Alternative Assessment Forms for Foreign Language Classrooms

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	Abstract *Research in the field of foreign language teaching and learning has proved that testing as an assessment instrument is not an adequate means of assessing the multiple dimensions of language learning. As a result, various alternative assessment forms have been suggested in the literature to compensate for the weaknesses and limitations of conventional testing and ensure more effective learning. Accordingly, this paper seeks to review the literature on the different forms of alternative assessment that language teachers could use in addition to traditional assessment. More specifically, the present paper aims to explore the types of alternative assessments, stresses their importance by listing the many benefits that these assessment methods proved to have, and also discusses some of their perceived limitations.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a vital element of education. Ensuring quality education in the 21st century requires reconsidering the way assessment is carried out. The increasing criticism of conventional testing, especially in light of recent educational reforms, has brought into question the value of alternative methods of assessment. Implementing alternative assessments within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has several advantages. Herman, et.al. (1992) found that student's involvement in all phases of the learning process, learner autonomy, critical thinking, the development of study skills, and life-long learning, are some of the benefits of alternative assessment. Similarly, Butler & Lee (2010) argue that alternative assessment fosters active learning and encourages students to "be in charge of their own outcome on class assignments" (p. 5). Additionally, alternative assessment does not measure content knowledge only. Rather, it allows teachers to assess multiple dimensions of students' learning such as "cognitive thinking and reasoning skills" (Hammond & Adamson, 2010, p. 7).

In fact, implementing teaching practices that are appropriate to the 21st century should begin with changing and improving the assessment strategies that teachers use in order to support their teaching practices. Research shows that reliance on one instrument for assessing key 21st century competencies and skills is insufficient and thus should be reconsidered (Jacobs, 2010). Several methods and types of assessment need to be used to assess various skills comprehensively. Accordingly, this paper reviews the research literature on the various

forms of alternative assessment that could be implemented to improve teachers' assessment strategies to adequately assess and improve students' attainment of the learning goals and development of key 21st century skills, and prepare them for the demands of the fast changing and technology-driven world.

Alternative assessments offer a plethora of tools that could be adapted according to different situations. Herman, et.al. , (1992) classify alternative assessment procedures under three main headings; *portfolio assessment*, *personal response assessments* (observations, journals, reading logs, videos of role plays, projects, audiotapes of discussions, conferences, exhibitions, peer and self-assessments ...) and *performance assessments* (oral presentations, debates, role plays....). This paper discusses these forms of alternative assessments, their advantages in teaching English in the foreign language classroom, and their perceived shortcomings. More specifically, the paper provides answers to the following questions:

1. What are the main forms of alternative assessment?
2. What are the advantages of the different forms of alternative assessment?
3. What are the limitations of alternative assessments?

2. Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios are regarded to be the most popular alternative assessment technique used in EFL teaching. Different definitions of portfolios have been suggested in the literature. Paulson and Meyer (1991, p. 1), for instance, define portfolios as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas". Hancock (1994) also explains that a portfolio is "an ongoing process involving the student and the teacher in selecting samples of student work for inclusion in a collection, the main purpose of which is to show the student's progress"(p. 3). In general, portfolios consist of a collection of students' work over a certain period of time. They include any item that exemplifies students' work and activities in order to track and document students' progress and accomplishments.

The popularity of portfolios as an alternative assessment method is owing to the several benefits that they offer to both students and teachers. Portfolio*s* give a more precise picture of the type of knowledge the student has attained providing students with an opportunity to track their progress and to be fully engaged in the learning process. This is likely to foster learner autonomy. As argued by Banfi (2003, p. 2), "the flexibility of portfolios is considered to make them ideal tools for encouraging learner autonomy". Keeping a portfolio enables students to feel that they are active participants in the teaching and learning process. This leads them to be independent learners, which is undoubtedly, one of the major aims of education. Therefore, the ultimate advantage of portfolios is helping students grow into autonomous learners and thinkers.

Furthermore, using portfolios in the field of language education is increasing since it fosters students' motivation. Through the use of portfolios, language learners are encouraged to select, gather and demonstrate their learning in a less stressful manner. Including the students in this process triggers their motivation since they are given a chance to select the topics and activities that are of interest to them. More importantly, portfolios also encourage teachers to discover the learners' skills and competencies, and to identify their learning styles, strategies, and preferences (Burnaz, 2011). In other words, portfolios reveal much about students' strengths and weaknesses. As Brown & Hudson (1998) argue, "portfolios provide unique insights into the progress of each student" (p. 13). This allows the teacher to understand

students' thoughts and individual differences, and hence, improves communication between students and their teachers about how the learning process occurs. This is likely to facilitate good instruction and inform educational decision-making as well.

Concerning methods of conducting the portfolio assessment, Hughes (1993) points out that there is disagreement among scholars in this regard. The author mentions a number of examples from the literature. Some researchers recommend that teachers should set standards for the requirements of the portfolio during the course of a term or a school year. Other writers suggest that students choose what to include because this reflective process of choosing in itself offers authentic evidence of students' learning. Finally, some consider portfolios to be teachers' files where observations and documentation are collected and stored throughout the year.

Gottlieb (1995) suggests different ways for developing and implementing portfolios in language classrooms. In order to use portfolios based on realistic objectives and to understand their limitations, the author uses what he calls *"CRADLE"*, an acronym that refers to six portfolio categories. The first category is labeled "collecting". In collecting, learners express themselves by deciding on what should be included in their portfolios. The second category is "reflecting", and it requires students to use checklists for self-assessment and write journals to compare their previous level of performance and their current level. Students get engaged in self-assessment and monitor their progress in the "assessing" category. In "documenting", students incorporate various data sources into their portfolios. In the "linking" category, students' portfolios are used in order to connect students with their teachers, their parents, and their peers. In "evaluating", portfolios provide data that support educational decision-making. According to Gottlieb (1995), these categories form a continuum and have equal weight, importance, and validity.

Cunningham, (1998, p. 144-145) suggests the following eight criteria for evaluating the usefulness of portfolios and specifying what they should include:

1. The designation of a purpose: to be a useful form of assessment, a portfolio should have a clearly designated purpose. A portfolio should paint a clear picture of students' progress from different perspectives and over a longer period. As such, the selection of items to be included should be deliberate and specific. Also, students should be aware of the purpose of their portfolios because this is likely to affect the way they respond and to reflect on these portfolios.
2. The provision of a plan for the selection of the content: as mentioned earlier, the content of a portfolio can be varied. It can be determined by the teacher or by the student and it can be the best of students' work or just samples that describe what the student can do. Hence, a careful selection of what to include in a portfolio is necessary.
3. A provision for student ownership: students should be involved in the process of deciding about the content and the structure of a portfolio. This way, students would feel ownership of the portfolio and take responsibility for their learning. In this respect, teachers are required to develop some level of trust with the students to help them feel comfortable revealing aspects of their learning processes.

4. An indication of student progress: a portfolio should reflect a pattern of students' growth. For this to be achieved, a portfolio should include all materials that show how the student was at the beginning of the assessment and how he/she is at the time the portfolio is completed.

5. An opportunity for self-reflection: a portfolio should be an opportunity for students to reflect on their work and not just to accomplish it. Students should be encouraged to view their portfolios not as an assignment to submit but as a way of thinking about their learning process as a whole. A teacher can help students be self-reflective by modeling his/her own self-reflection in the class.

6. Decision rules about ownership: rules must be established beforehand regarding whom the portfolio should belong to after it is completed. Should the portfolio be owned by the student, or by the parents? Can the teacher keep the portfolio or pass it on to the next teacher? Who should have access to the content of the portfolio? Is the teacher or the student allowed to modify or delete content? Such questions need to be answered early in the process of collecting a portfolio.

7. Appropriate structure: a portfolio should include a clear table of content so that readers can easily find what is included. Titles and dates need to be given to each piece of work as well.

8. Other relevant information: the content of a portfolio is not limited to a specific type of students' work. Endless types of data related to students' learning and progress could be included in a portfolio (Cunningham, 1998, pp. 144-145)

Nevertheless, there are a number of challenges that can influence the use of portfolios as an assessment technique. Brown & Hudson (1998), for instance, list five of these challenges. The first challenge is "design decision issues". These issues are mainly related to what constitutes the content of a portfolio and how to set criteria for scoring it. The second challenge is how to deal with "logistical issues". Song & August (2002, cited in Burnaz, 2011) share this concern over logistics by stating that "the actual evaluation of portfolios is inevitably labor intensive, requiring a significant amount of time from instructors" (p. 32). Teachers are required to guide students through all stages of developing their portfolios (planning, collecting, editing and revising stages). This in turn requires teachers to invest a great amount of time and effort in communication with students throughout the portfolio implementation process.

Moreover, going through every student's portfolio for evaluation is an increased workload for the teacher. The third challenge facing portfolio implementation according to the authors is "Interpretation". Interpretation issues challenging portfolio implementation are establishing criteria for grading students' work and ensuring that teachers are well-trained to implement and make fair evaluations. The issue of "reliability" and "validity" is another challenge facing portfolio assessment. Because portfolio assessment relies primarily on the teacher's judgment to grade the work, the score will likely lack objectivity and agreement with other raters. This, in turn, leads one to question the validity of portfolios which is related to whether the portfolio adequately exemplifies students' work, abilities, knowledge, and progress (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

In light of above-mentioned challenges, and in order to reap the benefits of portfolios as an instrument of assessment, teachers are required to be careful in planning for, designing, and evaluating students' portfolios.

3. PERSONAL RESPONSE ASSESSMENTS
3.1. Journals

Journals are defined as "daily or weekly writing entries by learners in which they reflect on their own learning experiences and progress" (Abbas, 2012, p. 10). By writing journals, students can record problem-solving activities, describe solutions to problems, or describe what has been learned and how it has been learned. Keeping journals is beneficial in a number of ways. To begin with, journals are informal in nature and allow students freedom in expressing themselves. As such, journals as an assessment tool proved to be enjoyable and less stressful for students (Shaaban, 2007).

Kwako (2011) describes journals as "an outlet for students' feelings, attitudes, and beliefs" (p. 4). They, in other words, provide teachers with greater insight into their students' knowledge, strengths, weaknesses, and attitudes related to a class, a curriculum, or the teaching and learning processes as a whole. Through journals, teachers can get access to data related to students perceptions and knowledge that might be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain through other means (Park, 2003). The data provided by journals can help teachers address the learning needs of all students especially those needs that the journal entries revealed and that the teacher was not aware of. Besides, journals can inform the teacher of any mismatch between what the learners actually learned and what the teacher expected them to learn. That is, journals can help the teacher verify whether the learning objectives have been met (James, 2005).

Another major benefit of journals is allowing students' reflection to increase. A journal is a type of writing assignment that requires students to think about their learning, and put their thoughts into words on a regular basis. In this way, students become able to reflect on their learning; what has been learned, what poses a difficulty for them, and what could be done to overcome their learning difficulties. In other words, the act of reflecting helps learners to become aware of what hinders their progress and what facilitates it. This is likely to promote problem-solving skills and encourage life-long learning (Park, 2003). Reflection can also "boost the silent and mechanistic approach to assessment into an active, vivid discourse between teachers and students" (Zessoulous & Gardner, 1991, p. 69). Journal writing is, thus, a means through which students communicate to their teachers what has been learned and understood, and what areas need further work.

When using students' journals as an assessment tool, there are a number of aspects that should be taken into consideration. James (2005) lists five of these aspects. The first is *Organization*. It is important to make sure that students' journals are well organized and large enough. Also, in order to make the journals easily identified, teachers are required to encourage their students to personalize the cover of their journals. This, in turn, is likely to make students have a sense of ownership of and pride in their work. *Management* is the second aspect to be taken into account according to the author. Storing the journals in the classroom is

recommended as the best management procedure. If students are asked to keep their journals in their classrooms, they may also be given time to work on their journals there.

The third aspect is *Writing Prompts* which are designed to probe students' understanding. These prompts should be created depending on the ability levels of students. When students respond to the prompts in their own words, the teacher reflects on learning outcomes. Journals could also include graphic organizers such as concept maps, sequence chains, and graphing. Such tasks help students employ higher levels of thinking rather than simply recalling facts.

The next aspect Is *Using Journals as an Assessment*. Journals as an assessment tool help teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses. Through journals, teachers should also be able to identify issues that interfere, and hinder student learning and plan future lessons accordingly. Journals are also a tool whereby students participate in assessing their own learning.

The final aspect is *Grading Journals*, and, here, James (2005) suggests that journal entries could be assessed using rubrics or checklists that include clear criteria for evaluation. However, teachers should not put a strong emphasis on grading as this might lead students to record only the information that they think would enhance their grade rather than their true feelings and perceptions. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers simply provide feedback about the content of students' journals after reading them.

3.2. Observations

Observing learners while they are engaged in activities within the classroom is another important form of assessment. A large variety of learning activities in different fields use observation as a common assessment tool. Hughes (1993) asserts that observation is an excellent form of alternative assessment for the language classroom as it provides learners with the chance to justify their actions and also to use their findings to make generalizations. This means that through direct observation of learners, teachers can get information not only about the learners' level of competence but also about the processes and strategies learners employ in their learning. This is confirmed also by Lester & Kroll (1996) who define observation as "observing and questioning students while they are engaged in classroom activities can yield invaluable information not only about their skill, but also about their thinking processes, their attitudes, and their beliefs" (cited in Kwako, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, observing students consistently basis can indicate students' differences in terms of learning styles and preferences.

Observations are part and parcel of the teaching and learning processes. They can be done while the teacher circulates around the classroom, monitoring students' work. To keep observational records of their students, teachers can use rating forms, narrative descriptions, checklists, and anecdotal records (Chittenden, 1991). This will help the teacher document students' growth and plan for future learning.

Rencken (1996, p. 1-2) proposes a number of principles that should guide observations as an assessment tool. These principles are as follows:

1. Learning to See the Whole Child: through observations, teachers are given the chance to view different components at the same time. In contrast to tests that assess a limited number of skills, observations can reveal much information related to the learner's emotional, physical, social, and cultural aspects.

2. Finding/Making Opportunities to Observe: As teachers' time is carefully managed to fulfill the lesson objectives, it is hard for many teachers to find an appropriate time for observations. Planning what and when to observe, providing activities that do not directly involve the teacher, and finding spots in the classroom that allow teachers to clearly see and hear what is happening are some practical ideas on how teachers can go about observing learners.

3. Keeping Records of Observations: Teachers must find ways to keep all information that they observed stored. Observing and believing that the information will be remembered is a waste of time. When the data collected from the observation are maintained, teachers can go back to them whenever necessary.

4. Sharing Observations: Records of students' observations show the way the learner progresses over time. These records can be shared with the students themselves to know how they are growing as learners. The information revealed through observations about the student's development could be shared with the parents as well.

5. Using Observations for Planning: Records of students' observations provide insights about the needs of the learners and reveal whether the learning goals are met. Based on such information, teachers can make any necessary adjustment to address the needs of learners in subsequent lessons and activities.

6. Considering assessments: Observations could be used to plan future lessons and also to assess students' learning. Unlike tests which focus mainly on the weaknesses of the students, observations are meant to document areas of strengths.

Familiarization with these six principles is likely to improve the use of observations for assessment purposes. However, as is the case with many other forms of alternative assessment, observations are often criticized for being time-consuming and lacking standardization. Subjectivity is another concern raised when dealing with observations as methods for assessment.

3.3. Self/ Peer assessments

Self-assessment requires students to monitor their learning progress and participate in assessing their knowledge and skills (Butler & Lee, 2010). The teacher sets in advance criteria or guidelines for how a performance will be evaluated. The teacher, then, shares these criteria with the learners. In this way, learners are trained systematically on ways of assessing their own learning progress and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses. According to Brown & Hudson (1998), students are required to "rate their own language" (p. 14) through self- assessment. This could be done by means of three types of self-assessment; performance self-assessments, comprehension self-assessments, or observation self-assessments. The first

requires students to see how well they would respond to a situation after they read it. Similarly, the second requires students to see how well they would understand a situation after they read it. As in the third type of self- assessments, students listen to their recorded performances on role-play activities and see how well their performance is .

Self assessment has a number of advantages. To begin with, this type of assessment involves students directly in the assessment process as it encourages them to become active and more effective in their learning (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Moreover, by allowing students to be involved in evaluating their own work, the teacher encourages them to become self-reflective and independent learners (Geeslin, 2003). In turn, students' engagement and their autonomy can enhance their motivation to learn the language.

Importantly, when students are involved in their own learning and take allowed the chance to be responsible for their assessment, "their growing awareness and ownership of their development enables them to make use of the process of assessment as a tool for learning" (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991, p. 74). That is to say, when students are given the chance to judge their knowledge and performance, they become able to identify their areas of difficulty and work towards improving them.

Added to that, Geeslin (2003) found that providing students with the chance to assess their own learning results in the creation of some sort of dialogue between the teacher and his/her students. The fact that students are required to assess their performances allows the teacher the chance to comment and provide feedback regularly. This increases student-teacher interaction as well as students' awareness of the learning goals.

According to Todd (2002), learners' self-assessment is used for a number of reasons. First, this type of alternative assessment is necessary for self-directed learning. Second, it raises learners' awareness about language and about the most effective learning strategies. Another reason is that self-assessment enhances learner motivation and goal orientation. Finally, self-assessment is likely to reduce the workload of the teacher.

A variant of self-assessment is peer assessment. Peer assessment is defined by Topping (1998) as "an arrangement in which individuals consider the amount, level, value, worth, quality, or success of the products or outcomes of learning of peers of similar status" (p. 250). Peer assessment is like self-assessment except that, as the name implies, students assess their peers, rather than themselves. Peer assessment requires students to be involved in providing feedback on their peers' work. This leads to students' direct involvement, learner autonomy as well as high levels of motivation (Brown & Hudson, 1998).

From another perspective, Brown (2004) refers to peer assessment as "simply one arm of a plethora of tasks and procedures within the domain of learner-centered and collaborative education" (p. 281). In addition to putting students at the center by involving them in the process of assessment, peer assessment encourages collaborative learning between students. Students get the chance to learn from one another by working in groups and assessing each other's work. The author categorizes self and peer assessment into five types:

Direct assessment of a specific performance: students monitor their oral or written performance and come up with an evaluation of the performance. Such assessment is carried out immediately after the performance. After delivering an oral presentation, for instance, the student himself/herself or a peer (in the case of peer assessment) completes a checklist and rates performance based on detailed criteria. Journals and peer editing after a writing tasks are other examples of direct assessment performance.

Indirect assessment of general competence: rather than evaluating a single specific performance, indirect self or peer assessment is rendered after a lesson, a module, or even a term of study. The aim is to focus on the general self or peer overall ability instead of focusing on a short performance. Such assessment can be done by listing a number of attributes and expressing the extent to which the student or a peer agrees or disagrees with them. Filling out questionnaires or writing journals are examples of this type of assessment.

Meta-cognitive assessment for setting goals: the aim here is not just assessing past performances or competencies, but to set goals and the degree to which they have been met. This can be done through journal entries, pair or group work planning, questionnaires, or listing a set of possibilities to choose from. This type of self/peer assessment is most likely to increase students' motivation as students are given the chance to set goals and strive to accomplish them.

Socio-affective assessment: this category of self/peer assessment investigates learners' affective factors. Factors such as learners' motivation, anxiety, learning styles, and multiple intelligences are examined through this type of assessment. The information obtained from socio-affective assessment benefits both students and teachers. Teachers will be able to identify how their learners prefer to learn and teach accordingly.

Student generated tests: involving students in constructing tests is the last type of self/peer assessment. It requires allowing students to have a say in the selection of test content or items.

Despite the many benefits of self and peer assessment discussed above, this type of alternative assessment has also some disadvantages. Lack of objectivity is the main criticism against such an assessment. Brown (2004) confirms this by saying that "one of the greatest drawbacks to self-assessment is the threat of subjectivity" (p. 281). Besides, students might lack the skill of making an accurate assessment of themselves or their peers. As such, these two types of alternative assessment must be dealt with carefully in order to reap their benefits. Brown (2004) suggests four guidelines for carrying out self and peer assessments successfully. The first guideline is to make students aware of the purpose of the assessment. It is likely that some students might be uncomfortable with such assessments. Hence, it is recommended that the teacher identifies the purposes behind a self or peer assessment and tells the students about them. The second guideline is to ensure that students are aware of what is required of them by clarifying the tasks beforehand. Modeling and offering guidelines will be useful in this regard. Third, clear criteria should be established to encourage objective self and peer assessments. Finally, teachers should devise follow-up tasks and procedures after self and peer assessments are conducted. Conferencing with the students, for instance, could be a follow up task to provide feedback to the students.

3.4. Project Work

Projects as an instrument of alternative assessment have gained much attention in education in general and in language classrooms in particular. Working on projects requires students to apply their knowledge and skills and make use of diverse skills like researching, writing, interviewing, collaboration, and public speaking. The projects are often designed to address real-world problems and to equip learners with practical life skills. Project work as an assessment tool reveals both the student's knowledge about language and also their ability to use the language in meaningful situations (Gokçen, 2005).

The advantages of projects are twofold. They develop students' linguistic competence as well as their social skills. Students' linguistic competence is developed as projects call for the integration of all language skills. For example, to accomplish a project, students may need to conduct interviews and take notes. This sharpens students listening and writing skills. Also, students are required to read enough materials related to the topic of their project. In this way, their reading skill is likely to improve. Finally, presenting the end product helps students use oral language. Further, project work fosters students' communication with members of their community. This enables students to improve their social skills and increase their self-confidence, leadership skills, persuasive skills, and critical abilities (Gokçen, 2005).

Another benefit of project work is helping learners gain their independence and autonomy as learners. Because in projects students have a say in selecting, planning, and conducting a project, they become responsible for their learning. Moreover, letting students work on their own and guiding them in this process is likely to increase their motivation to learn (Fragoulis, 2009).

Burke (1994) cites nine benefits of project work in second language classes. For the author, a project

1. allows students to formulate their own questions and then try to find answers to them,
2. through projects, students find opportunities to use their multiple intelligences to create a product,
3. projects can be assigned to students at different levels of proficiency and can be adjusted to learners' own individual learning styles and ability levels,
4. projects may increase students' motivation,
5. through projects students are provided an opportunity for positive interaction and collaboration among peers,
6. projects provide an alternative for students who have problems reading and writing,
7. projects, unlike tests or traditional writing assignments, help students to increase their self-esteem, ,
8. project work also provides an environment for students to share their learning and accomplishments with other students, classes, parents, or community members and
9. project work can achieve essential learning outcomes through application and transfer (Burke , 1994, cited in Gokçen, 2005, p. 47)

Despite the many benefits that projects have as an alternative assessment method, some teachers still shy away from using it. One reason for this may be that project work places a great demand on the teacher. The latter finds it difficult to monitor students' projects since much effort and time is required in the process. Students' projects require great levels of planning and coordination between teachers and students. Moreover, it is not easy to choose topics that are suitable for the students' interests and level, and fit them into the curriculum (Gokçen, 2005).

4. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Brown & Hudson (1998) define performance assessment as one which requires students "to accomplish approximations of real-life, authentic tasks, usually using the productive skills of speaking or writing but also using reading or writing or combining skills" (p. 11). In its simplest terms, performance assessment asks students to show how well they have acquired certain skills and competencies by performing and producing. Such assessment focuses on what students are able to do with the language rather than what they know about the language. The performance is assessed using criteria that were established beforehand by teachers and students. A checklist can also be used, and it includes items such as pronunciation, volume, pace, content, etc.

After the performance, feedback is given to the performers. According to Manson and Manson (1993) performance assessment has three key features. First, the student constructs, rather than selects responses. Second, the assessment format allows teachers to observe students performing tasks that mirror the real world. Third, relevant aspects in students' thinking and learning are assessed. Performance assessments can take many forms including, role-playing, interviews, oral presentations, oral reports, group discussions, summarizing or paraphrasing a text, describing a picture, etc.

The major upside of performance assessments is that they encourage students to use the language for meaningful communicative purposes. Brown & Hudson (1998) maintain that performance assessments are more valid in assessing students' abilities to perform real-life tasks, reveal students' abilities, and predict students' performances in future real-life situations. In addition, engaging in group work activities allows students to interact with the teacher, the materials, and with one another. Learning is facilitated when students justify their answers and clarify their ideas during a group activity. Moreover, performance assessments cater for different students' learning styles and preferences. Many students who have test anxiety, for example, might score low grades in reading or writing skills, but still, prove that they are proficient in oral skills. That is, class presentations and demonstrations provide an alternative procedure for students who fail to show their abilities on written tests, and help them "make connections between what they can see and touch, and what they can say" (Hughes, 1993, p. 6).

Performance assessments are also praised for offering "a medium for students to display the higher-order skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (Hammond & Anderson, 2010, p. 12). In other words, through performance assessments, students are given the opportunity not only to demonstrate their level of knowledge and comprehension but also to reveal more

complex cognitive processes that other types of assessment might fail to reveal. The increasing interest in performance assessment is, accordingly, the result of a strong belief that such assessment is capable of helping students develop the 21st century skills.

As is the case with any other type of assessment, teachers need to be careful when implementing performance assessments. For a successful assessment of students' performance, teachers are required to specify the main objective of the performance, set detailed criteria of the performance, train students on the performance, employ reliable forms of assessment like checklists or rubrics, and give feedback throughout the process (Brown, 2004, p. 255).

The overall downside of performance assessments is that they are time-consuming. Another disadvantage is that related to logistics. Teachers, for example, may find it difficult to collect and store audio or videotapes of the students' performances. Classroom management and subjectivity in the scoring process are also a criticism against performance assessments (Brown & Hudson , 1998).

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper seeks to provide a synoptic review of the literature related to types of alternative assessment. More specifically, the paper clarifies the different forms of alternative assessment available for language classroom teachers. In addition, this review summarizes the main characteristics of each alternative assessment form, its benefits, as well as the challenges that might hinder their incorporation.

In conclusion, it is recommended that teachers select the appropriate alternative assessment method to be used to supplement data gathered through traditional assessment. In order to achieve this, it is highly recommended that EFL teachers are provided with adequate training in the area of assessment. Teachers should be made aware of the different alternative assessment techniques available to them, and be trained on how to incorporate these assessment procedures with their students.

More importantly, the paper argues that the use of these assessment methods is context-bound. That is to say, each teacher should be careful in selecting the alternative assessment method that is deemed appropriate to their context and to the needs and abilities of their students. This is likely to enhance students' motivation to learn, inform teaching practices, and hence improve learning.

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