

**DISTINCTIVENESS AND DIFFERENCES OF ASSESSMENTS**

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**Abstract:** *This article explores main differences between two types of assessments, focusing on particular characteristics and problems related to them. There are two main types of assessment according to what a test measure. The first one is traditional assessment and the other one is alternative assessment.*

**Keywords:** *assessment, standard - based, performance - based, testing, standardized test, alternative, measure, advantage, disadvantage, difference, evaluation.*

**Alternative assessment. Alternatives in assessment.** In the decade of the 1990s, when a number of educators questioned the notion that all people and all skills could be measured by traditional tests, a novel concept emerged that began to be labeled "alternative" assessment. As teachers and students were becoming aware of the shortcomings and drawbacks of standardized tests, "an alternative to standardized testing and all the problems found with such testing" (Huerta-Macías, 1995. p. 8) was proposed [3]. Brown and Hudson (1998) noted that to speak of "alternative assessments" is counterproductive because the term implies something new and different that may be "exempt from the requirements of responsible test construction" (p.657) [1]. They proposed to refer to "alternatives in assessment" instead and aptly summed up the defining characteristics of the various alternatives in assessment that have been commonly used across the profession (TESOL Quarterly article, 1998, pp. 654-655) [8]. According to them, alternatives in assessment require students to perform, create, produce, or do something by using real-world contexts or simulations in order to improve higher-level thinking and problem-solving skills. They are nonintrusive in that

they extend the day-to-day classroom activities and they allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day, while providing educators with required information about both strengths and weaknesses of their learners. Moreover, Alternatives ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring which encourages teachers to open disclosure of standards and rating criteria [2].

**Alternative Assessment and Performance-based Assessment.** Before proceeding with alternative assessment, it is better to understand what is performance-based assessment and differences between two of them. Performance-based assessment, according to Norris et al. (1998), is “as authentic as possible” and “rated by qualified judges” (p. 8) [6]. The criterion of authenticity means that test-takers are engaged in real-world tasks, which in turn usually involve an integration of language skills, and perhaps all four skills in the case of project work.

According to O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (p. 5), the characteristics of performance assessment include providing constructed responses to open-ended tasks requiring the integration of language skills rather than selecting from given options. Tasks are meaningful, engaging and authentic which involve higher-order thinking. Moreover, performance assessment, as alternative assessment, focus on both process and product and depth of a student's mastery is emphasized over breadth [7].

Performance-based assessment needs to be approached with caution. This implies that teachers should, firstly, state the overall goal of the performance and specify the objectives (criteria) of the performance in detail, then, prepare students for performance in stepwise progressions by using a reliable evaluation form, checklist, or rating sheet. Besides they should treat performances as opportunities for giving feedback and, finally, utilize self- and peer-assessments judiciously, if possible.

In sum, performance assessment is not completely synonymous with the concept of alternative assessment. Rather, it is best understood as one of the primary traits of the many available alternatives to assessment.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Performance-based tasks.**

Performance-based tests, unlike standardized tests, provide a more realistic setting for students' performances and offers an opportunity to assess valued skills that cannot be assessed with traditional tests. Moreover, they, mostly, focus on student performance and emphasis on the quality of work. Furthermore. they can be easily aligned with established learning outcomes with their flexible design. Nevertheless, these tasks, also, have disadvantageous points, such as difficulty in evaluating and their cost. The process can be costly in terms of time, effort, materials, facilities, or funds. Apart from that, rating and grading are sometimes more subjective which can cause to inaccurate reflection of student progress and knowledge.

**IV. Significant Differences between Traditional and Alternative Assessments.** It is important to state that alternative assessment markedly different from formal tests. Tests, especially the large - scale standardized tests discussed in the II parts of the article, tend to be one-shot performances that are timed, multiple-choice, Decontextualized, Norm-referenced, and that foster extrinsic motivation. On the other hand, tasks like Portfolios, journals, and self-assessment are open - ended in their time orientation and format. They are contextualized to a curriculum and references to the criteria of that curriculum. More importantly, these tasks are authentic and likely to build inherent motivation.

Table 1. Contrast between Traditional and Authentic Evaluation.

<b>Traditional assessment</b>	<b>Alternative assessment</b>
One-shot, standardized	Continuous, long-term
Timed, multiple choice	Untimed, free-response
Inauthentic, indirect	Authentic, direct
Decontextualized	Contextualized
Scores only	Individual feedback
Norm-referenced score interpretation	Criterion-referenced score interpretation

Focus on "right" answer	Open-ended, creative
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non-interactive	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

Adapted from Brown, 2010

## **V. CONCLUSION.**

Assessment is the process of gathering, interpreting, recording and using information regarding students' performance on a task or test. It can be categorized into two primary types: standard-based and alternative assessment. Each type has its own advantages and disadvantages. A key distinction between them is that standard-based assessment can efficiently place a large number of test-takers onto a norm-referenced scale using pre-made materials in a limited time. On the other hand, alternative assessment is preferable for evaluating a small group of students' language abilities, creativity, or productivity over an extended period using authentic, open-ended tasks that which can possibly encourage intrinsic motivation of them.

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