

THE NEED TO USE ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES IN FLL

By

Diana Maritza Narváez Vásquez

Submitted to the School of Human Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

in the Linguistics and Languages Department

English and Spanish Program

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NOTA DE ACEPTACIÒN

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Resumen

Este trabajo de investigación pretende mostrar a los profesores la importancia de explorar algunas estrategias de evaluación utilizadas en las clases de lengua extranjera. La información se recopila a partir de las tendencias de evaluación que muestran las estrategias que los profesores pueden aplicar para evaluar las habilidades en el idioma extranjero de una manera exitosa.

Además, este documento presenta una breve descripción del entorno colombiano y las ventajas y posibles dificultades de implementar alternativas en la evaluación. Al mismo tiempo, no sólo describe la evaluación alternativa, sino que explica cómo algunas estrategias podrían ser utilizadas efectivamente en clases de lengua extranjera en nuestro contexto educativo.

Palabras clave: evaluación, lenguas extranjeras, alternativas a la evaluación

Abstract

This research paper intends to show teachers the importance of exploring some assessment strategies used in foreign language classes. The information is gathered from assessment trends that show strategies that teachers can apply in order to assess the foreign language skills in a successful way. In addition, this document presents a brief description of the Colombian setting, and the advantages and possible difficulties of implementing alternatives in assessment. At the same time, it not only describes the alternative assessment, but explains how some strategies could be used effectively in foreign language classes in our educational context.

Key words: assessment, foreign languages, alternatives to assessment

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The Need to Use Alternative Assessment Strategies in Foreign Language Learning

In Colombia, although the Lineamientos Curriculares de la Lengua Extranjera (1996) document states that there are many ways to collect information about the student's learning, in our context, teachers may tend to apply traditional ways (written tests) to collect that information, neglecting other strategies that might be more effective in providing an account of students' learning.

For teachers, assessment is something common in learning and it is seen such as one more step in the learning process. But, as it was stated before, assessment has to do with collecting information about our students' performance and it may be a factor that helps or hinders learning in foreign language classes. The use of only one or two ways to assess could neglect the strengths of some learners who might perform better if exposed to a different type of assessment tasks. If the learners fail the task, it might lead to developing a negative attitude to foreign language classes. If a student is not good at taking written exams and that is the only assessment task used by the teacher, the student might feel like s/he does not have the opportunity to succeed, or as Díaz, Alarcón and Ortiz (2012) suggest, assessment can produce anxiety in students. That can affect the student's performance and results. These ideas may lead us to think that teachers should apply alternative assessment more frequently, in order to help students decrease negative feelings, provide more opportunities to succeed and assess learners in a variety of ways.

The aim of this research paper is to provide teachers with some arguments that support the idea that alternatives in assessment can be effective and useful to assess second/foreign language (L2) learners in an EFL setting like Colombia and that they can be realistically applied in their professional practice. This will be achieved by presenting definitions related to

assessment that clarify some misconceptions that might exist regarding assessment and then, describing the implementation of some assessment strategies. The paper is organized as follows: first, the paper introduces some definitions about assessment and the difference between evaluation, assessment and testing. Second, it describes some alternatives or strategies in assessment. The paper also discusses the importance of implementing these strategies, the way in which these strategies can be implemented in our context, and some potential difficulties in implementing this type of assessment.

Assessment strategies used in foreign language classes

After this brief introduction, the definition of assessment will be provided in order to avoid confusing it with other terms such as evaluation or testing, given that in Spanish the three terms may be used indistinctively.

According to Brown (2004), assessment is a popular and sometimes misunderstood term in current educational practice. People might think that testing and assessment are synonymous terms, but they are not. While tests can be defined as prepared procedures that occur at identifiable times, assessment is an ongoing process inside the classroom that encompasses a much wider domain. Brown (2004) suggests that when a student answer a question, makes an opinion or a comment, or uses a new word or grammatical structure, the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the students' performance.

For Katz (2014), the term assessment refers to the use of methods and instruments to collect information to encourage informed decision making on learning. In contrast, a test is just one of the many forms of assessment.

On the other hand, Briendley (2001) defines assessment as a variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's performance. Although testing and assessment are often used interchangeably, the latter is an instrument in which the teacher can evidence a result while assessment involves other things such as observation, feedback, etc. Assessment is also distinguished from evaluation, which is concerned with the overall language program and not just with what individual students have learnt.

Another definition about assessment according to Hanna and Dettmer (2004) is the process in which the teacher can gather data of his/her students' learning. More specifically, assessment is the ways instructors gather data about their teaching and their students' learning. The data provide a picture of a range of activities using different forms of assessment such as: pre-tests, observations, and examinations. Once these data are gathered, you can then assess the student's performance.

Now that the concept of assessment and what it entails has been clarified, I now turn to clarify two relevant terms. It is important to notice the difference between formal and informal assessment in order to understand the ways to assess L2 learners and how these kinds of assessment work.

Brown (2004, p. 5) suggests that informal assessment can take a number of forms, starting with incidental unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to the students. Examples include saying "nice job!" "Good work!" "Did you say can or can't?" Informal assessment does not stop there. A good deal for a teacher's informal assessment is embedded in classroom test designed to elicit performance without recording results and making fixed judgments about student's competence.

On the other hand, formal assessment tasks are exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and student an appraisal of student achievement.

Having cleared the assessment definitions according to some authors, it is important to know that there are other subdivisions in assessment terms. One of these subdivisions is summative and formative assessment. Brown (2004) explains that it is important to keep in mind this subdivision as a function of assessment.

Summative assessment, according to Brown (2004) aims to measure or summarize what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit of instruction. A summation of what a student has learned implies looking back and taking stock of how well that student has accomplished the objectives, but does not necessarily point the way to future progress, final exams in a course and general proficiency exams are examples of summative assessment. Teachers who apply this kind of assessment focus on what students have learned as a result of a period of instruction.

On the other hand, formative assessment means to evaluate students in the process of “forming” their competences and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and the internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (or formation) of learning (Brown, 2004). Teachers use formative assessment when they help to promote students learning during the process of instruction. As it can be seen, assessment is not a simple concept, it is not something separated from teaching and learning, and it has sub-concepts and categories that teachers need to know as part of their teaching preparation. According to

Jorba and Casellas (1997, as cited in Arias and Maturana, 2005), the goals of formative assessment are the pedagogical regulation, work on errors and feedback. All this is possible with permanent assessment, and self- assessment.

In Colombia, Ministerio de Educacion (2008), in Ley General de Educacion, explains that teachers have to apply formative and qualitative assessment. However, there is a contradiction because Ministerio de Educacion (2010) also states that assessment, as a regulator of educational services, shows the progress and results of the learning based on evidence that guarantee a relevant education to the student and is at the same time relevant to society: that is summative assessment.

It is important to note that assessment tools are not summative and formative; it is the purpose to which they put that determines how assessments are characterized. Katz (2014, p. 322) shows the following list that displays how assessment is used for both summative and formative assessment:

Summative purposes:	Formative purposes:
Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document learning • Diagnose learning needs • Provide information for communication linkages among students, families and teachers. • Plan and improve instruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffold learning • Provide ongoing feedback during instruction and/ or student performances. • Engage students in self-assessment.

We have to understand that the previous chart does not mean that as teachers, we have to choose what kind of assessment we have to apply. As teachers, we can use both in order to get the teaching purposes; in fact, it is desirable to do this because teachers can get a more complete view of the learners' progress and the whole teaching/learning process. Assessment can help teachers modify their planning and be aware of the students' needs. One important thing to say is that regardless of the assessment we apply, we need to follow some principles.

Principles of language assessment

Regardless of the assessment task that teachers intend to use to assess their learners, these tasks should follow some parameters or rules. Brown (2007) sets some principles that serve as guidelines for teachers to design tests and tasks that permit to assess more effectively and objectively. Understanding these principles, teachers can apply summative or formative assessment according to their students' needs and assessment purposes. In the following section a description and explanation of these principles is provided.

Practicality

According to Brown (2007), a good test should be practical. "It is within the means of financial limitations, time constraints, ease of administration, and scoring and interpretation" (p, 446). Bachman and Palmer, (as cited in Frodden, Restrepo, Maturana, 2004) explain that "a practical test is one whose design, development, and use do not require more resources that are available" (1996, p. 36). This means that human, material, and time resources are essential to estimate the practicality of a test.

Reliability

Brown (2007) suggests that a test is reliable when it is consistent and dependable. Reliability relates to consistency of measurement. If someone takes the same test on two different occasions, she/ he should have similar results. Also, if two or more scorers give the same or similar scoring to a test, we can say that the test is reliable. Of course, this would only happen when the test-taker and test conditions are similar and when the scoring instructions are clear and specific (Frodden et al., 2004).

General instructions are important for transparency of assessment, because they are the means to inform test-takers how they are to proceed with the test, how the teacher will score it, and how the results will be used (Shohamy, 2001)

Validity

Brown (2007) explains that by far the most complex criterion of a good test is validity:

The degree to which the test actually measures what it is intended to measure. A valid test of reading ability is one that actually measures reading ability and not, says, 20/20 vision, previous knowledge of a subject, or some other variable of questionable relevance (p.448). Almost all the quizzes and workshops assess only aspects of one of the components of organizational language knowledge: grammar and vocabulary, with items such as word completion, multiple choice, and transformation. This type of item makes it difficult to infer that the student is able to use the language in authentic situations (Frodden et al., 2004)

Authenticity

Bachman and Palmer (1993, p. 23 as cited in Brown, 2007), define authenticity as “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a

target language task”, and then suggest an agenda for identifying those target language tasks and for transforming them into valid test items. Frodden et al. (2004) explain that authenticity is an important quality of tests because it links students’ performance and the domains in which the teacher wants to use her interpretations. Besides, the way in those students perceive the relative authenticity of a test task may influence their performance on the test.

Wash back

Brown (2007) suggests that when students take a test, teachers should provide them with subsequent information (feedback) about their competences, based on their performance. The feedback should “wash back” to them in the form of useful diagnoses of strengths and weaknesses of the language learning. Informal assessment permits a construction of wash back because teachers are providing interactive feedback. When students fail a test, teachers have to analyze if the test is designed in a correct way.

As assessment is a fundamental part in the teaching and learning process, teachers should consider that if they assess learners in an ineffective way, the results of assessment will not be reliable, and they will not know if they are doing things well or not. Applying the assessment principles, teachers can make sure that they are doing everything they can to assess a student’s real performance. Given that assessment may not be a commonly discussed topic in Colombian English classes, teachers may not realize if their tests are reliable, practical, authentic, etc. and this can lead to a mistake in the scoring and design of the test, affecting in the long run, the students’ perception of the English course and the teacher.

Alvarez (2000; Hearn & Garcés, 2003; Nezakatgoo, 2011), cited by Díaz, C et al. (2012) explain that since the arrival of communicative approaches, language assessment has focused on

the collecting and interpreting information aware of student performance in a foreign language; this means that teachers want to assess students based on the students' performance in interactive real world tasks in which the students integrate different systems and language skills. This has produced a change in assessment strategies, but not all English teachers apply these new strategies.

Assessment principles are a tool for teachers when they design tests, but teachers also have to keep in mind different ways or strategies to assess because tests are not the only assessment tasks. These different ways and strategies are what some authors have called alternative assessment. This term includes assessment strategies that can help teachers assess or judge their students' performance. Following this, here there are some definitions of alternative assessment.

Alternative assessment

For Hancock (1994), alternative assessment is an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the student's performance in language using non-conventional strategies, for example, the continued use of test, not all assessment consist of tests. In this way, Brown and Hudson (1998) suggest that alternative assessment emphasizes the responsibility to apply all assessment principles to such options, and not to treat them as strange aberrations of normal assessment practices

Brown (2007, p. 462) suggests a list of differences between traditional and alternative assessment:

Traditional test	Alternatives in assessment
One-shot, standardized exams	Continuous long- term assessment
Timed, multiple- choice format	Untimed, free- response format
Decontextualized test items	Contextualized communicative task
Scores suffice for feedback	Formative, interactive feedback
Norm- referenced scores	Criterion- referenced scores
Focus on the “right” answer	Open- ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

Brown (2004; Macaro, 2003; Sánchez & Morrison-Saunders, 2010) cited by Díaz, C et al. (2012) explain that some alternatives in assessment such as portfolios, interviews, diaries, and self-assessment and per-assessment are common assessment strategies used in English classes as a foreign language. These assessment tasks are focused on the student; they give students a way to get involved in their own learning. Also, these kinds of assessment provide teachers with useful information in order to improve their teaching practice.

Continuing with this topic, and consequently with the objective of the paper, a short explanation of some alternatives in assessment strategies that can be used in language classes with beginner, intermediate and advanced learners is provided.

Portfolios

Genesee and Upshur (1996, as cited by Brown (2007) define portfolio as “a purposeful collection of students` work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas” (p. 99). With this strategy, teachers, parents and students can see the progress or activities in the classes. Also, it allows students to work in an independent way or small groups. Portfolios can include all the student work such as essays, compositions, reports, oral production, journals and artwork.

Portfolios are a good tool in learning assessment when the portfolio is more than a file folder of work products. The contents should reflect learning aims and engage students in the learning process. When you review the content of the portfolio, it is possible to notice the strengths and weaknesses that students have, which are the areas of preference, or even if these questions can be solved by means of self-assessment (Sanchez, 2008). With portfolios, students get involved in the assessment process. In fact, student participation in the assessment process could be a critical factor in supporting learning in the language class. (Katz, 2014).

Polaksowki (1993) affirms that portfolios are a striking alternative in assessment for teaching children. The author listed some of the benefits of portfolios as follows:

1. It complements such developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction as whole language.
2. It also allows teachers to assess children`s individual learning styles.
3. It enhances teachers` ability to communicate with parents about children`s learning.

Teacher observations

According to Katz (2014), an important assessment tool is observation. It takes place during the lesson as teachers watch their students' performance. Through observation, teachers try to make sense of their students' moment to moment learning. Observation allows teachers to identify weaknesses and provide feedback in order to improve students' performance. Also, with observation, teachers can assess students without be aware, avoiding anxiety.

Also, observation allows teachers useful application of the principles proposed by Brown.

According to Brown (2007), with observation we can identify some student's performance such as:

- Sentence-level oral production
- Interaction with classmates (cooperation, frequency of oral production)
- Frequency of student-initiated responses (whole class, group class)
- Quality of teacher-elicited responses
- Evidence of listen comprehension (questions, attention, giving verbal and nonverbal behavior)
- Culturally specific linguistic and nonverbal factors (kinesics, proxemics, use of humor...)

Journals

Brown (2007) explains that journals are “simply opportunities for learners to write relatively free without undue concern for grammaticality” (p.476). With journals you can identify: language learning logs, grammar discussions, responses to readings, self-assessment, and reflections on attitudes and feelings. Using journals as an assessment instrument requires some recommendations such us:

- Specify the purpose of write a journal
- Give clear direction of how to start the journal because in many cases students never have written one.
- Help student to process your feedback, and show them how to respond to your responses.

Journals are an excellent tool for students to improve their writing skills, and also, it is a good way to assess this skill.

Conferences

Brown (2007) suggests that conferences are conversations that facilitate the improvement of the written work. In this strategy, there is an interaction between teacher and student, knowing the needs of the student and receiving direct feedback. For this reason, conferences, as dialogues, are by nature formative, not summative. In conferences, teacher is a facilitator and guide rather than a master controller and deliverer of final graders.

According to Brown (2007), conferencing can serve a number of possible functions, among them are the following:

1. Commenting on drafts of essays and reports
2. Reviewing portfolios
3. Responding to journals
4. Advising on a student`s plan for a paper or presentation
5. Exploring compensatory strategies to overcome weaknesses
6. Giving feedback on the results of performance on a test
7. Setting learning goals for the near future

Oral performance or presentations

Tannebaum (2011) explains that oral assessment includes interviews, oral reports, role plays, describing, explaining, summarizing, retelling, paraphrasing stories or text material, and so on. Oral assessments should be done to monitor comprehension and thinking skills.

Kelner (1993) as cited by Tannebaum (2011) sets forward the use of role plays as an alternative to traditional book reports. Students can transform themselves into a character or object from the book, delivering a meaningful presentation while providing output.

Following that, there are two assessment types that teachers can add in order to improve the assessment strategies or alternatives assessment already explained. In the next part an explanation about self and peer assessment and how teachers can apply them in their classrooms are suggested.

Self- and Peer- assessment

According to Frodden et al. (2004), this strategy makes the assessment more democratic by allowing students to get involved in the process and fairer by having other sources of information other than a test. Self- and peer- assessment require students to rate their own language knowledge and their commitment and they help other students to understand the meaning of learning and promote their autonomy.

Frodden et al. (2004) suggest that there are some advantages in the use of self- and peer- assessment because there is a direct involvement of students, the encouragement of autonomy, and increased motivation because of self- assessment in the process of learning (as cited in Alderson & Benerjee, 2001; Brown & Hudson, 1998; O`Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Brown (2007) suggests some ways that show how self- and peer- assessment can be implemented in language classrooms.

- Oral production: completing student self- checklist and/peer checklist. Listening to tape- recorder oral production to detect pronunciation or grammar errors. Setting goals for increasing opportunities to speak.
- Listening comprehension: listening to TV or radio broadcasts and checking comprehension with a partner, in pair or small groups. Asking when you do not understand something. Setting goals for increasing opportunities for listening.
- Writing: revising written work on your own or with a peer. Setting goals for increasing opportunities to write.
- Reading: reading textbooks passages followed by self- check comprehension question by your own or with a peer. Setting goals for increasing opportunities for reading.

According to Sanchez (2008), self-assessment promotes direct involvement in learning and the integration of cognitive abilities with motivation and attitude toward learning. With this activity students have freedom to choose challenging activities, take risks, advance on their own learning and accomplish desired goals.

Besides, Gomez (2016, p. 106), lists the positive and negative effects of Peer-assessment that teachers should have into account in their practice.

Positive effects of PA	Negative effects of PA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It fosters involvement, responsibility, and commitment in students. • Students raise awareness of their learning process and skills. • Students become able to assess their peers similar to their teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students found evaluating their peers' speaking and learning abilities difficult. • Under and over assessment were frequent. • It requires the support of other

- It fosters autonomy and critical thinking. techniques to encourage reflection.
- Learners liked and enjoyed it.
- It positively influences self-assessment.
- Students praise and reinforce their peers' good performance

In our context, teachers do not commonly apply these alternatives in assessment or apply them in a very small proportion. In my experience as an English teacher, I realized that teachers assess their students' English performance with tests. If this is the only strategy, teachers cannot assess all the skills, which do not give learners the opportunity to show what they know in different situations or tasks. Also, the repeated use of test may turn assessment into a boring and routine activity. Maybe this is due to the lack of knowledge about these alternatives. With the enforcement of these strategies in order to assess, I consider the language performance could improve and foreign languages lesson can achieve their goal.

Alternative assessment in the Colombian Educational context

Alternatives in assessment may seem recommendable for teachers everywhere. However, in Pasto, there seems to be a lack of application of the trends pointed out in this piece of research given the assessment experiences shared informally by students of different levels. Some reasons why alternatives to assessment are not prevalent in Colombia might include large classes, the limited hour per week for L2 instruction and the focus on Pruebas Saber 11 (reading and vocabulary). Considering these, which could be some of the possible advantages and difficulties at the moment of implementing the alternatives in assessment as strategies in Colombia?

Tannembaum (2011) explains that “alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction, and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom” (Hamayan, 1995, p.213). Teachers have to take into account that alternatives in assessment include a variety of measures that can be adapted according and to the students` needs and the different situations.

In my experience as a student and as a teacher, it has been realized that although teachers need tests to certain extent, the exclusive use of tests is monotonous and limited since teachers cannot assess all the skills of a language. That means that both teachers and students need current alternatives to assess not just because they may provide more information than tests, but also because students may get more involved if they are exposed to different activities based on students` authentic needs and preferences. In this way, teachers would be taking advantage of the students` likes, using some alternatives in assessment as strategies to assess as well as by integrating all the language skills.

Also, these strategies can be implemented as homework. Thereby promoting independent work and students would make autonomous learning.

In our context, the implementation of strategies to assess would be positive: students will be able to have spaces that foster and value communicative skills instead of grammatical ones, which are common in foreign languages classes. Moreover, alternatives in assessment also allow measuring the real students` performance, considering not only their grammatical performance, but the level of the others language skills. For this reason, teachers have to take into account the implementation of alternative assessment. The implementation of assessment strategies would help to modify and improve the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process in Colombia.

The use of alternatives to assessment has many advantages that have been discussed in this paper. However, it is also important to know that there exist some possible difficulties for implementing alternative assessment in our setting. These potential problems are listed next.

One possible difficulty is the teachers' foreign language proficiency. As a student, I have realized that there are some teachers that do not have the adequate level of knowledge to teach a foreign language. This is a big factor that can affect the teaching and learning process.

Another possible difficulty is the lack of motivation. This can be linked to the educational context, in which students have studied around 11 years in high school and yet, they do not know how to speak English. In this case, the implementation of strategies to assess is a big need. Teachers should apply alternative in assessment in order to motivate students for learning and to make the most out of the limited time teachers have in Colombia for instruction and assessment.

Alternatives to assessment require a variety of materials and this might be a limitation when implementing them given that in Colombia, public schools might lack materials which can support teaching, learning and assessment processes such as, TV sets, computers or laboratories, etc. Nevertheless, this is not valid reason to not implement the strategies already mentioned.

Moreover, the time allotted for foreign language classes in Colombia is limited. This is a disadvantage because alternative assessment strategies such as projects, brochures or portfolios require establishing rules, goals, group roles and other elements that are very difficult to clarify in one or two hours in a week, which is the situation of some public schools.

Finally, a big difficulty when using alternatives in assessment is the number of students in the foreign language class and the class size (Sánchez & Obando, 2008). In Colombia, most public schools have between 35 and 40 students per classroom. This would be a big difficulty

because, for example, teachers cannot make a role play presentation in a classroom with a lot of students and only one hour to do it. However, teachers can think about a way to use alternative assessment overcoming this difficulty.

Considering all these aspects, I think teachers should apply alternative assessment as strategies to assess their students` learning. For this, the first step is to add these strategies in their syllabi. In this way, teachers can manage the time difficulty and overcome it. In order to assess students` real performance, teachers have to take into account the four language skills. Here is where alternative assessment takes place.

Pineda (2013), explains that teachers may recognize the importance of planning for assessment, and these are the steps that some authors suggest: identifying the purpose, planning the assessment, developing the rubric or scoring procedure, setting the standards, involving students in self- and peer-assessment, selecting the assessment task, and keeping record of the information (as cited in O`Malley & Valdez, 1996). In this way, the following table summarizes the types of speaking activities and assessment tasks suggested by some authors depending on the learners` proficiency levels. They recommend the application of different assessment instruments because of the different types of information that can be provided about students` needs and further instructional goals (The American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, Brown & Yule, Murphy, Omaggio Hadley [as cited in O`Malley & Valdez, 1996]).

Types of assessment tasks based on students` proficiency level

Beginners	Advanced beginners	Intermediate	High intermediate	Advanced
Listening for the gist. Matching description to pictures. Using total physical	Oral presentations. Reading what they	Oral reports and	Listening for the gist of the	Summarizing. Note –

response (TPR). Inferring meaning from the context. Information that can be familiar for learners and include visual aids.	have written. Describing a chart. Giving instructions	public speaking performance.	message. Taking notes, analyzing, evaluation.	taking. Using fewer visual cues.
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Creating a confident environment, teachers can assess listening and speaking skills, and at the same time, reading and writing skills. For example, in a round, students could tell their classmates a book report that they had read in a role play way. In this way, teachers can realize the reading process of the students, the ability to tell their classmates what they read in a creative way, and the listen ability of the students who are hearing their partners telling. Finally, students could write a report of their classmates' presentations.

Teachers could realize that there are some strategies in which they can assess the language skills in an integrative way. This could motivate students and assess their real language performance.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to provide arguments in favor of using alternatives to assessment and provides teachers with some information that would be useful in their professional practice, such as principles of language assessment and alternatives in assessment as strategies to assess their students. As assessment is a fundamental part in the teaching and learning process, teachers should consider that if they assess learners without considering all the available options and strategies, the results of assessment may not be reliable and the wash back obtained from assessment may not inform adequately the teachers' performance and decisions.

Some conclusions that can be drawn from the information presented in this paper are the following:

With alternative assessment, teachers could assess all the communicative skills, especially skills that teachers can not assess with written tests (listening and speaking). In our setting, it is common that students only learn grammatical knowledge about foreign language. For these reason, oral productions such as interviews, oral reports, role plays, describing, etc., could help both teachers and especially students in their learning process. In general, assessment strategies will help to teachers to teach the language skills and help students to learn in a successful way.

Teachers who want to start implementing alternative assessment in their lessons, have to consider some the elements that allows to make it possible. One important element is the proper knowledge of those strategies to assess. As opposed to exams, alternative strategies require longer preparation time, the creation of grids, the organization of groups and individual responsibilities and the expected outcomes. So, teachers should be willing to carry out this initial planning.

It is also possible to affirm that in our setting there is a need to implement alternative assessment to enhance foreign language learning and to motivate both teachers and students in the learning and teaching process, developing all the language skills in a integrative form.

Alternative assessment helps students showcase their strengths, work cooperatively, and create more in the L2. Teacher benefit from this type of assessment because they can collect more varied information from their learners, can carry out more assessment tasks in a term and, if done properly, it can save them time while getting an accurate appraisal of their students' performance.

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