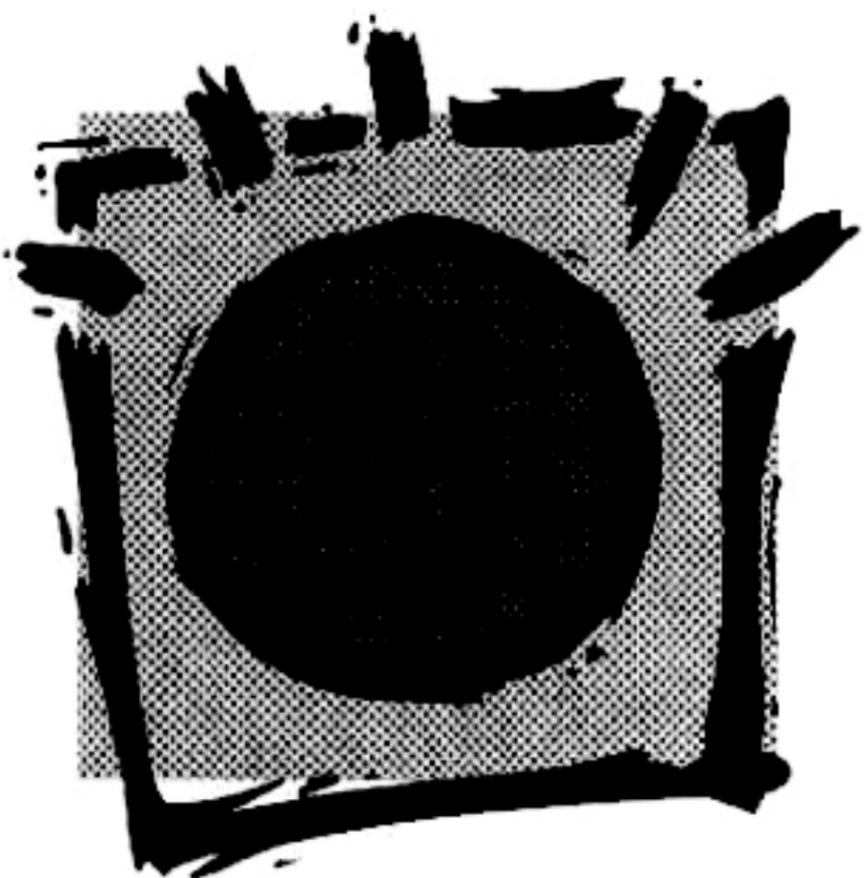


Assessment,
Articulation,
and Accountability
1999



Part Two:
Assessment

Chapter 2 - Introduction to Assessment

What is Assessment?

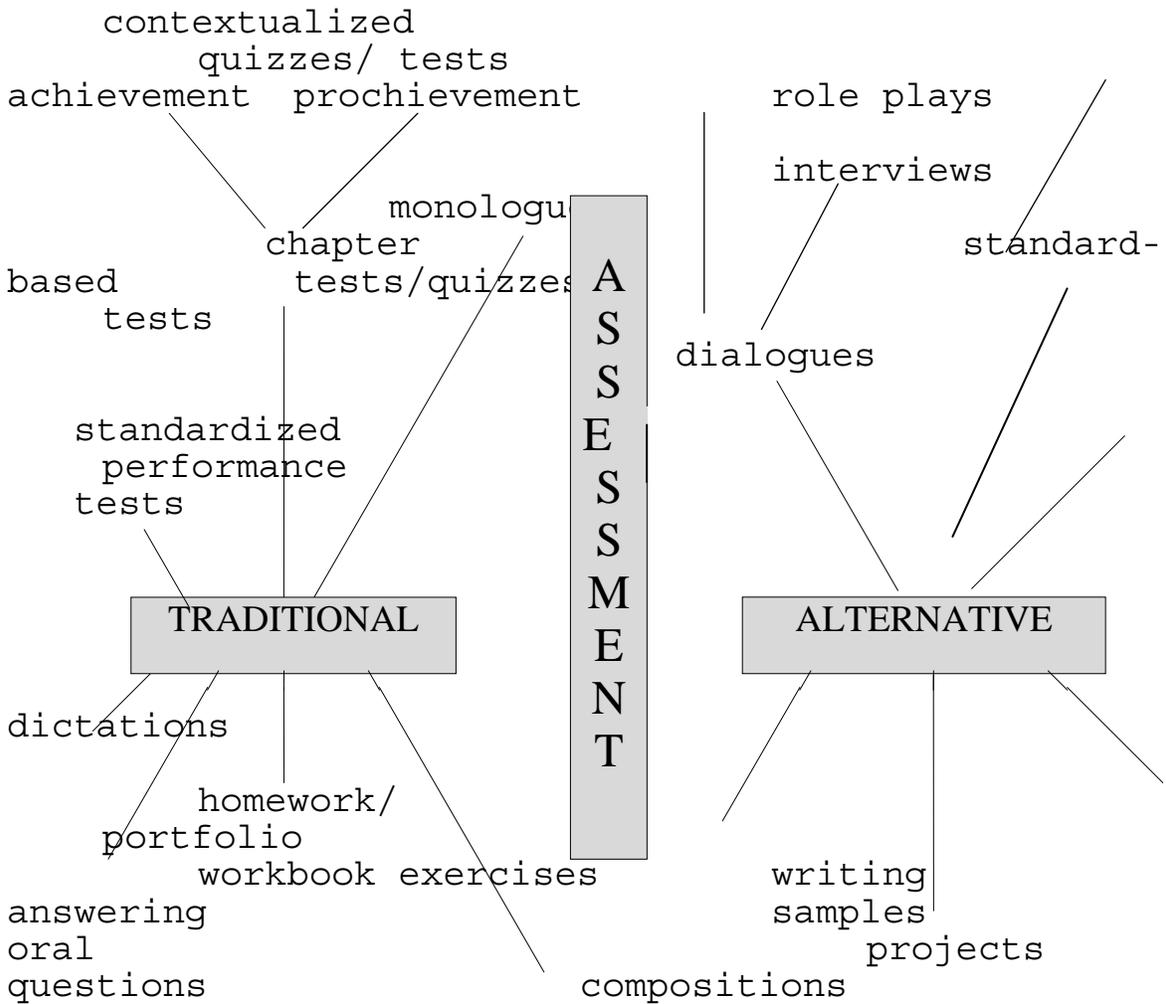
The word ``Assessment'' has been interpreted to mean many different things. Traditionally it has been used to refer to tests and quizzes. However, assessment goes beyond tests and quizzes. Assessment, in the modern sense of the term, is not just about testing but more about teaching and learning.

The new assessment models (whether they are called alternative, authentic, or performance-based) provide multiple measures and various opportunities for students to create and demonstrate what they can do with the second language. They focus on the students' performance rather than on their ability to manipulate the language in discrete items taken out of context. Assessment is ongoing and is conducted in many different forms. It gives us the picture album of the students' ability rather than the isolated snap shot provided by the test.

Traditional testing, on the other hand, is a one-time measure which relies on students achievement in a given day. It is usually dependent upon a single correct response per question with no regards for demonstration of knowledge and thought process. Nevertheless, traditional testing still holds a place in assessment; however, it needs to be balanced with ongoing assessments which measure students performance and progress over a period of time.

Figure 2 - Two Approaches to Assessment

TWO APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT



Source: Charlotte Gifford and Jeanne Mullaney. "What Gets Measured Gets Done." 1998.

Figure 3 - Traditional vs. Authentic Assessments

Traditional Assessments vs. Authentic Assessments	
1. test what is taught	1. evaluate what learners can DO with the language
2. test over limited material	2. challenge learners to use language creatively and to express their own meanings with learned materials
3. emphasize grammatical accuracy	3. assess the accuracy with which a student carries out a function within a given context
4. test "learned language"	4. assess "acquired language"
5. test mastery of language	5. evaluate natural use of language for the expression of personal meaning
6. encourage micro language learning	6. encourage macro language learning
7. are achievement-based	7. are competency-based
8. look for "right or wrong" answers	8. look for "sophisticated vs. naive" responses
9. assess for "coverage"	9. assess for "uncoverage"
10. audit performance	10. improve performance
11. must be unknown in advance to insure validity.	11. should be known as much as possible in advance. Not a

	''gotcha'' experience.
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Source: Peggy Boyles ''Helping Teachers Know How, When, Why and What to Assess in the Classroom.'' 1998.

Formative and Summative Assessments

There are two basic types of assessments.

1. Formative or ongoing assessments
2. Summative assessments

Formative or ongoing assessments entail daily or frequent observations and studies of students' performance. They are usually brief and not very formal and do not require the use of a grade. Ongoing assessments provide the necessary information and feedback to adjust and redirect classroom instruction to ensure that students can meet outcomes.

Summative assessments ''are periodic analyses of student performance designed to measure student progress in specific areas. They are usually formal, and they provide summative information to help evaluate mastery of material that has been taught through the curriculum'' (Guide to Classroom Assessment, p. 4). Summative assessments usually occur at the end of a unit, chapter, or course. They are often used to report to parents and to measure students' achievement.

What Are the Purposes for Assessment?

The purposes of assessment determine how assessment is conducted, what information is collected, and how this information is interpreted. Following is a list of the purposes for assessment.

- o Diagnose the instructional needs of students. Assessment provides teachers with the necessary information to make instructional decisions. When diagnosing the needs of individual students and/or groups of students, it is important to resort to a variety of assessments

to ensure that the needs of *all* students are met.

- o Place students in programs to meet their needs. This is especially crucial when students have had different experiences with language learning. Some students may have received language instruction daily for 25 minutes, while other may have met twice a week for 20 minutes per class. At the middle level, students have been involved in exploratory courses, beginning courses and/or sequential courses. As these students converge in a new school or class, their previous knowledge needs to be taken into consideration so that proper placement can occur. The need to place students is most obvious in the transition years from elementary to middle and from middle to high schools.
- o Involve students in their own learning. Students develop a sense of responsibility and ownership when they are part of the assessment process. They can become involved in the development of rubrics and checklists and can select individual items to be included in a portfolio.
- o Report progress to parents. Parents want to know how their children are doing in school and how they can be involved in their children's education.
- o Meet accountability demands. The accountability demands are usually part of a state-mandated testing program, a district requirement, or a school's desire to document students' ability to meet program goals. Assessing for accountability purposes provides information for reporting progress and achievement to administrators. Even when no state testing exists in a particular discipline, the need for accountability is still present and must be addressed.

- o Conduct program evaluation. This evaluation can take place at the school, district, state, or national level. At the present time there are no end-of-course nor end-of-grade tests in second languages for North Carolina students. However, there are several national tests (Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, National Assessment of Educational Progress test planned for 2003) which can help teachers assess the strengths and weaknesses of their programs against national trends.

On a local level, program evaluation needs to be ongoing to justify practices such as block scheduling (and its effect on the development of language) and exploratory programs (and their impact on enrollment).

- o Modify instruction to meet the needs of students.
Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment lists two kinds of information needed when assessing for instructional purposes:

- 1) decisions about teaching strategies and how well students are reaching the specific learning targets set by the teacher or
- 2) specific individual diagnostic information for individual students (p. 7).

Who Are the Audiences for Assessment?

Identifying the audience and the purposes for assessment constitutes the first step for selecting and administering assessments. Different purposes necessitate different kinds of assessment and different audiences.

The following charts, devised by Dr. Richard J. Stiggins, illustrate the different audiences and the kind of information they need for assessment.

Figure 4 - Users and Uses of Assessment Results

Users	Key Question(s) to Be Answered	Information Needed
<i>Classroom Level</i>		
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I meeting the teacher’s standards? • What help do I need to succeed? • Are the results worth my investment of energy? 	Continuous information about individual student attainment of specific instructional requirements
Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which students need what help? • Who among my students should work together? • What grade should appear on the report card? • Did my teaching strategies work? • How do I become a better teacher? 	<p>Continuous information about individual student achievement</p> <p>Continuous assessment of group performance</p>
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my child succeeding in school? • What does my child need to succeed? • Is my child’s teacher(s) doing a good job? • Is this district doing a good job? 	Continuous feedback on the student’s mastery of required material
<i>Instructional Support Level</i>		
Principal/Assistant Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is instruction in particular areas producing results? • Is this teacher effective? • What kind of professional development will help? • How shall we spend building resources to be effective? 	Periodic assessment of group achievement
Lead Teacher (dept. chair, mentor teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this teacher need to do the job? 	Periodic assessment of group achievement
Counselor/ Psychologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who needs (can have access to) special support services such as 	Periodic assessment of individual achievement

Curriculum Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remedial programs? • What students should be assigned to which teachers to optimize results? • Is our program of instruction effective? 	Periodic assessment of group achievement
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Figure 5 - Users and Uses of Assessment Results
(continued)

Users	Key Question(s) to Be Answered	Information Needed
<i>Policy Level</i>		
Superintendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are programs producing student learning? • Is the building principal producing results? • Which programs need/deserve more resources? 	Periodic assessment of group mastery of district curriculum
School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students in the district learning: • Is the superintendent producing results? 	Periodic assessment of group achievement
State Dept. of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are programs across the state producing results? 	Periodic assessment of group mastery of state curriculum
Citizen/Legislator (state or national)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are students in school achieving in ways that will allow them to be effective citizens? 	Periodic assessment of group mastery of valued targets

Source: Dr. Richard Stiggins. Leadership for Excellence in Assessment, p. 11-12

Multiple Assessments

Teachers remain concerned about assessing their students' knowledge and proficiency. They realize that some assessments may be easy to administer but may not provide them with the information they need. Other assessments are challenging and more difficult to design and administer but may yield extremely valuable information. Such is the case for a multiple choice test which can be administered very easily and can assess effectively listening and reading skills but which may not be the best tool for assessing oral language. An open-ended question to be answered orally may be a more appropriate strategy and at the same time may be more time consuming and challenging to administer and rate.

In the foreign language class, an objective can often be assessed in a variety of ways. For example, reading comprehension can be assessed through open-ended questions, factual questions, multiple choice, true and false, use of checklist, retelling, etc. Because some assessments may be better suited for specific tasks, it is important not to rely solely on one approach to assess a student's knowledge and skills but instead to select the assessment which is the best suited for a specific task.

For this reason, teachers will want to look at what is to be assessed from a variety of perspectives to ensure that all aspects of that knowledge are assessed. In doing so, they will take in consideration the students' different learning styles and validate the students own ways of thinking.

Assessment Strategies

The following section on Assessment Strategies is excerpted from Classroom Assessment: Linking Instruction and Assessment (1999), p. 44.

There are five basic categories of assessment strategies that teachers frequently use. Within the categories, there are several different methods. Each assessment strategies has advantages and disadvantages. Some are more appropriate for

different learning targets than others, but each method offers some kind of evidence of student learning. The main categories are:

- o Selected response (forced choice),
- o Constructed response (student written responses),
- o Performances,
- o Conversations, and
- o Observations.

Selected response assessments include multiple choice, matching and true-false questions.

Student constructed responses include the students' written responses to short-answer and open-ended questions, essays and research papers, reports from investigations and book reviews, and journals and learning logs. This kind of assessment focuses more on the application of knowledge rather than on the verification of the information they have memorized and learned.

Another category of assessment includes original performances, products and projects, and responses to complex, "real world" performance tasks.

Finally, conversations, interviews, informal discussions, oral questions posed to the class as a whole or to individuals, and student conferences complete the list of possible assessments.

Steps in Planning for Assessment

- 1** **PLAN**
Determine what to assess, how to assess, and when to assess. Choose purpose and audience.

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- 2** **COLLECT**
Gather information through formal, informal, traditional, and authentic assessments.

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- 3** **ORGANIZE**
Organize the information collected through the various assessments to facilitate reporting.

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- 4** **EVALUATE**
Evaluate the students' progress toward reaching the stated goals.

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- 5** **REPORT**
Report the information gathered to the targeted audiences (students, parents, administrators, etc.).

Adapted from Guide to Classroom Assessment, p.

21.

Issues to Consider When Planning Assessment

1. What to assess.

This is most often determined by the goals and objectives outlined in the curriculum and required by the school, district, or state. At this time, the purpose and the audience for assessment have to be determined since they influence the selection of assessment tools.

If teachers want to assess the students' ability to communicate orally, they need to narrow that overarching goal to a more focused one which breaks down that goal into observable and realistic components. For example, teachers may choose to assess the students' ability to exchange information about their daily activities.

2. How to assess

This is determined best by choosing the most effective tools available for the identified goals. There may be times when a multiple choice test is more effective in assessing listening comprehension than a written test and other times when a performance task yields more information about the students' ability to use the language than a fill-in-the-blanks activity.

3. When to assess

The decision to use ongoing assessment or to use a summative assessment at the conclusion of a unit will be influenced by the kind of information which is needed. If a teacher wants to find out if students understand a new concept and can apply it, he/she might use ongoing assessment and redirect his/her teaching as needs be. If, on the contrary, he/she is more interested in finding out what students remember at the conclusion of a chapter, he/she might use summative assessment.

4. How to organize information

To prevent them from being overwhelmed, teachers will want to think about managing and organizing

the collected information. To keep track of all the information gathered, teachers may consider portfolio folders, notebooks, computer files, or any other system which fits the teachers' and students' needs. Reporting the information to the targeted audiences will be facilitated when the information is easily accessible and organized.

5. How to report information

Careful consideration has to be given to the reporting of information. Different audiences need different kinds of information. Information reported to administrators is generally more global and addresses the achievement of broad goals. Reporting to students and parents is usually more detailed and may include some suggestions for improvement.