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Developing Authentic Assessment for English Language Teaching: A Theoretical View

Sonia Brown[1]

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Abstract

This paper presents a theoretical view of developing authentic assessment for English language. It aims at describing the theory, therefore, might be proposed as assessment in TEFL class. I realized that this view is still limited. Case studies need to be conducted further in order to have deeper understanding of developing authentic assessment.

1. Introduction

The global world requires that all learning provide the learners with meaningful experiences which can help them survived. Brew (1999) contented that education must be meaningful for learners, because meaningful education can help but meaningless education will burden life. An analysis has been done toward what education is needed in this era (Delors, 1996).

The analysis recommends four pillars of education under which a meaningful education rests. The four pillars – learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together- require not only good knowledge on the part of the learner, but also how the learner becomes the agent of his/her life, becoming knowledgeable, skillful, self-regulated, and independent. This means that the learner must be the center of the learning. As the center, the learner can choose what and how to learn, and develop the knowledge in the way he/she wants and does it. Here, the learner constructs his/her own knowledge. Elliot (2002) states that constructivist learning involves two things, meaning and action. This means that the learner must seek meaning by doing it herself, not others doing it for her. If learning is to develop competency, individual student must develop it by themselves.

In order to know and assure competency, learning must be assessed. Learning involves assessment to know what is learnt. Viewed from the above perspective toward learning, assessment must include students' assessment to both their product and process of learning. In regard to the above view, many teachers now reconsider their traditional approach to assessment. Traditionally, assessment had been dominated by testing, a quantitative orientation toward the result of learning. The world education has experienced an over-reliance toward objective type tests, which are essentially most suitable for the measurement of the product of learning. Moreover, the past measurement was largely cognitive in nature, which eventually left the affective and psychomotor

[1]The London School of English, London, UK

domains behind (although some argue that cognitive tests, to some extent, may represent competency). In fact, what any education seeks for is the relevance of the learning to real life. How can a uniformed, imposed response represent what the student has learnt which reflects real life? Meaningfulness of assessment, then, becomes a crucial point to discuss.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) define meaningfulness of assessment as the degree of involvement of various attributes of an individual in performing a language task, including topical knowledge, language knowledge, personal attributes, affective schemata, and problem solving strategies. All these, as we can see, involves the four dimensions of knowledge (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2003; a revision of Bloom's taxonomy which contains the three domains), namely factual, conceptual, procedural, and meta-cognitive knowledge. There have been efforts done lately to make assessment more meaningful, that is, by minimizing the use of imposed response tests and optimalizing the use of authentic assessment.

2. Materials and Methods

The current paper is a theoretical view that based its opinion on the documented theories. I, first, read the documents that related to the topic. Next, I tried to classify and to distribute them as my basic proposal. All of the writing is presented descriptively.

3. Discussions

3.1 What is Authentic Assessment?

Before defining authentic assessment, it is quite important to clarify three terms in evaluation study, namely measurement, assessment, and evaluation. Nitko (1996) states that measurement is a procedure for assigning numbers (called scores) to a specified attribute or characteristic of a person in such a way that the numbers describe the degree to which the person possesses the attribute.

Assessment is a process of obtaining information that is used for making decisions about students, curricula and programs, and educational policy. Evaluation is a process of making a value judgment about the worth of a student's product or performance. From the three definitions we can see that measurement deals with scoring an attribute like ability; while assessment is more concerned with how to obtain meaningful facts about learning, and evaluation is about making judgment toward the learning. It is clear then, that the three terms are very closely related. While assessment is the process to gather information, measurement is only a way to gather information about learning, and the information is the evidence which enables judgment.

Today the term assessment, however, is not limited only on the activity in gathering information, but covers all activities involved in the effort to know a student's competency, which means that it covers measurement and evaluation together within it. Therefore, today we hear the term assessment more often than the term evaluation and measurement. Popham (1995) states that the term assessment is more preferred because it is more friendly. Assessment gives the sense of humanistic approach which acknowledge process and feedback as important, while the term evaluation indicates judgment.

The term authentic has a familiar meaning. It means real, like real world, real life. From the meaning of the terms assessment and authentic, then we can infer what authentic assessment means. Authentic assessment is a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-

world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills. Wiggins (1993) states that authentic measures are "engaging and worthy problems or questions of importance, in which students must use knowledge to fashion performances effectively and creatively. The tasks are either replicas of or analogous to the kinds of problems faced by adult citizens and consumers or professionals in the field."

Below is an internet quote on how important is authentic assessment in our education today: The critics of objective and structured types of assessment have pointed out a major weakness of such assessments of not being capable of portraying the overall performance of a learner and being rather helpful in investigating and probing understanding of mathematics learning. Authentic assessment is a process of involving multiple forms of performance measurement reflecting student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes (Callison, 1998) . The term authentic assessment is also coined to denote the notion of alternative practices, which are different from the traditional summative examinations, are appropriate in the contexts of outcome-based education for realistic and learner-centred instructional decision (McNeir, 1993).

Furthermore, the term is used in education to enhance the practice of realistic student involvement in assessment of their own achievements (Grace, 1992) by which they can develop a positive attitude towards mathematics learning. Commonly speaking, the traditional notion of assessment cannot assess the student learning process realistically because it views the assessment as the notion of knowledge-out-of-action (Applebee, 1996) . On the contrary, the concept of authentic assessment regards the process of assessment as a series of interactive situations between the learner and knowledge-in-action (Applebee, 1996) . Comparing with the traditional standardized testing, the authentic assessment is different in many respects. For instance, it requires students to perform of what they have understood rather than to memorize; it presents the students with full array of tasks rather than writing one line answer; it is a process-oriented rather than guessing and selecting the correct answer; it probes the reliability and validity by devising a criteria varied to situation and the purpose of the assessment rather than trying to establish an objective framework; and authentic assessment comprises of ill-structured tasks from which students are helped rehearse for complex tasks as were in the real life rather than drilling and so called practicing in artificial situation (Wiggins, 1990-12). The following quotation provides reasons why, then, we must consider using authentic assessment in our teaching:

Authentic assessments are direct measures

We do not just want students to know the content of the disciplines when they graduate. We, of course, want them to be able to use the acquired knowledge and skills in the real world. So, our assessments have to also tell us if students can apply what they have learned in authentic situations. If a student does well on a test of knowledge we might infer that the student could also apply that knowledge. But that is rather indirect evidence. I could more directly check for the ability to apply by asking the student to use what they have learned in some meaningful way. If I taught someone to play golf I would not check what they have learned with just a written test. I would want to see more direct, authentic evidence. I would put my student out on a golf course to play. Similarly, if we want to know if our students can interpret literature, calculate potential savings on sale items, test a hypothesis, develop a fitness plan, converse in a foreign language, or apply other knowledge and skills they have learned, then authentic assessments will provide the most direct evidence.

Authentic assessments capture the constructive nature of learning

A considerable body of research on learning has found that we cannot simply be fed knowledge. We need to construct our own meaning of the world, using information we have gathered and were taught and our own experiences with the world (see, e.g., Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000; Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Thus, assessments cannot just ask students to repeat back information they have received. Students must also be asked to demonstrate that they have accurately constructed meaning about what they have been taught. Furthermore, students must be given the opportunity to engage in the construction of meaning. Authentic tasks not only serve as assessments but also as vehicles for such learning.

Authentic assessments provide multiple paths to demonstration of learning

We all have different strengths and weaknesses in how we learn. Similarly, we are different in how we can best demonstrate what we have learned (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001). Regarding the traditional assessment model, answering multiple-choice questions does not allow for much variability in how students demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have acquired. On the one hand, that is a strength of tests because it makes sure everyone is being compared on the same domains in the same manner which increases the consistency and comparability of the measure. On the other hand, testing favors those who are better test-takers and does not give students any choice in how they believe they can best demonstrate what they have learned.
Thus, it is recommended that multiple and varied assessments be used so that 1) a sufficient number of samples are obtained (multiple), and 2) a sufficient variety of measures are used (varied) (Wiggins, 1998). Variety of measurement can be accomplished by assessing the students through different measures that allows you to see them apply what they have learned in different ways and from different perspectives. Typically, you will be more confident in the students' grasp of the material if they can do so. But some variety of assessment can also be accomplished within a single measure. Authentic tasks tend to give the students more freedom in how they will demonstrate what they have learned. By carefully identifying the criteria of good performance on the authentic task ahead of time, the teacher can still make comparable judgments of student performance even though student performance might be expressed quite differently from student to student. For example, the products students create to demonstrate authentic learning on the same task might take different forms (e.g., posters, oral presentations, videos, websites). Or, even though students might be required to produce the same authentic product, there can be room within the product for different modes of expression. For example, writing a good persuasive essay requires a common set of skills from students, but there is still room for variation in how that essay is constructed.

3.2 What are kinds of Authentic Assessment?

Basically, there are five kinds of authentic assessment, namely performance assessment, project or problem solving, essay, self-evaluation, and portfolios. It is impotrant to note here, however, but the term performance assessment is also used to refer to all authentic, competency-based kinds of assessment. Authentic assessment is also called direct assessment, as it directly observe the performance, not like objective type tests which infer competency from cognitive measurement of ability. Authentic assessment is also called alternative assessment as it is considered as an alternative beside the objective type tests.

Performance assessment is a procedure which involves the use of various kinds of tasks to obtain information about what and to what extent a student is doing. Performance assessment is observation of product through process, meaning that the process can provide clues to see the product of learning. Performance assessment has three components, namely: (1) performance task which contains topic of task, task standard, task description, and condition of task accomplishment, (2) performance rubric which contains criteria of an ideal performance, and descriptors of the criteria, and (3) scoring guide which can be analytic, holistic, or primary traits.

Project is also sometimes called problem solving assessment because its main characteristic is that the student works through a problem during the project, then formulate a solution for it. The term problem solving to refer to project is probably most suitable in science lessons. In language assessment, project does not necessarily contain a problem. It can be simply a performance task which requires the student to work comprehensively in a long period of time.

A project involves three phases, like a story: beginning, middle, and final. In the beginning phase, the teacher orients the student with the learning material and the competencies to be developed, which help the student decide a topic of his/her project. In this phase the teacher also provides the condition of project accomplishment. In the middle phase, the student works for the accomplishment of the project. Collecting material and data, interviewing expert, exercising, writing reports, etc. In this phase, the student works independently and with teacher's assistance. In the final phase, the student exhibits or performs the project. Drama performance is an example of project in language teaching.

An authentic essay task needs an extended response of the student. An extended response requires the student to organize his/her ideas in a good way. In this type of assessment, the student can demnstrate skills in factual knowledge, assess his/her factual knowledge, organize own ideas, and express the ideas logically and coherently. Self-evaluation is a way to see own strengths and weaknesses. Rolheiser and Ross (2005) provides a theoretical model to illustrate the importance of self-evaluation in learning, as follows.

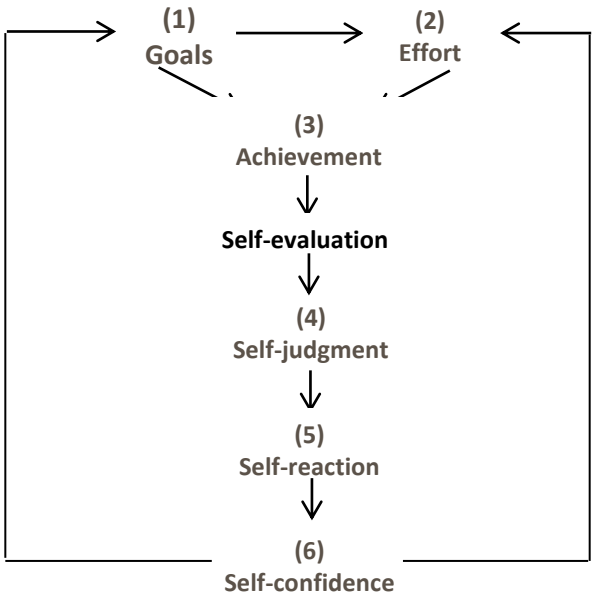


Figure 1
Self Evaluation in Learning

On the above diagram, we can see that goal and effort yields achievement. A self-evaluation that follows achievement provides feedback which then helps to jugde own performance. A judgment may be like, Oh, I'm doing good in A but less in B. This judgment then initiates self-reaction toward the achievement/performance. If a person is doing well, the reaction may be higher motivation to learn. If a person is doing less satisfying, the reaction may be an intention to work harder (positive), or frustrated (negative). Whatever the reaction is, this will determine how confident the person is to set higher goal and to what extent the person will dedicate his/her effort to obtain better achievement.

Portfolio is a collection of evidence that shows growth and achievement of a student in learning. We need to emphasize that if a student collects his/her own works (and put it in a folder), then, it doesn't automatically mean a portfolio. It is a portfolio if it is collected in such a way which provides meaningful information about the student as a learner.

Seen from its purpose, Wyatt and Looper (2002) classify portfolio into developmental portfolio, bestwork portfolio, dan showcase portfolio. Developmental portfolio shows growth chronologically as the student go through tasks, bestwork portfolio contains the outstanding evidence of the student's growth as selected by oneself, or with a peer. The bestworks are accompanied by a narrative which contains reasons why the student considers the works as his/her best. Showcase portfolio is usually created for the purpose of exhibiting and celebrating growth of learning.

Portfolio assessment contains three basic elements, namely evidence of learning, self-evaluation, and open criteria. Portfolio assessment is assessment in process, meaning there is an on-going assessment that takes place as the student is working with the tasks. Portfolio assessment also provides ample opportunities for the student to achieve as best as possible because during the process the student can learn the strengths and weaknesses of his/her work, and progresses along the working-self evaluating-reflecting-planning of revision cycles. This opportunity that portfolio assessment provides makes it famous in education practices as it is contrasted with the 'one-shot' learning evidence/achievement data collection focusing on the product of learning but ignoring the process of it. For the student to be able to progress, self-evaluation helps. Self-evaluation is the key to portfolio. The evidence can not say anything about the student's growth if there is no self-evauation done to the work.

3.3 What techniques are used in authentic assessment?

Authentic assessments include a variety of techniques that can be adapted for different situations. These are some examples of authentic assessment techniques (O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce, 1996). More details are given to meet the current needs of English learning and content areas, like in bilingual classrooms.

Oral Expressions

First, interviews; Teacher asks students questions about personal background, activities, readings, interests, opinions, etc. Second, free dialogue that can be conducted in pairs or more of a given/free topic. Third, story or test retelling. Students retell main ideas or selected details of text experienced through listening or reading. Student produces oral report. The activities can determine reading comprehension, reading strategies, and language development.

Writing Samples

Students can generate narrative, expository, persuasive, description. Furthermore, student

produces written documents like letters, memos, advertisements. It can be scored on content or language components. It also can be scored with rubric or rating scale.

Projects/ Exhibitions

Students complete project in content areas, working individually or in pairs. Students make formal presentation, written report, or both.

Experiments/ Demonstrations

Students complete experiments or demonstrate use of materials. Students make oral presentation, written report, or both. These techniques can observe oral and written

Constructed-Response Items (extended response/essay)

Students respond in writing to open-ended questions. Student produces written report.

Project, exhibition, experiment, or demonstration are suitable for content assignments using English as the medium of instruction. Rather than having separate classes for content areas and English all the time, bilingual classrooms or schools may design an integrated language and content areas lessons, on schedule or incidentally.

Teacher Observations

Teacher observes student attention, response to instructional materials, or interactions with other students. Setting is classroom environment. Record observations with anecdotal notes or rating scales

Portfolios

Focused collection of student work to show progress over time. Integrates information from a number of sources. Gives overall picture of student performance and learning. Strong student involvement and commitment. In portfolios, students also do self-assessment.

3.4 How do I do It?

Moya and O'Malley (in Marhaeni, 2005) propose a comprehensive model, which is modified from portfolio assessment model for implementing authentic assessment in the classroom. This model is carried out based on the components of instructional process, such as planning, implementation, and analysis and reporting.

A. Planning

(1) Determining the purpose and focus of the assessment, such as standard competency, basic competency, indicators, and domains (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) that are going to be assessed.
(2) Determining the contents of the assessment, namely: the assessment procedure, the topic, and the frequency and time of the assessment.
(3) Designing the procedure of analyzing the data.
(4) Designing the steps of conducting the assessment.
(5) Determining the procedure of obtaining the information about the validity and the reliability of the assessment.

B. Implementation

(1) Announcing the purpose and focus of the assessment to the students.

(2) Asking the agreement whether they agree or not with the assessment planning that has been designed.
(3) Discussing some other ways that are still important to be taken in doing the assessment. It is done with the students who are going to be assessed and aimed to make the assessment run maximally based on the purpose.
(4) Conducting assessment activity based on the planning (collecting the data).
(5) Giving feedback for the students who have been assessed.

C. Analysis and Reporting

(1) Analyzing the gathered data.
(2) Combining the whole analyzed data.
(3) Giving final judgment based on the assessment criteria.
(4) Reporting the result of the assessment

In preparing for an authentic assessment, simply take care of the four things below:
(1) **Performance Indicators** which you have developed when writing the syllabus
(2) **A performance task** which contains topic of task, task standards being assessed, task description, and condition of task accomplishment,
(3) **A performance rubric** which contains criteria of an ideal performance, and descriptors of the criteria, and
(4) **A scoring guide** which can be analytic, holistic, or primary traits.

Next, the table below can help specifying your preparation.

Table 1
Preparation List

What to assess	What are the criteria of assessment	How is the task performed	What instruments are needed
Speaking : Story telling	**Fluency** (no repetition, no run-ons, smooth), **Accuracy** (pronunciation, intonation), **Expression** (facial expression and gestures, natural, impressive)	performance	Performance task, analytic assessment rubric
Writing: narrative paragraph writing	Ideas (originality, richness, contextual), Organization (cohesive, coherent, logical), language (vocabulary, grammar, spelling,	Portfolio	Assessment task, analytic assessment rubric, self-evaluation checklist

punctuation)

Now, develop the assessment preparation, as shown in (1) and (2).

(1) Performance Indicator (s) :
The student demonstrates ability in reading a story to children.

(2) Assessment Task :
Read a story in front of a group of students. You may use one of the stories provided by the teacher. The following criteria will be used to assess your performance, so please make sure to use the criteria when you exercise.

When developing a rubric, a teacher must define the competency to be assessed. The teacher can begin with the concept (What is story reading?), then continue to identify the components which comprise an ideal story reading for children. Those components become the criteria of assessment. It is important to note here that the purpose of learning affects the kinds or components to be used as assessment basis. The above rubric is quite general. For my students at the English Education Department taking Children's Literature Course, the components also involve 'story selection' because ability in choosing a story to read is important for them as later when they are teachers, they must choose a suitable book to read for their students.

3.4 About Scoring: which is better?

There are three kinds of scoring guide, namely holistic, analytic, and primary traits. The above rubric is analytic, because the competency (the ability to read a story for children) is seen from some components of the ability, and each of the components are scored, and the ability is considered as the composit of those component scores. For holistic scoring, the ability is considered a whole, not parts composing a whole. Therefore, the ability is just defined which involves description of the substances of the ability. The primary traits scoring is much like analytic, but it contains aspects specific for a particular ability. For example, in assessing paragraph writing ability, there are general components to assess (see the above table). Any paragraph can be assessed using based on such components/aspects. To assess a narrative paragrap, however, when the teacher has emphasis of the specific aspects of narrative like climax, resolution, following chronological order, etc, then, these aspects must be included in the rubric.

Which is better? It is more practical to use holistic scoring because the teacher just assign a score to a performance. Analytic and primary traits are less practical in this sense, but they are useful because they can focus teachers' attention to the ability, avoiding subjective judgments. But, breaking an ability into some components, some argue, does not match with the concept of competency.

Diederich has had a research on this issue. She concluded that the holistic scoring is good to be used by teachers who have experience in scoring and has used analytic scoring for a period of time. For novice teachers, especially in using authentic assessment, she suggested to use analytic and trimary traits scoring. As the teachers are more and more familiar with the concept and components of an ability, they may use holistic scoring with a rubric always available on reach.

3.5 About self-evaluation: Why do I need to use it?

Self-assessment (SE) is defined as the involvement of students in identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgments about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards (Boud 1991 in Brew 1999). The definition reflects the two elements of any assessment process: the identification of standards related to specific criteria and the making of judgments based on them. Brew (1999) further argues that the ability to critically assess one's own work may be a goal of higher education irrespective of whether or not self-assessment exercises as such are involved.

Assessment is actually an exercise of power, of the teacher as the assessor and the students as the assessee. In regard to autonomous learning above, perhaps the most significant shifts in thinking about assessment is the recognition of the need to be mindful about how that power is exercised. If it is exercised in a way which lessens the person's sense of self-worth, then, it is unlikely that learners will develop the ability to think for themselves, or to develop confidence in their ability to learn and to evaluate what they learn and who continue to learn when their college days are over (Brown & Glesner, 1999).

From the above description, then, we can realize how important self-assessment is in supporting autonomous learning. It is time for teachers to practice SE in their classroom, and get benefit from it. When SE has been a routine for the students, then, the load of the teacher, especially in doing correction, becomes less. Some examples of SE checklists and assessment rubrics (which can also be used as SE instruments) are abundant in the internet. Some are given in this paper.

3.*6 Final Remarks : The Challenges*

There are some issues of authentic asseessment implementation that challenge teachers. Among them are time consuming, objectiveness of scoring, and construction of instruments. Experience shows that conducting authentic assessment takes much time. For example, oral interviews. A teacher may need more than five minutes interviewing a student before deciding a score. Considering that the curriculum material in the current curriculum (the school-based curriculum), many teachers are doubtful about whether or not to apply authentic assessment in their teaching.

Objectiveness of scoring raises another question. As teachers have long been accostumed to using objective type tests like multiple choice tests where the consistency of scoring is perfect (as the answers are absolute), they are very often doubtful about the scores to a performance which contains some aspects or criteria with ranged scores, not absolute.

Another hard job for teachers in using authentic assessment is its preparation. While making performance tasks is relatively easy, developing a performance rubric requires teachers to go into the concept of such performance and articulate it on a written rubric. In the past, teachers mostly rely on their mental 'calculation' of a skill which was almost completely secret for the student. Teachers just simply asked the student to, for example, perform a conversation of a given topic and made a rough consideration in scoring. Very often teachers did not have any criteria for scoring, and also were trapped in irrelevant aspects of the required performance, like "Uuh, this student makes me feel nausea, she smells like....." then, her score was low.....

Now, what about the national examination system? My experience with teachers tells that they are worried with the system which largely relies on the use of multiple choice type tests. To anticipate this, many teachers 'exercise' their students with such type of test, thinking that they will survive in the examination as they are familiar with the type of test.

Teachers must be aware of the importance of using authentic assessment in their classrooms

and have professional onsideration about it. Authentic assessment is a way to make learning and assessment more meaningful for the students. Therefore, it does not mean that teachers must use authentic assessment all the time. Objective type tests, if well-constructed, can also be good measures of student competencies, although they may operate well only in the level of cognitive competencies.

4. **Conclusion**

Teachers, in my opinion, must be aware of the importance of using authentic assessment in their classrooms and have professional onsideration about it. Authentic assessment is a way to make learning and assessment more meaningful for the students. Therefore, it does not mean that teachers must use authentic assessment all the time. Objective type tests, if well-constructed, can also be good measures of student competencies, although they may operate well only in the level of cognitive competencies.

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Biography of Author

Sonia Brown is a language teacher of English in the The London School of English. She is active in social works, especially in educational field. Her activity, mostly, is related to the practical teaching of English. She has just started on writing scientific journals.
Email: brownsonia@gmail.co.uk