievements.

a. Oral assessment rubric

Rubrics are criteria to ensure that students achieve the learning goals. A simple rule of thumb in creating any rubric is to list specific criteria expected for mastery. Here is a guideline.

Sample of oral assessment rubrics

Oral assessment rubrics	Not at all	Ok	Good	Excellent
Pronunciation was clear and natural • sounds were clearly pronounced, etc				
Grammar was used correctly • tenses were correctly used, etc				
Fluency did not affect communication • connected speech was used, etc				

When teachers would like to assess his or her students in acting out the dialog in the class, The following guideline can be considered

Acting out dialogues	Not at all	ok	good	excellent
The dialogue was extended creatively				
Pronunciation was clear and natural				
Dialogues were uttered fluently				
Grammar was used correctly				

To put it simply we can assess the learners’ pronunciation and grammar by considering :

**Pronunciation was clear and natural**

- Words and sounds were said correctly
- Stress and intonation were used correctly
- Dialogues were uttered smoothly
- Connected speech was used

**Grammar was used correctly**

- Grammar
- Tenses
- Nothing was left out
- Word agreement

b. Portfolios

Portfolios are collections of assignments and projects that students have done over a long period of time. These materials are usually put in a file kept by the students or the teacher. The portfolios provide the basis for evaluation.

7. Types and Approaches to Assessment

Numerous terms are used to describe different types and approaches to learner assessment. Although somewhat arbitrary, it is useful to consider these various terms as representing dichotomous poles as explained by Scanlan (2003).

Formative <-----> Summative  
Informal <-----> Formal  
Continuous <-----> Final  
Process <-----> Product  
Divergent <-----> Convergent

thus tend to have greater motivation impact and are associated with increased stress. Given their role in decision-making, formal assessments should be held to higher standards of reliability and validity than informal assessments.

### 1. Formative vs. Summative Assessment

Formative assessment is designed to assist the learning process by providing feedback to the learner, which can be used to identify strengths and weakness and hence improve future performance. Formative assessment is most appropriate where the results are to be used internally by those involved in the learning process (students, teachers, curriculum developers). Summative assessment is used primarily to make decisions for grading or determine readiness for progression. Typically summative assessment occurs at the end of an educational activity and is designed to judge the learner's overall performance. In addition to providing the basis for grade assignment, summative assessment is used to communicate students' abilities to external stakeholders, e.g., administrators and employers.

### 2. Informal vs. Formal Assessment

With informal assessment, the judgments are integrated with other tasks, e.g., lecturer feedback on the answer to a question or preceptor feedback provided while performing a bedside procedure. Informal assessment is most often used to provide formative feedback. As such, it tends to be less threatening and thus less stressful to the student. However, informal feedback is prone to high subjectivity or bias. Formal assessment occurs when students are aware that the task that they are doing is for assessment purposes, e.g., a written examination or OSCE. Most formal assessments also are summative in nature and

### 3. Continuous vs. Final Assessment

Continuous assessment occurs throughout a learning experience (intermittent is probably a more realistic term). Continuous assessment is most appropriate when student and/or instructor knowledge of progress or achievement is needed to determine the subsequent progression or sequence of activities. Continuous assessment provides both students and teachers with the information needed to improve teaching and learning in process. Obviously, continuous assessment involves increased effort for both teacher and student. Final (or terminal) assessment is that which takes place only at the end of a learning activity. It is most appropriate when learning can only be assessed as a complete whole rather than as constituent parts. Typically, final assessment is used for summative decision-making. Obviously, due to its timing, final assessment cannot be used for formative purposes.

### 4. Process vs. Product Assessment

Process assessment focuses on the steps or procedures underlying a particular ability or task, i.e., the cognitive steps in performing a mathematical operation or the procedure involved in analyzing a blood sample. Because it provides more detailed information, process assessment is most useful when a student is learning a new skill and for providing formative feedback to assist in improving performance.

Product assessment focuses on evaluating the result or outcome of a process.

Using the above examples, we would focus on the answer to the math computation or the accuracy of the blood test results. Product assessment is most appropriate for documenting proficiency or competency in a given skill, i.e., for summative purposes. In general, product assessments are easier to create than product assessments, requiring only a specification of the attributes of the final product.

#### 5. Divergent vs. Convergent Assessment

Divergent assessments are those for which a range of answers or solutions might be considered correct. Examples include essay tests, and solutions to the typical types of indeterminate problems posed in PBL. Divergent assessments tend to be more authentic and most appropriate in evaluating higher cognitive skills. However, these types of assessment are often time consuming to evaluate and the resulting judgments often exhibit poor reliability. A convergent assessment has only one correct response (per item). Objective test items are the best example and demonstrate the value of this approach in assessing knowledge. Obviously, convergent assessments are easier to evaluate or score than divergent assessments. Unfortunately, this "ease of use" often leads to their widespread application of this approach even when contrary to good assessment practices. Specifically, the familiarity and ease with which convergent assessment tools can be applied leads to two common evaluation fallacies: the Fallacy of False Quantification (the tendency to focus on what's easiest to measure) and the Law of the Instrument Fallacy (molding the evaluation problem to fit the tool).

#### CONCLUSION

Assessment and Testing are two different ways of evaluating students' achievement in

English language Teaching (ELT). Assessment can be said as to give more freedom for the students and teachers in performing their skill with whatever knowledge they have rather than a testing is. It is more free not just timed exercise. The teacher can get information by observing the students in class and by looking at their work. The final grade given to the student is not his or her mark on the final exam paper; rather, it is some kind of combination of the grades the learner has received for various assignments during the course. Last but not least please take attention to the following ;

What have you learnt from today's session?  
What is assessment?  
How can you assess your students properly?

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