

REINFORCING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TO PROMOTE AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH YOUNG LEARNERS' CLASSROOM

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Abstract: This paper discusses the process of alternative assessment in English young learners' classroom. As regard with the assessment, it is a process which cannot be separated from the process of teaching learning. It is a fact that in Indonesia teacher usually assesses learners by focusing on summative test – also called as traditional test- a test for assessing learners after they accomplish the course. This also happens to English young learners' classroom. Young learners should be encouraged also to do formative assessment to see not only the result, but also the process of learning English. Alternative assessment consists of a method of finding out what a student knows or can do; it is intended to show growth and inform instruction, and it is an alternative to traditional forms of testing, namely multiple-choice tests . This paper describes some theories (library research) which underpin the assessment as integral part of teaching; it also presents the kinds of alternative assessment that can be utilized by teacher in the teaching learning process to promote authentic assessment for young learners .

Key words: *alternative assessment, authentic assessment, English young learners' classroom*

The term of “assessment” is very crucial in the teaching learning process. It is a part of the instructional. We should think how to create the assessment to conduct during the learning process. It is different from the testing which focuses on how the students will be assessed at the end of the course to see whether they have comprehended the lesson or not. This is in line with Pinter (2009, p.131) who perceives assessment as “the process of data analysis that teachers use to get evidence about their

learners' performance and progress in English.”

Assessment can be conducted in two ways – summative and formative assessments. When teachers focus on the test or doing some multiple choice items for students, it can be namely as summative. In other words, when teachers set out some exercises after the teaching learning process such as giving students a chance to write a short paragraph and make it into a journal day by day, it can be called as formative assessment. Therefore, this

also regards to the terms of traditional and alternative assessments.

Providing assessment in English young learners' classroom needs consideration to judge dealing with the learners' characteristics specifically. It will be closely related to the age, their maturity, experience, and cognitive, linguistic, and literacy development which can be considered to assess them carefully either individually or with other students (Shin and Crandall, 2014). Hasselgren (2000) in Shin and Crandall (2014, p.245) also notes that in assessing young learners, one has to remember that "they have a particular need and capacity for play, fantasy, and fun; they have a relatively short attention span; [and] they are at a stage when daring to use their language is vital, and any sense of 'failure' could be particularly detrimental." It means, English teachers to young learners should understand how to select the appropriate methods to assess young learners.

This paper discusses how alternative assessment (formative assessment) can reinforce the authentic assessment in English young learners' classroom. What methods can be used by teacher during instructional process and how they are used with particular objectives of learning. Some basic principles of EYL and assessment will be described in some parts of this paper.

ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS' CLASSROOM

There are some theories underline how young learners or children learn dealing with their characteristics. They are very unique and of course different from adults. When they learn they need more contextual and authentic activities

which can support their successful in learning especially learning language.

Regarding to the characteristics of young learners, Pinter (2006, p.2) notes that children learn at their own speed; they change quickly and develop new skills and abilities in spurts. Shin and Crandall (2014, p.25) also believe that children are energetic and physically active; spontaneous and not afraid to speak out or participate; curious and receptive to new ideas; imaginative and enjoy make-believe; easily distracted and have short attention spans; egocentric and relate new ideas to themselves; social and are learning to relate to others. When learning language, children actively try to construct meaning and need space for language growth (Cameron, 2001). Based on these theories, it can be concluded that young learners or children have their own unique characteristics which can be utilized by teachers to provide the activities to reach the goals of learning English.

There are many activities that can be conducted by teachers in teaching English to young learners in terms of their characteristics. The first thing that should be considered is the appropriate material and methods. Teachers can accommodate learners who are very active in the classroom through TPR (Total Physical Response) method which is very interesting. TPR allows learners to move or to be active in the classroom. Teachers can ask learners to do activities through such commands as "sit down", "stand up" or "touch your knees". Teachers can also use games, such as "Talking and Writing Box" game in which the learners can choose some vocabularies in the box which they like to talk about and write. After that, they can share what they have

written in front of their classmates. This activity can encourage their writing and speaking skills. In addition, to support learners' reading activity, teachers can create a print-rich environment. For example, providing a bulletin board with English language labels such as "Our Work", word lists, stories, and posters. For reading activity, young learners can be presented with the predictable stories and pattern books which contain repetitive phrases and predictable language. Predictable storybooks, also called pattern books, contain illustrations that help to clarify or support the word, sentence, or pattern that is repeated in the text (Optiz, 1995 in Linse, 2005).

Next, teachers of English who teach young learners' classroom can use several techniques to teach vocabulary. The activities that can be conducted to teach vocabulary are as follows (Linse, 2005): connecting vocabulary to young learner's lives through personalization, word for the day, categories, Scavenger Hunt, What's missing? Mystery Words, Concentration, and the last is Vocabulary Basket. Teachers can also use pictures and flash cards when teaching vocabulary to young learners. Songs are believed to be able to increase learners' vocabulary mastery.

The activities done by students and provided by teachers can give benefit to students because they really do what they need based on their characteristics. It will not be harmful also when young learners learn English as a foreign language because teachers do understand what they should give or provide to their learners.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT AS AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Alternative assessment can reinforce authentic assessment. Alternative assessment consists of any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is an alternative to traditional forms of testing, namely multiple-choice tests (Stiggins, 1991 in O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). It is also more authentic since it is based on activities that represent classroom and real-life settings (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Traditional and alternative assessments have different purposes. Traditional assessment can take the form of tests or quizzes by filling in the blank, multiple-choice items, matching, and true-false questions, sometimes in standardized tests that measure whether students have met specific objectives or outcomes, and other times created by the teacher (Saricoban & Kuntas, 2010 in Shin & Crandall, 2014, p.257). In addition, to these traditional forms of assessment, there are a number of "alternative" or performance assessments that require the learner to apply the knowledge, skills, and strategies used in learning (Bailey, 1998; O'Malley and Pierce, 1996; Pucket & Black, 2000; Shabaan, 2005 in Shin & Crandall, 2014, p.257).

Brown and Hudson (1998) in Brown (2004, p.252) summed up alternatives in assessments require students to perform, create, produce, or do something; use real-world contexts or simulations; are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities; allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day; use

tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities; focus on processes as well as products; tap into higher-level thinking and problem solving skills; provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students; are multiculturally sensitive when properly administered; ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment; encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria; and call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles. This means that alternative assessment can be meaningful and help teachers to provide their learners to have other way to be assessed. Using alternatives in assessment can make learners have a chance to expose their competence and performance in learning. Teachers also can take benefits from this kind of assessment such as knowing what their learners cannot do during the process of learning. There will be also a good feedback or positive washback rather than a score after a test - traditional testing.

To support authentic assessment, teachers should know some important points of this term including the definition of it. Authentic assessment can be defined as an assessment which can reflect students' learning, achievement, motivation and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). There are three kinds of authentic assessment including performance assessment, portfolios and student-self assessment.

Performance assessment consists of any form assessment in which the student constructs a response orally or in writing (Feuer & Fulton 1993; Herman, Aschbacher, &

Winters 1992 in O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). The examples of performance assessment are oral reports, writing samples, individual or group projects, exhibitions, and demonstration. This kind of assessment can give learners good tasks to increase their performance dealing with their language learning. They can perform their abilities and skills in the form of spoken and written. They will be motivated to speak up and write well because their thinking skills are also demanded highly. Then the feedback will be also given by teacher to make them do better in classroom activities.

Portfolio assessment is a systematic collection of student work that is analyzed to show progress over time with regard to instructional objectives (Valencia, 1991 in O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). In line with this, Genesee and Upshur (1996, in Brown, 2004, p.256) state that a portfolio is "a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates ... their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas." The examples of portfolio task are writing samples, reading log/journal, drawings, audio or videotapes, and/or teacher and student comments on progress made by the students. Portfolios can give advantages of engaging learners in gaining their achievements. Brown (2004, p.257) argues that portfolios foster intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and ownership; promote student-teacher interaction with the teacher as facilitator; individualize tangible evidence of a student's work; facilitate critical thinking, self-assessment, and revision process; offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers, and permit assessment of multiple dimensions of language learning. This indicates that portfolio is really

appropriate for learners when we as teachers want to have their progress during instructional process. Critical thinking of students can be gained by this kind of tasks. Teachers can give written or oral feedback of what learners have done.

Self-assessment can be conducted in classroom. Students can monitor themselves dealing with what they have learned. They can be also motivated and use strategy to learn after they know what they get. Student self-assessment can promote their autonomy learning because they know what are their weaknesses and strengths. O'Malley and Pierce (1996, p.5) believe "Self-assessment promotes direct involvement in learning and the integration of cognitive abilities with motivation and attitude toward learning." It is clear that self-assessment can give learners good motivation to put themselves in right position as a learner and construct them to be autonomous learners. Therefore, they can reach successful learning easily as stated by Brown (2004, p.270),

Self-assessment 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. The ability to set out one's own goals both within and beyond the structure of a classroom curriculum, to pursue them without the presence of an external prod, and to independently monitor that pursuit are all keys to success.

This leads that self-assessment gives a benefit for learners when they reflect what they do in the learning process.

Based on those explanations, it can be concluded that alternative

assessment can be formed to provide the authentic assessment which are possible to do in the instructional process. Student-teacher interaction can occur in the assessment which makes it more varied. The assessment will be authentic then can be a base for teachers to judge whether their students have reached parts of the goals/objectives of learning.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT IN ENGLISH YOUNG LEARNERS' CLASSROOM

There are number of issues of assessing young learners that make it sound complex. Because of their unique characteristics, teachers who want to assess their students should focus and think in what appropriate aspects and kinds of assessment should be given to their students. Shin and Crandall (2014, p.281) say, "These include (1) their age and overall development; (2) the degree of focus on oral skills in the classroom; (3) the types of activities used in teaching and learning; (4) the goals of the program; and (5) the approach to teaching and learning." So, it will be very important for English teacher to young learners that should choose what is suitable for assessing young learners in English classroom.

Shin and Crandall (2014) propose eight alternative assessments can be conducted by English teachers: (1) observations; (2) conferences and oral interviews; (3) story or text retellings; (4) writing samples; (5) projects; (6) portfolios; (7) other performances; (8) self-assessments.

As described in the previous section of this paper, there are generally three kinds of alternative assessments (performance assessment,

portfolio assessment and self-assessment). The following section discusses what Shin and Crandall (2014) state about the eight alternative assessments.

First, it is observation. In this activity of assessment, students will have the activity or tasks such as giving a oral report individually or in group. Teachers can observe what the students do and say, then after finishing their work, teachers can give comments as feedback dealing with the strengths and weaknesses. Besides that, students can have many activities dealing with the four language skills. Here, as teacher can utilize the activity to be observed based on their students know and how they need to complete the certain task. This is in line with what Gordon states (2007, pp. 208-209 in Shin & Crandall, 2014, p.259),

Such observations are helpful when you are interested in finding out whether your students have the know-how needed to complete a certain task or whether they can help themselves while dealing with the challenges posed by a language learning activity or to see if they have the strategic competence essential for completing certain tasks. By observing how your students resolve the challenges presented by the acts of speaking, reading, or writing in a second language, you can learn the extent of their students' strategic competence and ascertain what type of help would benefit language learners

Dealing with conferences and oral interviews, in this process, especially during writing conferences, teachers can ask students with simple questions because of their limited English as young learners. It can be in a simple form of questions such as “Why did you choose this book?” or

“Can you tell me about the part you really like?” These questions will provide information on a child's oral language development which focuses on listening and speaking.

In telling a story or text retellings, students can be asked to retell the story or the text given. They will tell the content of the story orally or written. In this assessment, students will be assessed based on the major events, selected details or the main ideas (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Teachers or other students can ask probe questions about the text.

Other assessment which is also important to do to young learners is writing samples. Students can be asked to write a range of text. These writing samples can be assessed and placed in a student's portfolio (Shin & Crandall, 2014). So, in this task, students will expose their language competence dealing with writing skills.

Regarding with young learners who are very active, projects can be one of the ways to assess them. In doing projects, students are demanded to fulfill a kind of tasks which concern on creating drawing, posters, student books, charts that can be undertaken individually or in groups. Collaborative projects with carefully defined roles can also provide opportunities for learners at different levels to demonstrate their English language and other skills such as drawing or acting (Pinter, 2006). To complete summative and formative assessments, teachers can use portfolio for young learners. They can include documents containing the students work such as journal, drawings, writings, posters, etc. Portfolio can provide a full representation of a student's language abilities. Some programs also pass students' portfolios

on to the teacher of the next level, providing valuable information to the new teacher on each student's progress (Shin & Crandall, 2014). These assessments will be very valuable for developing the instructional process not only for the students' side but also for teacher side.

Other performances such as role play, oral reports, and demonstrations also offer opportunities to gauge learners' speaking proficiency. Students can be asked to play the part of a character in a story, give a brief report of their or their group's project, or demonstrate something they know how to do. These can also be audio taped or videotaped to preserve their performance. The audiotapes or videotapes can be part of the students' overall portfolios (Shin & Crandall, 2014).

In conducting self-assessment, young learners need help from older young learners. This happens because learners younger than 8 years old are not likely to be able to reflect on their performance, or if they do, they are likely to be overly optimistic about their own learning, but their ability to self-reflect and self-assess improves around age 8 (Butler & Lee, 2010; Paris & Newman, 1990 in Shin & Crandall, 2014). Pinter (2006) also believes that self-assessment encourages students to assess themselves as an integral part of a learner-centred approach. It means that children are asked to think about their own performances and achievements on a regular basis. It can work well when it is established well with certain well-known tasks and situations.

CONCLUSION

In the case of teaching English to young learners, traditional and alternative assessments should be balanced. Teachers cannot only be concerned with score as the product of traditional assessment, but they can also utilize the alternative assessment for enhancing and reinforcing the authentic assessment which gives many benefits for the improvement of instructional process to young learners. Having young learners with the various tasks of assessment can encourage them to expose their successful language learning. Without having any doubt, teachers of English to young learners should believe that in addition to traditional assessment, alternative assessment can be chosen as a way to see the progress of their learners.

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