

Using Journalism as a Way to Shift from Summative Assessment to Formative Assessment

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Submitted to the School of Human Sciences

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

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Nota de Responsabilidad

Las ideas y conclusiones aportadas en este Trabajo de Grado son responsabilidad del autor.

Artículo 1, Acuerdo N° 324 de octubre 11 de 1966, emanado del honorable Consejo Directivo de la Universidad de Nariño

Nota de Aceptación

Firma del Presidente del Jurado

Firma del Jurado

Firma del Jurado

Resumen

Este documento de investigación explora la evolución de la evaluación del lenguaje a través de la historia y explica la necesidad que los profesores de Inglés como lengua extranjera tienen de cambiar las prácticas de evaluación sumativa por la incorporación de evaluación formativa. Esto, con el fin de enfocarse en el desarrollo y progreso del aprendizaje del idioma por parte de los estudiantes, usando actividades creativas, prácticas y fáciles de usar basadas en el uso de proyectos tales como el periodismo en la clase. Este documento será de utilidad para que profesores nuevos sepan exactamente que hacer y no hacer cuando se trata de evaluación del lenguaje.

Abstract

This research paper explores the evolution of language assessment throughout history and explains the need that modern EFL teachers have to shift from a traditional and summative assessment practice towards the incorporation of formative assessment. This, as a way to focus on students' language learning development and progress by using creative, practical and easy-to-use activities based on the use of projects such as class journalism. This document will also serve new teachers to know exactly what to do and not to do when it comes to language assessment.

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Introduction

In a globalized world, learning to speak a foreign language has gained major importance given the circumstances of daily life. At the same time, the need to assure successful language learning, in this case English, is now a priority because for “millions of learners around the world, the ability to communicate in English is the passport to economic prosperity, social mobility and educational advancement” (Fulcher 2007, p.1).

In order to cope with the context’s demands, EFL teachers may now be challenged to shape their instructional practices and adjust them to what their students need and are able to do. As a way to know exactly what best works in the classroom, language assessment plays an important role in the overall learning process (Haymann, 1995) and it is key to make informed decisions on how to enhance the whole learning experience for EFL students (Gottlieb, 2006, p1).

Heritage, Walqui, & Linqunti (2012) also assert that “integrating instruction and assessment is a continuous cycle that entails gathering evidence of and judging student learning; providing feedback to students about their learning; and using assessment data to adjust subsequent instruction as needed” (p.3-4). However, it may be likely that many EFL teachers in our Colombian educational system limit themselves to using traditional paper and pencil tests, and this may be the case because of the conditions in our classrooms which tend to have large classes, low motivated students and lack of curricular support and materials, (Salas & Santamaria, 2004). As a consequence of the previous ideas, teachers are likely to end up using the traditional written tests but the problem is that this kind of summative assessment cannot provide enough information about a student’s progress or proficiency level (Gipps, 1990).

Hence, there exists a need to raise awareness about the multiple ways of assessment available for the purpose of improving language-learning conditions and to support teachers' instruction.

In agreement with what has been mentioned thus far, the main goal of this research paper is to provide a pedagogical proposal based on the use of class journalism-based activities such as the creation of newspapers as a formative assessment idea to respond to the needs of the context and EFL learners and teachers. This goal will be attained by exploring and discussing the differences between summative and formative assessment and how important it is to promote the use of the latter given that the other way of assessment may not be appropriate anymore.

The first section of this document will be in charge of discussing in a general way, the background of language assessment and testing and the changes it has had in history. Once this groundwork is laid, the next section will explain the differences between summative and formative assessment. Finally, the last theoretical framework section will focus on the need of shifting towards the use of formative assessment and the practical ideas that can be incorporated based on this latter approach.

General Background of Language Assessment

In order for EFL teachers to know how to implement formative assessment in their classrooms, it is foremost necessary to clarify the differences between assessment, evaluation and testing because a misunderstanding of these terms may lead to choose inadequate tools to assess the learning process of students. As Ioannou and Pavlou (2003) affirm, there is confusion between these terms and they are usually used interchangeably but they are completely different, hence the need to have them clear.

As for evaluation, there are many definitions provided by different authors. Here two points of view will be considered. In accordance with Nunan (1999) “Evaluation is the collection and interpretation of information about aspects of the curriculum...for decision making purposes” (p. 85). A similar definition is provided by Ioannou and Pavlou (2003). They assert that “Evaluation is the process of gathering information in order to determine the extent to which a language program meets its goals.” (p.4). As it can be seen from the definitions above, evaluation is the part of the teaching process that allows to collect and interpret data and information in order to make decisions about the next steps in the classroom settings.

At the same time, evaluation can be separated in two major categories regarding the purpose it has attached to it. These types of evaluation are *summative evaluation* and *formative assessment*. Lemmetti (2015) explains that “formative assessment is often referred to as assessment for learning and is mainly used to provide information for the student regarding where he/she is in the learning process and how to move further” (p. 5). In this sense, Lemmetti conveys that the purpose of formative assessment is improving the learning. On the other hand, summative assessment is “more assessment of learning. In this case to sum up end results of achievement, and a way of doing that is to use different types of tests” (Lemmetti, 2015, p.5). These two forms of evaluation will be studied with more detail further on this document.

In regards to assessment, this term is defined by Nunan (2004) by saying that it is “the set of processes by which we judge students’ learning” (p. 118). Similarly, Tom Angelo (1995) states: “assessment is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning” (p. 7). Furthermore, a worth mentioning definition is provided by Angelo and Cross (1995, pp. 427) who affirm that assessment “focuses on learning, teaching and outcomes. It provides information for improving learning and teaching. Assessment is an interactive process

between students and faculty that informs faculty how well their students are learning and what they are teaching”. A clear distinction between evaluation and assessment may be drawn upon these definitions considering the idea that assessment is focused on students’ performance as a way to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to know what can be improved to enhance language learning. It can also be taken into account, based on what these authors said, that assessment involves both students and teachers in a continuous process to decide what can be changed in the instructional methods and the tasks that can be assigned for students to improve their learning.

The other concept that tends to be misunderstood the most and which is regularly used to refer to the previous terms is testing. Therefore, this concept will be analyzed and discussed in detail as a way to explain the importance it has in the overall subject field of language assessment. To do so, following there will be a brief definition of testing as well as a general revision of the history of testing since it is important to understand that as Lemmetti (2015) argues, the way testing is seen has changed focus over the last five decades. Therefore, by knowing generally the changes testing has had, it will be easier for readers to understand they should incorporate other types of assessment - the need to change from testing practices to an assessment culture.

Testing as well as evaluation and assessment is defined by many scholars in the field of language teaching and research. This document will take a look at two definitions. For Brown (2007), testing is defined with simple words: “a method of measuring a person’s ability or knowledge in a given domain” (p. 384). Another definition is given by Norris (2003, P1), “language tests are simply instruments or procedures for gathering particular kinds of information, typically information having to do with students’ language abilities.” In general

words, it can be noted that a test is a tool to measure what a student knows about a certain topic or what they can do in a given situation. Further explanations of testing can be analyzed and discussed by going back in the past and studying in a general way the history of language testing and how it has evolved throughout time.

As Kluitmann (2008) affirms, that language testing has a significant long history. He cites Fink (1995) and explains that “play is one of the basic phenomena constituting the human condition (cf. Fink 1995: 356) and in play; humans compete against each other and test their abilities” (p. 1). Therefore, game and play become the first way of testing that exists among human beings.

Kluitmann (2008) also asserts that the first language testing evidence can be noted in the history of human existence (p. 1), and he also cites Kunnan (1999: 707, Brown / Hudson 2002: 1) by saying that probably the first evidence of language testing can be found in the “Old Testament, when the Gileadites use a Shibboleth to distinguish between friends and enemies” (p. 1)

The biblical passage is as follows:

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand (Judges 12: 5-6) in Kluitmann (2008, p. 1).

Kluitmann (2008) explains that as in this story, in most language tests there is always a need to meet certain standards. As it is the case of this story, the standard was the correct pronunciation of the word “Shibboleth” as a way to approve a test.

As it can be seen, language testing has its roots in ancient history of human life, however the history of modern language testing and assessment is still young because the earliest language testing formal activities started to appear as a result of the World War I. Later on in the 1940’s, as Kluitmann states, language testing started to become a topic of scientific research with:

“Villareal’s Test of Aural Comprehension in 1947 and Lado’s Measurement in English as a Foreign Language in 1949” (Kunnan 1999: 707, in Kluitmann, 2008, p. 5) being the first two Ph.D. dissertations in the field of language testing. Robert Lado went on to do further research and in 1961 presented his views in *Language Testing*. His structuralist approach promoted discrete point testing, a concept which “was reinforced by theory and practice within psychometrics [sic]” (McNamara 2000: 14, in Kluitmann, 2008, p. 5).

Since this period of time, a significant contribution of dissertations, books and articles can be found within the literature of language teaching, and the TESOL field more specifically (Bachman, 1991; Brown, 2000; Bailey & Nunan, 1996; Oller, 1978; Oxford, 1997).

As shown up to this point, it can be seen that assessment, evaluation and testing keep a close relationship among them, however, it is clear from what has been demonstrated that they are totally different things. In general words it can be said that they are classified or rearranged in the order presented below in this document. From the evidence, it can be acceptable to say that assessment is the bigger umbrella that involves the other two elements. Assessment is in charge

of collecting data as a way to make decisions over the teaching procedures, the learning outcomes and the curricular aspects. Evaluation is inside the assessment process and it is used as a way to observe and judge the collected information. And finally, the test is the instrument that enables teachers to measure how much something has been learned.

In the Colombian context, where learning a foreign language is extremely important, it should also have equivalent importance that teachers have a clear distinction of all these terms so that every time they design a task or a lesson plan, they adjust their learning goals taking into account the most appropriate way to assess language learning. In this way, teaching practices may be coherent with the tools they choose to assess their students.

From this point on it can be discussed how important it is to understand that language learners do not need only to be tested and given a grade or a letter to tell them 'how good they are at something'. Many EFL teachers may tend to struggle with this part of the teaching process because they may not know that testing is not the only way of assessment. Therefore teachers need to ask a few questions when they are testing their students as a way to realize what can be improved or what needs to be changed.

Why Using Tests?

In regards of the reasons why to use tests, a few questions may arise: when testing language learners, what is more important for EFL teachers? What are the reasons for them to use tests in the classroom? Are they using tests because it is part of the institution where they are working and they need to cope with the administration requirements? Are tests being used to promote discipline in the classroom? Are they used because it justifies decisions? Because they fill class time? Or just because they make students study?

When using tests inside the classroom, it is of great importance to consider that they may have what Brown (2000) defines as *washback effect* which refers to the direct or indirect effect that testing has on the teaching process.

An example of negative *washback* occurs when testing becomes more important than teaching (*e.g.* test training, penalizing error during the learning process, etc.). Consequently, teachers may become ‘test junkies’ as Prodromou (1991) defines, which refers to a kind of “abuse of testing that occurs when tests invade essential teaching space, when they are not the final stage of a process of learning but become the beginning, middle, and end of the whole process” (p. 14).

In spite of the information presented above, it is also necessary to clarify that depending on the use and the purpose, tests are not a necessary tool because at the same time they can have a positive *washback effect*, as Prodromou states, because testing may promote good teaching quality (not testing practices) in the classroom. As it can be seen, testing may have a negative or a positive effect in language teaching and learning but as Prodromou argues, even if tests have a washback effect, this should not be the main reason for testing.

From a Testing and Examination Culture to an Assessment Culture

Why should EFL teachers shift from a traditional way of assessment based on the use of tests and examinations to a performance-based and learning-oriented approach to language assessment? This question may be answered in multiple ways and different scholars and experts in language teaching may have different opinions in regards of this issue. However, from this document’s author’s point of view, once being a teacher, she has experienced that tests are not as adequate to use as they might appear when learning and improving the learner’s progress is the

final outcome of a daily teaching practice. Additionally, as Prodromou (1995) states, “many teachers, trapped in an examination preparation cycle, feel that communicative and humanistic methodologies are luxuries they cannot afford” (p. 14). Which is true in many settings where there are factors that sometimes are difficult to deal with such as large classes, lack of materials or low motivated students. However, it is essential to change this common idea and understand that using new trends in language assessment is no difficult task, but it is a matter of being open-minded to enhance professional practices and improve the overall language learning conditions of our students.

Taking into consideration what has already been suggested, it is important to highlight that many researchers talk about the shift from psychometrics (e.g. paper and pencil tests, standardized tests, questionnaires and examinations) to a wider approach to language assessment. From a testing culture to an assessment culture (Lemmetti, 2015). For instance, Lemmetti cites Gipps (1995) who explains that twenty-five years ago there were not as many assessment practices as there are today. Examples of these assessment practices are: teacher assessment, standard tasks, coursework, records of achievement, and practical and oral assessment. It is more common now than in the past to use written tests and standardized tests. Testing and assessment are regarded in a different way nowadays, and are required in order to achieve various objectives such as supporting teaching and learning, providing information about the students, teachers and schools, being selective and certifying, and directing curriculum and teaching. As it can be analyzed based on the above, these new forms and purposes mentioned by Gipps mean that the major traditional assessment theory, the psychometric model is not appropriate any longer, henceforth the paradigm shift (p. 3).

Differences between Summative and Formative Assessment

Adapted from Brown (2004)

| | Formative Assessment | Summative Assessment |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Purpose | “Evaluating students in the process of ‘forming’ their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process” | “Aims to measure or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction” |
| Key Features | “The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (or formation) of learning” | “A summation of what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished objectives, but does not necessarily point the way to future progress” |
| Examples | “Observations, portfolios, journals, student feedback, debates, discussions, etc.” | “Final exams in a course and general proficiency exams are examples of summative assessment... quizzes, periodic review tests, midterm exams, etc.” |
| Outcomes | “Ongoing development of the student’s language...students are engaged in their learning and it | “Students usually think that after they are done with a test they think that they do not need to remember what they studied for |

| | | |
|--|--------------------------|------------|
| | improves their progress” | their test |
|--|--------------------------|------------|

As it can be seen in the above comparison chart, formative assessment is principally used to provide information for the student regarding where he/she is in the learning process and how to move further. The goal in this type of assessment is to improve the learning process. On the other side, summative assessment sums up final results of achievement, and a way of doing so is by utilizing different types of tests.

Unwanted outcome of too much use of summative assessment may be that students will only be in charge of memorizing loads of material, and ‘spitting out’ answers. On the other hand, as Chickering and Gamson (1987) argue, students should be able to speak out about what they are learning, write about it and more importantly “relate it to past experiences and apply it to their daily lives, they must make what they learn part of themselves.” (pp. 1-8). And the way to achieve that purpose may be by using formative assessment activities oriented towards those mentioned goals.

Journalism to Promote Formative Assessment

In order to know what activities can be used following the trend of formative assessment along with the use of journalism it is necessary to understand what this is and the reasons to implement it in the EFL classrooms of our context.

What Is Journalism?

According to the American Press Institute, journalism is the activity and product of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information, and whose main purpose is

that of communication. We can see how journalism has a great impact on societies given the big influence they have over opinion and information gathering and distribution. Journalism is a powerful resource created to sustain a cultural part of populations around the world and in that sense it is a necessity to regard journalism as an advantageous tool to implement in language teaching, in this case as a way to foster formative assessment and to shape language instruction as a whole as well.

Why Using Journalism in the Classroom?

It should be noted that in the same way as language learning, journalism is characteristic for developing analysis and critical skills as well as reporting and commenting on news and information. Therefore given the close relationship and the equal purpose shared by these two areas, journalism may be a powerful tool for English language teachers to shape instruction that facilitates better assessment practices. This could be attained by taking into account that journalism would suit a holistic, integrative and interdisciplinary way of teaching and learning because it provides the opportunity for students to work hands on, to be part of the whole process of learning while researching, interacting, and exploring all the functions of language and also because by means of implementing this pedagogical method students can really be aware of what they learn and see their results as they progress throughout the courses designed for them.

Journalism can be a significantly authentic resource inside the classroom given that it could reflect natural and real-life knowledge as the content to introduce language learning given that as Efe, Demiröz, and Akdemir (2011, in Akdemir, Barin and Demiröz, 2012) state that authentic materials are those that teach natural and authentic knowledge, competencies and abilities (p. 2). Therefore, the use of journalism can contribute largely to the learning of daily

used language at the same time it reinforces contextualized knowledge of news and information in a given culture, community or society.

An example of how journalism can be used and the benefits it can bring with is by using newspapers. For instance, Mehta (2010), explains the following advantages of using newspapers in the ESL classroom:

1. Provides motivation for reading and discussion in English
2. Develops affection and interest towards the use of English Language.
3. Makes the process of learning interesting and innovative.
4. Becomes flexible and adaptable to all curriculum areas and grade levels.
5. Promotes good reading habits that will help in a better understanding.
6. Offers a wide variety of knowledge and information -- news, sports, weather, editorials, and comics.
7. A very cost-effective way to impart learning.
8. Contains practical vocabulary and the best models of clear, concise writing.
9. Develops writing, speaking and listening skills of the students.
10. Explores and unfold the world of knowledge and information.
11. Lessons take time to prepare. Once a teacher finds an interesting material, he/she may use it over and over again.

12. Helpful in learning grammatical usages, carefully crafted sentence structures and idioms and phrases besides new words. (p. 2-3)

Aside from the previous benefits of using journalism, it should also be necessary to consider the competencies that journalism itself develops in those who practice this activity. As a matter of fact, Clark (2014) a scholar at Poynter, (a global leader in journalism) explains that there are 10 competencies that can be accomplished when developing journalism. Those matter in relation to the purpose of this research given that they support the multiple benefits that it provides to utilize this tool in language teaching and to enhance language assessment. Those competencies are judgment, evidence gathering, storytelling, critical thinking, using audiovisuals, using technology, using numeracy, civics, culture, and mission and purpose. Further reading on these competencies can be found in the online resources at Poynter Institute's.

Pedagogical Proposal

As it has been clarified so far, the purpose of this research paper is to use journalism as a way to shift from summative assessment to formative assessment. However, it may be necessary to take into account that there are different kinds of journalism and the one that is intended to be used in this document is the newspaper. The skills that can be developed through the use of newspapers have already been explained above; nonetheless, this proposal is going to focus on writing production-oriented skills such as writing and speaking.

The following are activities adapted from the New York Times newspaper but it should be noted that they can be adapted using any newspaper, any materials and also they can be used with any age and any level of English language proficiency.

Lesson Plan

Objectives: At the end of this activity students will be able to gather evidence, analyze and report on news and information from their local context and daily realities by means of writing articles for a class newspaper or a class radio program.

Level: Any

Language: Any

Assessment: Students will follow a process with guidelines from the beginning to the end of the activity. Additionally, there will be three types of rubrics: teacher's rubric, individual rubric and peer rubric.

Process:

1. Provide students with a list of themes based on the previous assessment of their skills, needs and interests. For example, if it is an ESP group of business students, the list of themes would include topics such as: the effect of globalization in the local economy, the devaluation of the national currency, the harm of multinationals in the regional development, unemployment rates during the last decade in Latin American countries, etc.
2. Design a guideline to explain all the steps that students need to follow in order to accomplish the final product. It is important to remember that clear instructions are vital for effective results.
3. Students need to go through all the steps/competencies mentioned previously. They need to gather information and evidence, compare it with different resources, analyze the differences and similarities within the information collected, select the type of means they want to report through, prepare their report and proof read it.

4. If there are large classes, a good idea is to create a class newspaper that covers different sections by splitting the class into small groups that are in charge of completing the article or contribution that will go into that section.
5. For the revision stage it is necessary to design the rubrics that will facilitate that process. Rubrics can be designed based on the kind of product that will be developed. If it is a newspaper the following are two adaptable examples of a rubric to assess the final product.

| Category | Excellent (4) | Good (3) | Fair (2) | Poor (1) | Score (Optional) |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Required articles | All required articles have been included. | Most of the required articles have been included. | Some of the required articles have been included. | Most required articles were not included. | |
| Content-Accuracy and Relevancy | Articles show a full and accurate understanding of the topics. | Articles show a good and mostly accurate understanding of the topics. | Articles show a good understanding of parts of the topics. Some information is inaccurate. | Does not seem to understand the topics well. Information is inaccurate. | |
| Spelling and Grammar | There are no/one spelling/grammar errors in the newspaper. | There are a few spelling/grammar errors in the newspaper. | There are some spelling/grammar errors in the newspaper. | There are several spelling/grammar errors in the newspaper. | |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| Citations | All work/evidence was properly cited. | Most work/evidence was properly cited. | Some work/evidence was cited, but maybe not properly. | Citations were limited and not properly done. | |
| Works Cited Page and Sources | Works cited page was completed correctly and all sources were handed in. | Works cited page was completed mostly correctly and most/all sources were handed in. | Work cited page was done with many errors and/or most sources were not turned in. | Works cited page was done poorly or not completed and/or sources were not handed in. | |

Rubric 1 – adapted from rubistar.4teachers.com

| CATEGORY | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Score (Optional) |
|--------------------|---|--|---|--|--|------------------|
| Information | very-well written article included, information is accurate, and very creatively written. | well-written article included, information is accurate, and somewhat creatively written. | Article included, information somewhat accurate, and somewhat creatively written. | articles included, not very accurate, and not creative. | article, not accurate, and not creative. | |
| Format | Followed a newspaper format, with a title, headlines, pictures, captions; very creative. | Followed a newspaper format with a title, headlines, pictures, captions; creative. | Followed a newspaper format, some items missing; not very creative. | Several items missing from the newspaper format; not creative. | Didn't follow newspaper format; incomplete work. | |
| Mechanics | All words are spelled correctly, all complete sentences; no punctuation missing. | Most words are spelled correctly, all sentences complete, no punctuation missing. | Some misspelled words, some incomplete sentences, some punctuation missing. | Several misspelled words, several incomplete sentences, several punctuation marks missing. | Newspaper is unreadable; 1 point for just turning it in. | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Neatness | Paper is very neat and well organized. It is appealing and easy to read. | Paper is neat and organized. It is easy to read. | Paper is neat, not well organized. It is readable. | Paper is somewhat neat, not well organized, and difficult to read. | Paper is messy, unorganized and unreadable. | |
|-----------------|--|--|--|--|---|--|

Rubric 2 - Adapted from rubistar.4teachers.com

The activities can be developed taking into account the classroom management characteristics. For instance if there is not enough time for language classes the project could be done at the end of a term or at the end of the academic year depending on the individual needs of the context where this proposal is being implemented.

Conclusions

It has been settled that learning to speak English has become a major necessity in a globalized world where knowing how to effectively communicate with this foreign language can lead to accomplish life goals in personal, academic and professional fields. For this reason, adopting an accurate learning approach that includes an effective system of language assessment is essential to develop the communicative skills and become eventually a proficient user of the target language.

At the same time, this research document studied and analyzed the evolution of language assessment throughout history as a way to justify the importance of adopting a change towards the use of formative assessment in place of the traditional summative assessment approach. This given the need to obtain alternative strategies that lead to enhance the language learning development by means of practical and innovative activities based on projects such as class journalism.

In line with the stated above, the present research paper reviewed the concepts of evaluation, assessment and testing in order to clarify and differentiate the elements that make up this important stage of every daily teaching practice so that EFL teachers can reflect on how to improve their lesson planning and pedagogical skills.

Furthermore it was explained that language assessment is an important factor in lesson planning because knowing how to effectively gather data with the purpose of making improvements will shape the teacher's goals and the overall reinforcement of language learning will take place. Therefore, by incorporating a system of activities that include assessment in a

formative way, rather than with the aim of giving grades, students' will develop a series of traits that help them progress in their achievement of proficiency and performance.

It is clear that in the Colombian educational context, specially in the public sector, where there are large classes, lack of appropriate materials, students who might display low motivation and lack of teacher training and curricular support, it is a challenge for EFL teachers to incorporate new ways to assess their students given the idea that using paper tests and summative assessment is the traditional and easiest way to accomplish institutional goals and teaching standards in high schools and educational institutions. However, the author of this document truly believes that it is worth trying to implement these new strategies and types of activities if the main purpose of teaching a language is having students who can actually use that target language, rather than having students with high grades in national tests but little use or low proficiency of English. Also, it was explained that the traditional assessment procedures are not as appropriate as formative assessment activities and it is essential to adopt a change to formative assessment that focuses on students' needs and skills.

By using local newspapers and information sources from the students' immediate context it is possible for them to get more acquainted with their daily realities and this may lead them to develop more cultural and social awareness. Also this might make learning more meaningful because they will be using the target language involving personal experiences and relating to their realities and the social context because as Vygotsky (1978) argues, learning always occurs and cannot be separated from the social context.

The use of project work such as class journalism inside the classroom can involve many benefits because as Stoller (2012) explains, the use of project work can be adaptable to different

proficiency levels and students' interests, it can provide plenty input and output, there is an authentic involvement of several skills at the same time (e.g. reading, speaking, listening and writing) activities can be content driven, it can involve students in meaningful learning, it is a process-and-product-oriented activity, it intensifies students' motivation, participation and creativity, it increases autonomy to take responsibilities, it can engage students in activities that can be challenging but easily developed if well structured and finally the typical academic cycle can take place: gathering information, processing and reporting (p. 27-32).

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