

Implementing Alternative Assessments in ESP Context: Testing Templates and Effective Evaluative Practices

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• Abstract:

Although ESP learner-centred approach seems successful to satisfy learners' needs and achieve their target goals, practitioners still face difficulties to assess their abilities. While literature shows moderately not absolutely, the inconsistency of conventional testing methods in ESP context, teachers have deliberately adopted alternative assessments that are supposed to provide valid and reliable testing templates. The present paper deals with the significant studies devoted to alternatives effectiveness in ESP teaching-learning context and it prominently emphasizes portfolio as one of its efficient methods. Accordingly, this theoretical study aims at examining efficacy of alternative assessments via their instructional utility and exploring their effectual implications on ESP learning progress. The findings indicate, first, alternatives assist ESP tutors to address students' contextual knowledge and professional skills efficiently. Second, they designate their effective impacts on ESP reflective practices and learning advancement.

Keywords:

English for Specific Purposes (ESP)-alternative assessment-testing methods-portfolio effectiveness.

• Introduction

Assessment is an important part of Foreign Language (FL) teaching and learning, it evaluates teaching quality and learning development. In ESP field, assessment is an on-going process through which teachers adopt changes required to satisfy their learners' needs and meet their interests. The particularity of ESP teaching contexts counting, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) drives practitioners to implement new and authentic testing methods that enable them assess their learners holistically and continuously. Additionally, teachers usually encounter difficulties when evaluating ESP students' performance using traditional assessment. Accordingly, alternative methods have been resolutely proposed to provide formative assessments to learners' contextual knowledge and skills, change negative perceptions of FL tests and exams students have developed during their academic career, and overcome hindrances faced by instructors once they assess specific fields' students. Nevertheless, alternatives effectiveness has sparked debates among researchers; the main question involved in this regard is whether non-traditional assessments provide effective evaluation to ESP learners' performance. In other words,

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whether these non-conventional tests help ESP teachers assess their students' abilities and competences authentically and easily, and make them learn more from these realistic testing experiences. Moreover, the present research primarily tackles the main issues related to alternative assessment including, its adaptation in assessing ESP learners' performance, its forms and methods, its instructional and functional facets and its efficiency with respect to ESP teaching then learning. These issues are extensively not exclusively reviewed in ESP studies confined to effects of portfolio on assessment efficiency and learning advancement. For that reason, the theoretical study then focuses on portfolio by defining its key features, showing its forms and revealing its impacts on ESP teaching, in terms of strengths and shortcomings. Therefore, it is found to deal with the core literature involved in this research area and divulge significant findings and conclusions drawn to alternative assessment effectiveness in ESP teaching context. In particular, the work aims at providing an answer to the following question:

- In which ways do alternative assessments effectively serve ESP learners' contextual knowledge growth and professional skills development?

In an attempt to answer the research questions, the following hypotheses are suggested:

- i. Alternative testing methods help ESP teachers to assess their learners' performance effectively, as they ensure continuous and authentic assessment.
- ii. Alternative assessments affect ESP learners' academic achievement and professional skills positively.
- iii. Regarding other alternatives, portfolio assessment is so selective, since it efficiently overcomes instructional difficulties and addresses learners' professional skills.

1. Alternative assessment

In academic context, assessment generally refers to various tools used by teachers to collect data that are expected to interpret of learners' performance and progress; however, these testing means were labelled by researchers as traditional/conventional forms and alternative forms of assessment. Literature general underemphasize traditional sorts of assessments, it records that they often measure learner's knowledge of a topic and fail to assess deeper forms of learning such as application, evaluation or creation. As a response, teachers tend to use alternative assessment methods, which measure learners' levels of proficiency related to particular item or items by allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and execute authentic tasks in unique and innovative ways.

1.1 Alternative assessment scope

As its name implies, alternative assessment is different from standardized testing and can take diverse forms for achieving disparate purposes. The intended assessment is depicted as something new and dissimilar because it is not confined to standard test requirements. Regarding the variety of methods involved in alternatives, the researcher insists on using the term “assessment” rather than “test” because all tests are assessments but not all assessments are tests; assessments may take other forms in which there is no respect to test criteria¹. These forms include, for example but not exclusively, portfolios, journals, observations, essays, oral presentations, demonstrations and they involve self-assessments and peer-assessment². Furthermore, non-conventional testing methods can be interpreted in a wide range of practices and procedures and classified dissimilarly vis-à-vis target-learning objectives. Profoundly, one of the significant latest studies developed by Department of Higher Education of Malaysia draws out different but not contradictory features wherein it offers a distinctive but meaningful description to this kind of assessment. The description highlights alternative testing methods categories, common strategies and effective techniques that are expected to measure learners’ skills and performance with validity and reliability. The study displays that alternative methods include authentic testing tools are chiefly oriented “to measure learners’ ability and proficiency in performing complex tasks that are related to intended learning outcomes”³. The results of the Malaysian study are processed to design a practical guide to alternatively assess university students’ knowledge and abilities regarding different teaching contexts. The guide predominantly calls attention to use of authentic assessment tools’ or tasks; the latter usually take the form of problem-solving situations in which learners meaningfully used their acquired abilities and skills to find solutions to these real-world situations.

The practical guide elucidates that alternatives are also widely depicted as performance-based assessments though this description can be not comprehensive due to the ramification and diversity of their forms and means. Performance-based assessment implies testing methods that usually assess learners’ higher-order thinking skills, as portfolios, to create a product or complete a process. To sum up, authentic assessment have benefits that significantly influence students’ aptitudes and proficiency and increase assessment reliability; these benefits are classified as follows:

- *Support authentic assessment.* Reflects how well learners are able to apply knowledge in the real-world context.
- *Communicate expectations.* Gives learners an idea of what is expected of them. It is especially useful when the rubrics are communicated to the learners before they are assessed.
- *Improve performance.* Explicit criteria and performance level descriptions allow learners to understand the desired performance. Learners are able to assess themselves by referring to the specific criteria and performance-level descriptions.
- *Provide informative feedback.* Instructors are able to provide constructive feedback to learners on their weaknesses and strengths.
- *Promote thinking and learning.* Learners are able to review and revise their work, thus reflecting on their learning experiences.

¹- Brown Douglas- Language Assessment Practices: Principles and Classroom Practices- Pearson Education, Inc, USA, 2004.

² - Shareef Mohamed- “The Motivational Impact upon ESP learners”- Sudan International University- in TESOL Conference- 2017.

³ - Department of Higher Education - Alternative Assessment in Higher Education: A Practical Guide To Assessing Learning- Ministry of Higher Education- Malaysia, 2021, p.37.

- *Ensure fairness.* Learner performance is assessed fairly and objectively. It helps instructors avoid disputes between learners (even with them) about the scores/grades given.⁴

1.2 Alternative assessment strategies and techniques

Apropos the non-conventional assessment strengths, teachers need to know how to instructionally assess their learners; they need to know the tactics that testing is underpinning, this means that there is a necessity to distinguish pertinent strategies and applicable techniques though it is not clear for many practitioners or assessors. While strategies cover methods tutors use to determine how much progress their students have made apropos performance and learning outcomes, techniques are tools utilized to measure such progress and they provide different options vis-à-vis skills or products being assessed. Strategies that are widely associated with non - traditional testing methods comprise peer assessment, self- assessment and group assessment whereas techniques encompass project, interview, technology-based assessment, oral presentation and portfolio⁵.

The table below is adapted to explain these strategies and techniques that be applied when alternatives take place as academic procedures. The strategies are classified according to the original source (though the classification indicates no respective link between these strategies and techniques. The table below is adapted to explain these strategies and techniques that be applied when alternatives take place as academic procedures for evaluating undergraduates.

Table 1. Alternative assessment common strategies and techniques

Strategies	Techniques
-Peer assessment	Projects/debates/interviews/group discussion/role-plays/writing essays.
-Self-assessment	Technology-based assessment(blog, videos, running
-Group assessment	record, flip grid,e-portfolio,e-project, oral examination)
	Oral presentation, portfolio, case study, checklist.

Source: Department of Higher Education of Malaysia (DHEM),2021, pp 40-41)

Strategies that are widely associated with non -traditional testing methods comprise peer assessment, self- assessment and group assessment whereas techniques encompass project, debates, interview, group works, technology-based assessment, oral presentation portfolio, case study and checklist. Alternatives' techniques are usually called "*rubrics*" because they differ in terms of form, function and procedures. To put another way, a rubric is defined as a visual, written, or oral instruments applied to measure a process of performing particular task as making speech or to assess learners' works like designing a concept map or writing laboratory reports. For instance,

⁴ - Department of Higher Education- op.cit.

⁵ - Ibid.

essays are written rubrics addressed to measure and reinforce learners' specific linguistic competences and critical thinking, respectively⁶.

2. Alternative assessment in ESP

In EFL teaching contexts (ESP or EAP and EOP), assessment is a crucial key procedure and factor that determines the effectiveness of both instructional practice and learning process. As far as we concern, earlier ESP studies gave little interest to assessment; however, recent ones have regarded it as an interesting area and a challenge for teachers. In other words, it is not easy to design ESP tests, since practitioners are required to test particular skills and contextual knowledge their learners acquire, this on the one hand. On the other hand, testing commonly helps these practitioners determine students' weaknesses and strengths, measure their teaching quality and /or reconsider their teaching methods. This fact made researchers insist on conducting relevant studies and provide publications to guide ESP teachers on assessment (tools, materials and tasks) and tests' preparation⁷.

2.1 Nature and targets

Definitions given to ESP assessment relate it to testing of abilities to language use with reference to specific purposes i.e. evaluating language competencies within specific discipline.

According to Alderson Charles, assessment in ESP is to showcase that learners are equipped with the target language (English) knowledge and able to perform well in a profession or to simply pass a course for further study⁸. Similarly, Douglas Dan defines ESP assessment as a subfield of language assessment, which focuses on evaluating language use ability in order to perform authentic tasks associated with their target specific field knowledge. Despite the variety of ESP testing methods associated with the particularity of relevant fields of study, ESP assessors emphasize language accuracy while integrating field-specific knowledge⁹. Furthermore, topical studies once again have indicated that the purpose of ESP assessment is not limited to assess learners' language abilities, but rather goes beyond that to know whether they have reached the required level, which makes them competent language users in their professionally oriented domain¹⁰. These results have made ESP researchers consider the limitation of traditional assessment in measuring ESP professional skills and adjust their evaluative practices to the ones which are more accurate, valuable, consistent and effective.

With reference to language competence, Dudley-Evans and St. John state that ESP learners need to develop their competences considering their specific needs; the researchers suggest that teaching-learning requirements determine which language (grammar, syntax, and lexis), what skills, discourse and genre should be involved in a specific discipline or context. In addition, ESP

⁶ - Department of Higher Education- op.cit., pp. 75-76.

⁷ - Douglas Dan- *Assessing Languages for Specific Purposes-* (Cambridge University Press), United Kingdom, 2000.

⁸ - Alderson Charles- *Testing and its Administration in ESP.* In D. Chamberlain, & R. J. Baumgardner (Eds.)- *ESP in the Classroom: Practice and Evaluation-* Wiley- Blackwell, United Kingdom, 1988.

⁹ - Douglas Dan- *ESP and assessment-* In B. Paltridge, & S. Starfield (Eds.)- *The Handbook of English for Specific Purposes-* Wiley-Blackwell, USA, 2013.

¹⁰ - Knoch Ute & Macqueen Suzy- *Assessing English for Professional Purposes-* Routledge, United Kingdom, 2019.

field specificity makes it distinct from that of General English (GE), thus the way teaching practices (methods, strategies, assessment) are adopted and chosen is necessarily dissimilar. Pedagogically, the two fields are different in two respects authenticity of task and the interaction between language and content knowledge; hence, authentic assessment methods are needed to measure their specific content knowledge and their specialized skills¹¹.

It is important to state that ESP does not only include the needs as departure point to design the right content and the appropriate methodology for the course, but it also takes these needs as an assessment reference point. ESP teachers refer to their learners' needs to see if they have achieved what they have been planned to achieve. At this point, assessment in ESP requires a deeper understanding and more careful consideration for the analysis of needs from different perspectives¹².

2.2 Functional aspects of alternatives

Although authentic assessment has common targets and profits across diverse teaching-learning contexts, things might be altered with EFL teaching contexts. In ESP, realistic testing methods are absolutely necessary as they allow students to principally reflect on their performance, skills development and learning experiences. Admittedly, this type of assessment has been broadly used in education at tertiary level, mainly in testing Second Language (SL) and Foreign Language (FL) abilities due to two important reasons. First, it assists instructors test different learning aspects including, accuracy, fluency, cognitive skills and creativity, second, it makes learners assessment partners because they are given opportunities to contemplate and appraise their own performance and then demonstrate what they can do with their target language in different communicative situations¹³.

Brown Douglas goes deeper in the context, in which he defines various features of alternative methods that are likely to influence ESP learners' achievement positively. The researcher mentions that the methods in question require students to perform, create, produce/do something, allow them to be assessed on what they do in class, involve realistic situations and simulations, use meaningful instructions, focus on processes as well as products, give much attention to critical thinking and problem-solving skills and provide information about students' strengths and weaknesses. It is obvious these methods' application is extensively concerned with language production, authentic use of language, effective classroom instruction and critical thinking skills development. Hence, by conducting alternatives in testing, teachers seek language proficiency that learners need to develop to be skillful language users and then to effectively perform in their academic and

¹¹ - Dudley-Evans Tony & Maggie St. John, M.- Developments in Specific Purposes- (Cambridge University Press), Cambridge, 1998.

¹² - Çelik Servet, Çelik Handan & Combee Christine - Language Assessment and Test Preparation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Education -Trabzon University Conference- Turkey, 2021.

¹³ - Shareef Mohamed- op.cit.

professional career. Many specifics concerning effectiveness of non-conventional assessments in teaching and learning will be explained below¹⁴.

3. Effectiveness of Alternative Assessment

The efficiency of alternatives in evaluating ESP learners' skills and in making them reflect on their own abilities has been widely confirmed by topical studies. In this respect, the investigation carried out by Awang and Sinnadurai (2011) indicates that non-traditional tests help ESP students achieve progress in language use, thus fill gap or gaps found in their abilities, skills and even their curriculum, since these non-conventional methods enable them to learn a lot in record time. Consequently, students' academic achievement will increase and they will be able to perform in disparate contexts including, personal and professional ones¹⁵.

3.1 Alternatives for Learning and Instructional facets

Testing methods' effectiveness can be seen from unlike but related perspectives regarding teaching and learning contexts variety. In his study of *"ESP Learners' Challenges"*, Shareef Mohamed states that alternative assessment has facets involving varied functions that facilitate evaluation and make the process enjoyable rather than stressful. These facets are summarized vis-à-vis teaching practices and learning achievement and classified as follows

- Different methods can be used to evaluate learners' performance or their individual progress over time in diverse authentic contexts and settings.
- Various tasks are proposed to test learners' skills and knowledge, and simultaneously give them the opportunity demonstrating their dissimilar abilities.
- Tasks' variety helps teachers test their learners' capabilities in using or transferring the acquired knowledge and skills in/into new situations.
- It also helps them to lower the stress of tests, which can have a negative impact on the self-esteem of lower achieving students¹⁶.

Regardless the study stated above, there are studies that carried out earlier than that focusing on effective functions of alternatives by depicting their defining characteristics commonly used by SL and FL language teachers. In this regard, Brown Douglas appears again to identify these functional aspects and their usefulness in language pedagogy. These characteristics cover the following:

- requiring students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
- using real-world contexts or simulations;
- being nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities.
- allowing students to be assessed on what they normally; do in class every day.
- using tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities.
- focusing on processes as well as products.

¹⁴ - Brown Douglas – op.cit..

¹⁵ - Awang, Mohammad.& Sinnadurai, Suriya- The Development of Study Skills Tools in Evaluating Student's Study Orientation Skills and its relationship towards Academic Performance- Journal of Language Teaching and Research) V02 (V2) - 2011.

¹⁶ - Shareef Mohamed- op.cit.

- tapping into higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills.
- providing information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students.
- being multiculturally sensitive when properly administered.
- ensuring that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment.
- encouraging open disclosure of standards and rating criteria.
- calling upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles¹⁷.

Unlike standardized testing methods, alternative ones are flexible in application; they enable teachers to evaluate learning aspects disparately and make all partners involved in the process (self-assessment, peer assessment). As strategies, self-assessment and peer assessment contribute in overcoming evaluation difficulties teachers face, as they offer students chances to assess themselves and their peers. Syzenko Anastasia comments that both strategies are likely to develop learners' own criteria for evaluation (learner-oriented assessment), be aware of their needs, strengthen their autonomy, foster critical abilities, increase motivation, thus contribute to life-long learning skills and function effectively in real-life situations¹⁸.

Nonetheless, peer assessment is looked upon with favour by the researcher; his elicitation study concludes that the process supplies students with opportunities to reflect upon their own understandings, build on prior knowledge, generate inferences, integrate ideas, repair misunderstandings, and explain and communicate their understandings. Concerning teachers, alternative assessment allows them promote and modify learning plans and create learning experiences that will cater for their learners' needs, taking into account their strengths and weaknesses. In short, this formative assessment informs instructors on learners' progress and on overall success of the course and comes up students with comprehensive feedback on their learning advancement. This flexibility in assessment has made researchers believe that alternative methods are the best choice for ESP performance evaluation and learning progress.

A propos alternatives' flexibility in ESP teaching context, researchers developed some methods for achieving particular learning objectives. White and Gunstone (1992) developed the Predict-Observe-Explain (POE) method. The method consists of three phases as its name implies "*Predict, Observe and Explain*", in which students are required to predict the outcome of an event or experiment. The experiment is then performed and observations made by students are probed. When predictions and observations are inconsistent with each other, the students' explanations are explored. It is generally used to investigate students' understanding of science concepts. The Structural Communication Grids (SCG) is another method that has attracted ESP researchers and practitioners' attention. It involves data being presented in the form of a numbered grid and students being asked to select appropriate boxes, and to put them into a logical sequence, in response to a

¹⁷ - Brown Gouglas, op.cit.

¹⁸ - Syzenko Anastasia- Assessment in English for Specific Purposes: Traditional vs. Alternative Approach-UAS Language Instructors' Conference- University of Applied Sciences, Austria, 2018.

set of questions. Strengths of this method lie in grids' use, which springs insight into sub-concepts and linkages between ideas held by student, so that a deep level of understanding can be assessed¹⁹.

3.2 Alternatives for Professional Skills Assessment

Regarding the particularity of ESP context, application of alternative assessment has many to do with it. Conclusion drawn out from the foregoing discussion, application of authentic assessment has many to do with ESP context; realistic tasks ask students to show what they can do; how they benefit or activate what they have acquired or learned in different solving-problem situations, this from one angle. From another angle, authentic tasks give empirical evidences revealing if there is a consistency between classroom practices and real-life situations. In short, using authentic activities in ESP is perceived as a strength as their evaluation coincides with specialized tasks involved in their professional life.

Although alternatives are varied and overlapping and they may meanwhile gauge one skill or two skills or more, the matter is disparate when it comes to professional skills assessment. Measuring these specialized skills requires specific rubrics to ensure the accuracy, consistency, reliability and validity of the assessment. This means that non-conventional tests cannot be applied interchangeably in assessing ESP learners' skills; there is often a need for specifications to techniques being implemented because a stratagem that sounds off to particular skill might not be with others. Kuchkarova Yana supports this view, as he specifies alternatives' tools commonly employed by ESP practitioners to measure their students' specific abilities. The table below displays the classification of alternatives' use with reference to skills in test²⁰.

¹⁹ - Kirikkaya Esma & Vurkaya Gurbet - "The Effect of Using Alternative Assessment Activities on Students' Success and Attitudes in Science and Technology Course"- Educational Sciences Journal- V.11- N2- 2011- p. 998.

²⁰ - Kuchkarova Yana- "Alternative Assessment as a Means to Develop Study Skills in ESP Skills in Higher Educational Settings"- Uzbekistan – in Scientific Bulletin of Namangan State University- V.1- N11- 2019.

Table 2. Professional Skills Assessment Tools

Assessment Techniques	Skills to assess
-Standard examinations – unseen paper of limited choice	-Retrieving knowledge from memory, working under pressure, writing skills, structuring information, problem solving, argumentation skills
-Open book exam	-Finding information, working under pressure, more complex tasks can be set
-Seen examination	-All above plus research skills, use of resources, (less emphasis on memory), reflection.
-Examinations with optional questions – students choose the questions.	-Evaluation, synthesis, analysis, decision making.
-Projects (individual and group)	-Planning, organization, creativity, group work
-Portfolios	-Reflection, personal development, application of knowledge.
-Audio and video	-Presentation skills (individual or group), creativity, IT skills.
-Diary for self-assessment/ peer assessment.	-Reflection, personal development, application of knowledge.
-Observation, reports or notes	-Skills of observation, note taking, analysis, evaluation, interpretation.
-Essays	-Writing skills, structuring info, reflection, planning.
-Critiques and reviews of literature/film/TV show/event/etc.	-Evaluation, summarizing, arguing the point of view.
-Newsletter article	-Written task for an imaginary audience.
-Oral presentations	-Oral skills, non-verbal communication, using visual aids, interpersonal skills, team work.
-Posters	-Creativity, presenting information to a reader, graphical presentation skills, selection, evaluation.

Source: (Kuchkarova 2019, pp.345-346)

The classification given above counts different forms of assessment counting observational (portfolio diaries, reports with their ordinary or electronic versions) audio-visual/online (posters, films, TV shows, videos, audiovisuals) oral (presentations) and written (standards examinations, essays, newsletter articles). The classification seems valuable as it decreases ESP instructors' confusion by outlining measurement tools and enabling them to answer the question "which skill?" which technique?", in other words, it is the skill to be measured that defines testing instrument features. The table above answers this question and provides ESP instructors with sorts of testing means that ensure ongoing and flexible processes of assessment. These testing tools also certify

authentic application of skills, motivational learning environment, effective and integrative measurement of higher thinking skills such as, critical thinking (planning, analyzing, making inferences) , problem-solving skills (creativity and decision-making), self-assessment and self-direction and interpersonal skills (effective communication, teamwork, negotiation). Ultimately, the variety and the diversity of alternatives in terms of strategies and techniques or rubrics reflect their flexibility in measuring all types of skills and their adaptability with diverse learning and teaching variables, and highlight their significance in assessing students' learning outcomes with validity and reliability.

Notwithstanding the importance of all specialized skills, interpersonal or communicative skills are the significant one as regards to the primary target of learning language or a specific one as English, thus developing communication abilities is a chief purpose to specific fields. In this respect, ESP learners need to reinforce their language abilities to be commonly skillful users and primarily good communicators. Besides, ESP studies stated overheading in this paper praise alternative assessment effectiveness in advancing ESP learners' communication aptitudes and addressing specific fields' contextual knowledge. Their findings disclose that non-traditional assessment gives students opportunity to perform tasks relevant to real communication situations, this from one part. From another part, the assessment offers ESP tutors with instructional choices to appraise their learners' performance and content knowledge whatever the specific field is, utilizing different language materials as regards to their educational goals²¹.

For the purpose of motivating ESP practitioners and encouraging them to adopt a wide range of alternatives in their assessments, the paper in hands, accentuates the effectiveness portfolio as a hybrid, varied and flexible testing method and as an outstanding support to achieve academic and professional goals.

4. Portfolio as Evidence-based Learning Assessment in ESP

Though assessment methods are mostly used to evaluate learners' performance in altered ways, there is typically a need to select a method that offer effective options for achieving the specific objectives; accordingly, portfolio is expected to be the testing method at issue for some respects. Before delving in this depth, it is better to start with portfolio nature based on definitions recorded in relevant literature.

4.1 Portfolio, Definition and Selection

In fact, several definitions and explanations have been developed, illustrating portfolio growth and diversity of its use, and indicating its efficacy in EFL learning context. Nunes Alexandra shows that teachers have different views vis-à-vis portfolio assessment i.e. they receive it dissimilarly regarding the context and design of its development. For some practitioners, this method is part of alternative assessment programme that records learners' achievement or simply sets down their best work "*learners' product*". For others, it documents students' learning process and can be used as a means of promoting their reflection "*learners' process*"²².

²¹ - Çelik, Çelik& Combee- op.cit.

²² - Nunes Alexandra- Portfolios in the EFL Classroom: Disclosing an Informed Practice- in ELT Journal- V. 58 - N04- 2004.

Other researchers define portfolio as a collection of learners' works that displays the progress they are making in connection with classroom goals. This collection can include an extensive range of materials that vary in terms of type and form, these materials cover the following:

- Essays and compositions in draft and final forms.
- Reports, project outlines, poetry and creative prose.
- Artwork, photos, newspaper or magazine clippings.
- Audio and/or video recordings of presentations, demonstrations, etc.
- Journal, diaries and other personal reflections
- Tests, test scores and written homeworks exercises, notes on lectures.
- Self and peer assessment, comments, evaluations and checklists.
- Teachers' notes, written summaries and reading logs.²³

As it is previously mentioned, portfolio seems to be the most effectual testing method for two respects. First, portfolio assessment is likely to be a selective ESP testing method for the reason that recent researches, such as that of Hakim Kamalia and Srisudarso Mansyur have recorded successful implementation of portfolios in EFL contexts. The outcomes conclude that portfolio based assessments increase learners' motivation, mature their reflective capacities, and stimulate them to take their own language learning initiatives as well as enable them to carry on their foreign language learning and foreign language use beyond the borders of the classroom.

Second, authenticity feature involved in alternative assessment has captured the interest of many instructors in ESL, EFL and ESP teaching contexts. This feature is chiefly associated with portfolio as an important form of alternative or "*authentic assessment*". Conclusively, researchers consider this alternative method to be one way out for educators who are looking for ways to measure students' competencies authentically and realistically. It is important noting that the issues of effectiveness and authenticity in portfolio assessment will be well-discussed in the succeeding sections²⁴.

4.2 Portfolio Defining Features

For providing a detailed description to portfolio assessment, researchers have put forward some schemes that entirely aim at identifying portfolio features and depicting its structure. In view of that, O'Malley.J. Michael & Valdez L. argue that portfolio has five characteristics, namely: comprehensive, predetermined and systematic, informative, adapted and authentic. In their explanation, the researchers firstly state that portfolio assessment provides a comprehensive data collection, which gives an access to broad and deep descriptions of learners' capacities. Secondly, the assessment requires planning for its use; this includes decisions related to target objectives, contents, data collection schedule and students assessment criteria. Thirdly, it is informative, since

²³ - Kavaliauskienė Galina, & Anusienė Lilija- The Challenges for ESP Learners: Alternative Assessment of Performance and Usefulness of Class Activities- in Socialinis Darbas- V.6- N01- 2007.

²⁴ - Hakim Kamalia - Srisudarso Mansyur- A Washback Study on Portfolio Assessment. ELT- in Focus Journal- V.3- N1- 2020.

it offers useful information for teachers, staff, students and their parents. Next, it is adaptable as teachers can use it in the way that serves learning objectives and students' needs. Lastly, it is authentic because it involves authentic activities that are deliberately chosen to assess learners' realistic performance reliably²⁵.

Similarly, Gottlieb (1995) advocates a developmental scheme that portrays this authentic alternative method nature and purpose. The scheme is called “**CRADLE**” and it designates six attributes to a portfolio: **C**ollecting, **R**eflecting, **A**ssessing, **D**ocumenting, **L**inking and **E**valuating. First, portfolio is a *collection* of tasks and activities that express students' experiences and individual differences. Its application requires respect of learners' choices of tasks, but at the same time, its purposes need to be clearly specified. Second, successful portfolio needs the involvement *reflective* practice as an important component; the latter can take the form of journals and self-assessment checklists. Third, in portfolio, both partners (teacher and learner) take the *role of assessor* as they evaluate teaching quality and learning achievement, respectively. Fourth, the intended alternative method is an *important document* in demonstrating student achievement. Fifth, it can serve as an important *Link* between student and teacher, parent, community, and peers; it is a product identifies learner's uniqueness (abilities, skills, interests, talents and relevant gaps). Finally, *evaluation* of portfolio requires a time-consuming but it is important to assess learners reliably and continuously²⁶.

From their part, Hakim Kamalia and Srisudarso Mansyur return back to relate quality and success of portfolio to the nine features recorded in Hymplyons and Condon's 2000 work ; the features encompass collection, range, context, evaluation delay, selection, student-central control, personal reflection, growing along with specific parameters and progress in a certain period of time. These features are explained in details in the table below²⁷.

Table 3.Features of successful portfolio

Assessment Techniques	Skills to assess
-Collection	- Portfolio assesses more than one performance.
-Range	- Students can use more than one genre to show different expertise (in writing skills).
Context	- Students can use personal experiences in their assignments (in writing skills).
-Evaluation delayed.	- Students can go back and check the results of their performance.
-Selection	- Students participate in the selection process.
-student-central control	- Students are responsible for the success of their learning.
-Personal reflection	- Students can measure what they have mastered.
-Growing alone with specific parameters	

²⁵ -O'Malley J. Michael & Valdez L.-Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers- White Plains- Addison-Wesley- NY - 1996.

²⁶ - Brown Douglas- op.cit.

²⁷ - Hakim Kamalia & Srisudarso Mansyur- op.cit.

-Progress in a certain period

- Portfolio gives a detailed description of student progress.
- Each development of student progress can be tracked.

Source: (Hymplyons & Condon, 2000)

The overhead description contends that portfolio providing an ongoing process of assessment which makes it the most popular form of assessment in ESP. This supports Douglas's 2000 positive view as regards to its flexibility resulted from its tangible, hands-on nature that maintains communicative abilities development. From another perspective, portfolios demonstrate students' efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas related to their specific field. This means the method, in hands, offers teachers with a more inclusive way to evaluate their students' knowledge and skills, have them actively participate in the evaluation process and grow up their reflective thinking skills. Although the reflection or self-assessment and relevant documenting practices are usually considered the most important functions of the portfolio, the latter can reinforce self-understanding, promote interaction between learners and the teacher and be an incentive to learning achievement²⁸.

4.3 E-portfolio as Evidence-based Learning Assessment

It is noticeable that the outlining qualities extensively revolve around the functions and attributes of portfolio without giving an access to its types, nature or sources which may provide modern and developed techniques that reinforce authenticity in assessment. Such reinforcement can be achieved through the introduction of Electronic portfolio (E-portfolio) when assessing undergraduates. In this context, Syamsul Nor Azlan, a researcher and a member of the Malaysian Department of Higher Education comments: "educators can leverage technology to create an engaging and personalized environments to meet the emerging educational needs of this generation. The opportunities afforded by technology should be used to re-imagine 21st century education, focusing on preparing learners to be learners for life. Hence, implementing technology in learning and assessment is of great influence due to valuable opportunities it offers to students. This means that electronic testing techniques satisfy learners' common and individual needs, facilitate their academic career and improve their professional abilities.

Profoundly, the Malaysian researcher praises its crucial role in the process of learning as he defines it as a digital layout that records and displays students' knowledge, skills and afford a follow-up to the process of their development over time²⁹.

²⁸ - Banta Trudy- Introduction: Why Portfolio. Portfolio Assessment Uses, Cases, Scoring, and Impact-, Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint- San Francisco, USA, 2003.

²⁹ - Department of Higher Education – op.cit, pp. 95- 98.

It can be inferred that E-portfolio helps learners develop deeper learning that results in higher levels and a better sense of themselves as students and as individuals. It can be also deduced that these aspects and outcomes serve instructional practices, since they assist practitioners to document and assess their students' works, and then to reflect on, evaluate and improve their teaching.

The foregoing discussion makes us assume that portfolio (ordinary and electronic versions) might be an option for different learning contexts; however, it is not the case with ESP, the application of electronic tools is increasingly recommended as a means to gauge learners' knowledge and abilities, and cater their learning needs. The following section summarizes portfolio-influencing aspects in the form of strengths and shortcomings.

4.4 Portfolio, Strengths vs. Weaknesses in ESP

Many studies have examined the strengths and shortcomings of portfolio assessment; evaluation involved by these studies is accompanying with its positive and negative influences on assessment in particular, and teaching -learning process. Kavaliauskienė Galina and Anusienė Lilija assert that portfolio has a set of strengths "*key pros*" that influence assessment value and learners' achievement positively. These fortes cover the following:

- Allowing instructors to see the student as an individual, each with his or her own unique set of characteristics, needs, and strengths.
- Transforming their roles from comparing students' achievement to improving it through the use of evaluative feedback and self-reflection.
- Helping them standardize and evaluate the skills and knowledge students acquire without limiting creativity in the classroom.
- Helping students be more accountable for the work they do in class and the skills and knowledge they acquire
- Involving them in the assessment process, thus giving them a more meaningful role in improving achievement
- Inviting them to reflect upon their growth and performance as learners.

It is obvious that the researchers paid great attention to Epstein study's outcomes, the thing that made them carrying out an investigation within the same year to determine portfolio effectiveness with ESP students of Social Policy Faculty. Their research involved a comparison between advantages and shortcomings of portfolio use by examining the impacts of these features; they conclude that portfolio fortes overweigh its weaknesses and they are largely connected with instructional process. Their study predominantly reveals positive outcomes of portfolio system apropos ESP teaching process, in terms of quality and experience. These outcomes include helping instructors measure what they taught, offering them an in-depth knowledge of their students as learners and allowing them to individualize instruction for their learners. By applying this authentic assessment, practitioners can determine their instructional weaknesses or gaps, and then overcome them to get better results that are likely to affect learners' achievement constructively.

In their conclusions, both scholars do not ignore the benefits of this alternative method on learning process, but rather they confine it to promoting learners' reflections related to syllabus,

instruction, learning and assessment. They add that some challenges to language learners are involved within portfolio and contribute in decreasing its reliability. With reference to ESP teaching context, the researchers state the following challenges: lower comparability, difficulty ensuring standardized testing conditions and scoring problem resulting from difficulties in determining relevant criteria³⁰.

As a response to the preceding view, Hakim Kamalia and Srisudarso Mansyur mention that portfolio is chiefly found to support learning process rather than teaching process. They add that portfolio is practical and efficient assessment tool for capturing student learning over time and across disciplines³¹.

5. Alternatives between Feedback and Washback

The previous investigations came up with the result that alternatives as portfolios, require considerable time and effort from teachers i.e. if the teacher looks for reliable evaluation, he needs to double his efforts and spend a lot of time in assessment process. Nevertheless, these formative assessments evidently offer continuous feedback about ESP teaching-learning situation during the instructional process. To put differently, teachers obtain feedback about their teaching quality as well as learners' advancement. They also offer markedly greater washback, the latter refers to which extent alternative assessment influences teachers and learners to do things they would not; it can promote or inhibit language learning process³².

Referring to previous studies, Carrigan, Abigail Bennett elucidates that washback can be as positive "*taking a beneficial direction*" or negative "*taking a damaging direction*". In other words, washback is usually evaluated as positive to the extent that it motivates ESP learners and inspires teachers this on the one hand. On the other hand, it can be negative to the extent that it demotivates learners and discourages teachers. However, Carrigan's study findings provide evidence for a variety of positive washback effects on learning process then teaching process; he explains that EAP (English for Academic Purposes) students show positive attitudes to alternative assessments as portfolio and poster projects. These attitudes include self-confidence, accurate identification of the learning, motivation associated with their appreciation of alternative assessments. Here, a result can be drawn; positive attitudes of learners reflect a correlation between alternative assessment and generation of positive washback. This can be seen as a motivating factor for using non-traditional testing methods in assessing students of diverse levels and cultures³³.

• Conclusion

³⁰ - Kavaliauskienė & Anusienė- op.cit., p.136.

³¹ - Hakim, Kamalia. Srisudarso, Mansyur- op.cit., p. 10.

³² - Dudley-Evans Tony & St. John Maggie, op.cit.

³³ - Carrigan Abigail Bennett- Washback Effects on an Alternative Assessment in a Culturally Heterogeneous EAP University Class- Portland State University publications, USA, 2016.

Conclusions that can be drawn from this theoretical study are primarily related to alternative assessment effectiveness in ESP teaching-learning context. The findings show that alternative methods are increasingly required in ESP context; they are powerful and useful testing tools because they standardize and strengthen instructional performance and involve motivational and insightful practices, respectively. Deeply, the outcomes display that non-traditional assessments assess successfully and continuously ESP students' performance regarding the wide-ranging of functionalities that involving within these testing methods. Consequently, teachers will be able to cater learners' specific needs and give judgments apropos their fields' knowledge, professional skills, and individual differences in a comprehensive and persistent way, and without getting into difficulty, this on the one hand. On the other hand, students will be given an access to reflection on their abilities development and their engagement in their specific fields via authentic learning experiences.

Additionally, the results of the notional study clearly indicate that non-conventional assessments are associated with significant features including, variation, authenticity, flexibility and adaptability that help ESP practitioners to address effectually particular skills and aspects when evaluating their learners' performance. To put differently, the particularity of specialized skills measurement determine which rubrics or techniques should be applied to support accurate, valid and reliable evaluative procedures. In this respect, portfolio seems to be the most effective testing method in ESP; it is a spectrum of assessment that extends from dependent learning practices to independent ones, from simple techniques to digitals and from classroom assessment to self-assessment and self-reflection. These accesses make portfolio an ESP selective evaluative practice that provides systematic, realistic and ongoing assessment process. The latters can be seen as positive upshots to alternatives' constructive feedbacks and as a motivating factor to adopt positive attitudes towards testing and learning issues.

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