

ASSESSMENTS IN ELT: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

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Abstract: *Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is not an easy work. Teacher must be familiar with some stages called learning process where at the end of the process contains the evaluation stage through assessment and test. Unfortunately, teachers sometimes get confused through the terminologies of testing, evaluating, and assessing. Teachers do not know what to do and what they have done whether they are assessing their students or they are testing them. This study descriptively investigated the differences and similarities among the three terms and focused on the process of self-assessment by the use of literature review and documentation instrument. It was found that there are some differences and similarities among them, there are also ways of assessments which can be used by the teachers to do the assessment such as checklist or scale.*

Keywords: *TEFL, Evaluation, Assessment, and Tests.*

Abstrak: *Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris sebagai mata pelajaran bahasa asing merupakan sebuah tugas berat bagi guru pengampu mata pelajaran. Seorang guru dituntut untuk menguasai seluruh langkah pembelajaran dan tata cara mengevaluasi hasil belajar melalui penilaian atau tes. Namun, guruseringmengalamikesulitanandalammembedakanevaluasi, penilaian, dan tes. Asumsi mereka ketiga tahap tersebut adalah tahapan yang sama. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mendeskripsikan dan menginvestigasi perbedaan dan persamaan di antara ketiga kegiatan tersebut. Penelitian ini memfokuskan kepada penggunaan penilaian diri sendiri dalam kegiatan belajar. Penelitian ini menggunakan dokumentasi dan kajian pustaka sebagai metode pengumpulan data. Hasil penelitian adalah ditemukannya beberapa perbedaan dan persamaan antara evaluasi, penilaian, dan tes. Serta terdapat beberapa cara dalam menjalankan penilaian terhadap diri sendiri yaitu melalui checklist atau skala.*

Kata kunci: *TEFL, Evaluasi, Penilaian, dan Tes.*

1. BACKGROUND

The successful of teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia requires good preparation and evaluation. The preparation is done at the beginning of the program starting from the curriculum, the teachers, the need assessments of the prospective learners, the instructions, the intended goals, the media, the facilities of schools, and etc. All of them must be well prepared before the program in order to have a good program. In addition, it is believed that having good preparation can also be started by seeing the result of evaluation done from previous program done. Meanwhile, evaluation

is done at the end of the program. An evaluation must absolutely be done in order to know the success of a program. It also covers some steps such as assessment and testing. Then, the target which will be evaluated, assessed, and tested are curriculum, teachers, learners, instructions, achieved goals, media, the school facilities, and etc. In conclusion, teachers or educators cannot avoid the two steps mentioned above if they want to reach their goals from their program.

In addition, Popham (1975:1) said that “human beings have always been placed in situations where it is necessary to determine the value of things.” Then, to determine the value some steps of evaluation, includes the

assessment and testing, are required. For instance, a person can judge someone is beautiful or handsome by having the evaluation and, of course, its process involves assessment and testing steps as well. In professional activities, evaluation is considered as a main point which must be done. Therefore, a teaching program, professionally, covers three main stages namely (1) planning, (2) implementing, and (3) evaluating. Evaluation is used to assess the effectiveness of the implementation. Evaluation should include the evaluation of instructions as well as the evaluation of the learners' performance. Information from the evaluation of instruction should be used to revise the instruction in order to make it more efficient, effective, and appealing. In short, Human cannot be apart from evaluation, assessment, and testing phase in life.

Unfortunately, teachers or educators cannot really distinguish the term of evaluation, assessment and testing well. They think that those three words can be interchangeably used and they have slightly the same functions, roles, and steps. In fact, they are different as Burhan (2009) suggested that evaluation, assessment, and testing are different on functions and roles they possessed but, however, they are the same on purposes. In addition, it can be simply stated and concluded that evaluation is a broadest scope of giving values of something and covers all the stages meanwhile assessment does not cover all stages. It only focuses on the data gathering and judging the data collected. The last is testing which only covers until data gathering without any judgments given. However, even though assessment and testing only cover some stages

but assessments and testing are really essential to be done.

For the evaluation process on the stage of assessment, some of language teaching experts have proposed the use of self-assessment in language classroom context in order to be able to collect the information about the self-learner. They believed that self – assessment is really beneficial to be done since it provides the teacher with data they need and persuade the students to be more active and aware about themselves. Unluckily, again, this self – assessment is still unrecognized by teachers or educators. Teachers do not do this self – assessment yet because they do not know how to apply it in practice. It is simply because of the teachers' knowledge about assessment, again they think if they have done the evaluation they have also done assessment.

Because these three terms often confuse teachers or educators, as mostly available assessors for classroom activities, on how assessment theory can be applied in classroom context. Therefore, this paper will firstly distinguish the three terms. Then, this paper will only focus on the assessment process especially the use of self – assessment for English language teaching since experts had proposed this kind of assessment for classroom context. To provide all the answers of the problems, the writer will have some sub titles which will be discussed, first, the differences among the three popular terms (evaluation, assessment, and testing); second, the previous assessment which had been done by the linguists; third, the prospective application of assessment techniques found in theory to its

classroom context; and, fourth, the self – assessment.

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 The Three Terms Differences

As it has been mentioned before, the three terms here are evaluation, assessment, and testing. Those three words are so closely related that teachers might use them interchangeably or be confused. But, actually, they are lightly different.

Evaluation is a process which determines the extent to which objectives have been achieved (Cross, 1973:5) as cited in Sukardi (2009:1). Furthermore, Tenbrink as cited in Burhan (2009: 90) defines evaluation as the process of obtaining information and using it to form judgments which in turn are to be used in decision making. By seeing those two experts definition, the writer assumes that evaluation is set as the broadest scope which covers five stages. They are (1) preparing, (2) collecting the data, (3) making judgments, (4) making decisions, and (5) reporting. Therefore, if teachers want to evaluate their programs, it means that they must do the whole stages in order to have good report. Evaluation has some functions if we relate it into education. They are as follows:

- 1) As a tool to know whether the students have mastered the knowledge, values, and skills given by the teachers.
- 2) To know the low aspects of the learners in classroom activities.

- 3) To know the students' achievement.
- 4) As the feedback for teachers from the students.
- 5) As a tool to know the students' development.
- 6) As students' achievement report to the students' parents.

Assessment, then, is a part of evaluation. As it is stated in Sukardi (2009:2) that evaluation is a process of making an assessment of a student's growth. In addition, Burhan (2009: 90) gives more explanation that assessment does not include decision – making and reporting. It focuses mainly on data gathering and placing a value on something. And assessment seems to cover stages 1, 2, and 3 of the evaluation process. There are some techniques to measure the abilities and acquired skills of the learners. Then, the selection of the technique or several techniques depends on (1) the purpose of the assessment, (2) the time and the resources, and (3) the age and the ability of the learners. For example, when the purpose of assessment is to determine whether learners have achieved learning goals, the learners should be evaluated in terms of how nearly they achieve those instructional goals rather than how they “stack up” against their fellow students.

The techniques for assessment can be classified as follows: (1) written assessment, (2) practical assessment, (3) oral assessment, (4) aural assessment, (5) learner questionnaires, and (6) coursework (including projects and fieldwork). Assessment can be done by teachers, learners, and those who can provide some information needed. Deane and McNamara in Faltis as cited in Burhan (2009) recommend self – assessment activities which help develop the

learner's autonomy to be more students centered. Not only those people who had proposed the used of self – assessment in education field. There are some experts had also proposed this assessment such as Liang, Krause, and Strong. It proved that the use of self-assessment is really essential and helping in educational context. Unfortunately, the teachers of Indonesian only know the theories without knowing how to implement self – assessment to their students. Therefore, the writer tries to discuss the term self – assessment and on how it is applied in classroom context.

The last term is testing. It is defined as the narrowest in scope. It is one of the techniques for collecting the data or scores. It can be used with other techniques such as observations and interviews. It does not deal with the making of judgments. Testing are also classified into some parts such as direct testing, indirect testing, discrete point testing, integrative testing, norm-referenced testing, criterion-referenced testing, objective testing, subjective testing, and communicative language testing.

In short, if teachers do the preparation and collect the data needed from the students, they are doing the testing phase. Then, if they continue it by making judgment based on the data collected, therefore, it is called assessment. At last, teachers will completely do all the evaluation process if they have passed the preparation until making judgment phase and they continue it by making decision and reporting the result of the students. To be drawn in a figure evaluation, assessment, and testing can be clearly seen in this following figure.

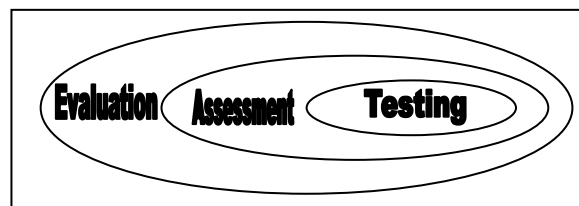


Figure 1. Assessment, Evaluation, and Testing

2.2 Assesment Done Previously

There are, actually, some assessments have been done in our teaching and learning process even it is consciously or subconsciously done. For example, the teacher does mid semester test then it is one of assessments technique. The teachers try to assess their students after few times learning process, they try to know whether the students have achieved what are stated before the programs as their learning goals.

Some experts are also giving their supporting findings toward the assessment done in classroom context. Therefore, most of them wrote articles about how to use assessment to classroom context. Research done in 1960s and 1970s compared self – assessments with predictors of academic achievement, such as Scholastic Aptitude Test and class grades. It is reported that self – assessments seemed to predict academic achievement of the doers. For example, like what Strong and Krause exposed on their paper that there were significant correlation between self – assessment and instructors' judgment and formal tests. in addition, it was also found that there is positive correlations between the results on a self-assessment instrument and a standardized English proficiency exam.

From all the results found about self-assessment, all results give us positive views of self – assessment done. Therefore, I really suggested that this kind of activity must be done soon. However, assessment is not merely about self – assessment, there are some assessments which are lightly different from self – assessment. For instance, learner – directed assessment, this assessment is also aimed to see the students’ abilities and help the students know themselves well in order to have better result and achievement in their lesson. Some experts or linguists are also supporting this assessment such as Ekbatani, Gottlieb, Ekbatani, and Pierson (2000).

2.3 The Prospective Application of Assessment Techniques Found In Theory To Its Classroom Context

To implement assessment in classroom, teacher can use two approaches and some techniques which are suggested by Firth and Macintosh (1984:10) as cited in Burhan (2009). The approaches used can be divided into Pragmatic Approach and Predetermined Approach. The pragmatic approach is concerned with the teaching and learning which is really applied in classroom and with the situations of the class. It is the assessment for what happen to the classroom during the teaching and learning program. It is done to discriminate between the learners and the analysis of the result is intended to ensure that the assessment is well – balanced. The choice of the assessment techniques depends on the opportunities presented by unexpected

outcomes. And the final grading is postponed until all result of assessment can be properly balanced and adjusted. Meanwhile, predetermined approach is different from the pragmatic approach. Predetermined assessment focuses on the plan set up before. In this approach, the objectives are set up the outset of the instruction and some criteria are formulated to determine the level of mastery. Pretesting and post testing of assessment material are done to ensure the teachers that it is appropriate to the learners and relevant to the subject being taught and to ensure the teachers that the results are taken into account. The teachers better use those two approaches of assessments since the teachers can control the beginning and the end of the program when they do the predetermined approach and then, they can control the running of the program and check the situation when they use pragmatic approach.

There is considerable range of techniques to measure the abilities and acquired skills of the learners. The selection of the technique or several techniques depends on some factors. They are (1) the purpose of the assessment, (2) the time and resources, and (3) the age and ability of the learners. For more explanation, the teacher should match the technique of assessing their students based on their purpose if they want to assess their students’ speaking achievement so it is really impossible and inappropriate for the teacher to use written assessment. In addition, before implementing the assessment to the students the teacher must see the available time to assess their students whether the time is enough or not and the teacher must be aware of the resources as their material in making their

assessments instruments. The last is the age and ability of the students. Assessing means that not burdening the students so the teacher must arrange the assessment activity wisely in order not to make the students feel burden.

Furthermore, there are several techniques can be applied in doing assessment. (1) written assessment, (2) practical assessment, (3) oral assessment, (4) aural assessment, (5) learner questionnaire, and (5) coursework (including projects and fieldwork). Assessment can be done by teachers, learners, and those who can provide some information needed (Burhan: 2009). Based on this statement, it means that students can assess themselves which is usually called self – assessment. Not only it is clearly seen that Deane and McNamara recommended self – assessment activities which help develop the learners’ autonomy to be more students centered.

All approaches and techniques mentioned above can be used based on the teachers, students, and information collector need. Therefore, it is really suggested for the assessor to know their objectives or purposes first before doing the assessment.

2.4 Self – Assessment

It is still questioned that how could learners who are still in the process of acquisition, especially the early processes, be capable of rendering an accurate assessment of their own performance. However, self – assessment, actually, derives its theoretical justification from a number of well-established principles of second language acquisition. The principle of autonomy stands out as one of the

primary foundation stones of successful learning. This assessment can develop the ability of setting own goals both within and beyond the structure of a classroom curriculum. As Hirvela and Pierson (2000) suggested that

“assessment is best viewed not only as a means of measuring, at a particular point in time, what students know or can do, but also as the process of allowing them to provide a portrait of their own learning through some form of self – assessment.”

There are some advantages from doing self – assessment. As Strong – Krause stated that students should be able to respond to questions about their abilities in language using all their experience with the language, whereas traditional exams simply test a small sample of their language. Another advantage is less time is involved in completing a self – assessment instrument than with traditional tests. The last is self – assessment involves the students more in making decisions about their education, which increases their responsibility for their own learning. Just like Hirvela and Pierson (2000) stated that this path of assessment, self – assessment requires two core beliefs: that learners are capable of meaningfully measuring their own learning, and that a viable form of self – assessment exists.

Table 1. Example of Self-Assessment Checklist

Ability	Learner	Teacher
Read and understand texts on a travel theme.		
Listen and understand passages on a travel theme.		
Talk about past and future trips or holidays.		
Write an itinerary for an upcoming vacation.		

Table 2. Example of Self-Assessment Scale

I understand the language as well as a native speaker.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand most of what is said in the language even when spoken by native speakers, but have difficulty in understanding dialects and slang. It is also difficult for me to understand speech in unfavorable conditions (i.e. through bad loudspeakers outdoors etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
I can follow and understand the essential points concerning every day and general things when spoken normally and clearly, but do not understand native speakers if they speak very quickly or use slang or dialect.	1	2	3	4	5
I do not understand the language at all.	1	2	3	4	5

As Liang (2006) states about the advantages of self – assessment into six advantages: (1) Self - assessment directly involves learner in their own destiny, (2) Self - assessment promotes learner autonomy and self – sufficiency in language learning, (3) Self - assessment trains learners to evaluate their own language performance accurately, see the gap in their learning, and initiate self – repair to redirect their learning toward the learning goal, (4) Self – assessment also increases the learners’ awareness of the learning process and stimulates them to consider course content and assessment

critically, (5) Self – assessment increases learners’ knowledge of their learning goals and their learning needs, and thus enhances their motivation and goal orientation, and (6) Self – assessment reduces the teacher’ workload.

Unfortunately, even it has been mentioned many advantages of self – assessment. Teachers are still questioning on how they can apply self – assessment in classroom context. Self – assessment is, actually, simply as the assessment process of checking one’s own performance on language learning task after it has been completed or checking one’s own success in using a language. Therefore, all efforts or techniques can be done to assess, but still focus for the end purpose. Therefore, self – assessment can be done in many forms, some of them are these below.

Firstly, as Hirvela and Pierson (2000) suggested that at the outset, teachers can ask the students to write or compose their own portfolios with every topic. The topic is based on the teachers need to see or know from the students. For instance, students can be asked to compare and contrast the characters after they read stories and get the treatment from the teacher to know the students language proficiency, and not only teachers know the result but also the students. Because in a portfolio writing students are asked to write their feeling, learning process and their prior knowledge related to the writing. Then, the teacher and also learners can see the reflection of portfolios done. By seeing the reflection they can examine the learning process, take responsibility for their own learning, see “gaps” in their learning, determine strategies that supported their learning, celebrate risk taking and inquiry,

set goals for future experiences, and see changes and development over time.

Secondly, teachers can use student progress card. As Oscarsson (1984) describes student progress cards as simple self-assessment tools which have been used in a variety of educational settings around the world. Quite simply, student progress cards define series of short-term functional goals and group these together in graded blocks at various levels of difficulty. Both students and teachers can participate in this activity. The student can tick off (in the learner column) each language skill or activity that he/she is sure of performing successfully. The teacher can later tick off (in the teacher column) the activity once the learner has mastered it. A sample activity can be seen in Table 1.

Another way of self – assessment is using Rating Scales, Check lists and Questionnaires. These kinds of ways are opposed by (Coombe 1992; Oscarsson 1984). These three techniques have been used as a means where learners could rate their perceived general language proficiency or ability level. For example, the students want to assess their listening ability. To complete the activity, the learner indicates his estimated ability to cope with situations by giving the scores as Likert Scales Technique.

The next techniques which can be used are almost the same as the techniques which are proposed by Hirvela and Pierson. The techniques are Learner Diaries and Dialog Journals. Learner diaries and dialog journals have been proposed as one way of systematizing self-assessment for students. Learners should be encouraged to write about what they learned, their perceived level of

mastery over the course content, and what they plan to do with their acquired skills. The last technique is videotape. Video can be exploited in a number of ways to encourage self-assessment in the classroom. For example, students can be videotaped or they can videotape each other and then assess their language skills. An obvious advantage to the use of video in self-assessment is that students can assess not only their communicative or language skills but their paralinguistic (i.e. body language) skills as well. Finally, all the procedures and techniques above can be best done in classroom context based on the teacher and student need.

3. CONCLUSION

From all explanation above, it can be concluded that: (1) evaluation, assessment and testing are different but however they are integrated. (2) assessment is done by the aim of knowing the achievement of learners in a program by giving them test. And (3) self – assessment is the way of measuring and knowing one's capacity of language they have learned in a teaching program. Then, teaching program is very essential program for the human life. Therefore, it should be well managed and well evaluated. One of the ways for managing and evaluating it is by doing the assessment. In this case, self – assessment is the one which is really suggested to be done since it possesses many advantages. Therefore, teachers are really suggested to search and understand on how it is implemented in classroom context. However, teacher must be able to figure that evaluation is

different from assessment and testing. So, the teacher can cope all the stages of evaluation to have better program not stop until testing and assessment process only.

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