

## A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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### *Abstract*

*A performance assessment is one which entails learners to show that they have mastered specific skills and competencies by performing or producing something. Performance-based assessment in language learning raises from the observation that mastering the grammar and lexicon of a language is not adequate for using a language to attain ends in social situations. The setting of language use is observed in more complex and realistic than discrete skills assessments and require the integration of social knowledge of the formal elements of language. To address the issues of performance assessment in language learning, this paper will analyze the application of performance-based assessment in terms of its link and relationship in language learning.*

*Keywords: Performance-based Assessment, Language Learning*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the period of the last ten years, the concept of communicative language teaching in students' language competency in their real-world activities has existed in language learning. As the major aim in language learning has changed from teacher-centered to student-centered, there is an urgent need to assess students' language knowledge appropriately in order to help students achieve their target. Because of this reason, the performance-based assessment has become more popular to assess students' performance in language learning. The meaning of performance assessment itself is assessing students' proficiency and understanding directly. Learners can build the response, product designing, or even demonstrate the knowledge in language capacity that they can perform. Messick (1994) maintains that performance assessment is intensively used in the teaching and learning process because it reflects the authentic situation or material of the test and provides educational competency. Moreover, the data describes how performance assessment makes it easier for students to show their language proficiency

In contrast, the practice of assessment can be out of the standard development and can challenge the successful instructional process because the power of the wash back effect is plenty strong, particularly in high-stakes level. Therefore, the correlation between learning theory and assessment practice are striving for teaching and learning activities (James, 2006). Moreover, the lack of performance assessments literature has become a problem for finding a wide range of information, but there is evidence provided on the advantages and effectiveness for students' performance (Abedi, 2010). To address the issues of performance assessment in language learning, this paper will analyze the application of performance-based assessment in terms of its link and relationships in language learning.

### **2. PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING: LINKS AND RELATIONSHIP**

*The reason that performance-based assessment was chosen in language learning Heilig (in Darling-Hammond, 2008) found widespread exclusion of English learners from testing on a high – stakes accountability environment , both through mechanism that rendered them “ missing” on testing day and through policies and practices that pushed older student out of school entirely. When learners of language have been excluded from grade categorically in*

order to inflate a schools' scores in high- stakes assessment appropriately, so that students' achievement and progression will be misrepresented in the standard barometer that has been set on the school (Abedi, 2010). Despite determining young learners' conceptual knowledge by using multiple choices is useful, but the actual performance assessment may be more suitable in any condition (Ayala, Shavelson, 2001). Also, Miller and Linn (2000) offered some reasons for doing performance assessment compared to standard testing. It was considering the unintentional effect that causes negative implication to the measurement, when it represents the limitation of the test leading to the curriculum and teaching process. To be clearer, the test-takers in performance-based assessment use the language related to the real-life conversation, written skill, and open- ended response, performance integrated with other skills area, working together behavior, and communicating tasks. (Brown and Abeywickrama, 2010).

### **3. PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

#### **1. For the student**

Performance-based assessments are greatly involving for learners in that they associate their knowledge capacity with the process which can be used in the real-life situation. As Messick (1994, p.15) maintains:

If assessment itself is to be worthwhile educational experience serving to motivate and direct learning, then the problems and tasks posed should be meaningful to the students. That is, not only students know what is being assessed, but the criteria and standards of what constitutes good performance should be clear to the in terms of both how the performance is to be scored and what steps might be taken or what directions moved in to improve performance.

Furthermore, Darling – Hammond (2004) state that by measuring students learning and improving it is not about the accountability. In addition, Abedi (2010) suggested that performance assessment can help fill the gap both language learners' ability and national standardized test, for the reason that not only engaging students to demonstrate their language knowledge and capacity and but also relate deeply information on students' achievement in academic demands. So far, Brown & Abeywickrama, (2010) explain that performance-based assessment is testing students' performance directly and accurately as they demonstrate the real-life tasks situation. My point of view is that, in language learning, the student needs to communicate or work in groups to avoid passiveness in class and to improve many fields of language learning, for instance the four fundamental skills in learning language such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading. As Kind (1999) stated that the performance – based assessment requires students to incorporate information in many areas.

#### **2. For teacher**

For teaching a subject in a classroom, by assessing students' behavior through performance-based assessment more easily compare to general concept. Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman (1998) they are suggesting that collaborative work in performance-based assessment can improve teachers' knowledge in the instructional process in the classroom. Also, Linn (1991) specifies that the tests are emphasizing the solving of the problem in the teaching process and test has not limitation to the answer, however, there could be several ways to solve the problem is fundamentally aspect of good teaching process. When applying performance- based assessments, teachers can design their evaluative criteria clearly in advance to serve as a focus for both instruction and evaluation and stipulate the feedback regularly to the learners in term of criteria standard and the possibility for learners to look over their work toward the feedback.

3. For school

Advocating for the reform of assessment continuously will create the meaning of performance-based assessment as a degree for the educational restructuring (Khattri et al, 1998). Relating to the reform in performance assessment, Smith and O'Day (1990, p.12) stated that:

A major reform in the assessment system is critical to education. Assessment instruments are not just passive components of educational system; substantial experience indicates that, under the right condition they can influence as well as assess teaching.

Moreover, Khattri (1998, p.25) explained that:

Proponents also assert that if performance assessment is effectively implemented at the school, district, or state level, it can change curriculum as well as teachers', students', and the community's attitudes toward education. An innovative and far-sighted leadership and a friendly political climate appear to play pivotal roles in the effective implementation of new forms of assessment.

Despite the fact that school may see themselves as vulnerable to do much to deal with state and the constituency order, implementing and developing performance – based assessment at school could be easily compare to state and region levels, it seems in the school, the change on the small scale can be organizing easier.

#### 4. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Performance- based assessment has certainly its strengths and weaknesses. There are some of positive sides of performance – based assessment which are performance assessment is appropriate to assess the knowledge content, incorporation between subject areas, lasting competence of learning in term of making decision effectively in cooperation and communication ( Shepard, 1989) , provides a better chance for the teachers to identify students' understanding through the concepts that have given during instructional activities ( Mauch, 2005), improve students' achievement ( Goals, 2000), involving learners to integrate the information from wide range aspects of learning language, and the tests are presenting real-life situation ( Kind, 1999). In addition, implementing performance-based assessment should not require modification setting in the classroom that there exists the possibility of progressing students to the point where these assessments would be effective and useful. Kind (1999) stated that it make sense to use assessments which are comparable to those used in international comparison. Ensuring the assessment standards are met, the assessor should be considering students' understanding and apply those concepts to real situations.

Moreover, performance-based assessment can offer the academic needs information deeply and design the situation that helps students to stimulate their activities cognitively. It has been believed that performance-based assessment is of great value for language learning and can be used by school and individual teachers to assess students and curriculum, although some experts have an opposite opinion about implementing performance assessment in language learning. Despite the above strengths, performance-based assessment has been criticized for some reasons which are the difficulties of performance assessment (Wiggins, 1993; Wolf *et al* 1991) were not distinctive for testing language, motivations, authenticity, and designing matter and application are can be easily find in many discussions in educational measurement more widely, the test is not reflecting the core concept on the tasks of instructional process that represent accurately in classroom (Haertel, 1990; Shulman 1987), consisting of the incorporate of multiple knowledge and skill strands, the tasks construct are not elicit perform the desire of language knowledge, which evaluate performance aspects, incorporate multiple tasks information, also the type of inference to depict about students. Importantly, create task situations that likely fundamental for students or interest competence is not simply enough (Messick, 1994). The above scholars' views seem dissimilar because they used distinct point of views in determining what performance – based assessment is. However,

there is a common thread among the views which signifies that performance- based assessment concerns with language learning.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to critique and analyze the performance –based assessment in language learning. The analysis found that performance based assessment is a better way to achieve and it can involve students in learning language to demonstrate their knowledge comprehensively. The finding suggest that the performance-based assessment inquiry positively contributes to language learning in many ways, including its validity, reliability, teacher- students interaction, tests design and developing the tasks materials. However, this is not to say that this study has no limitation. One of which is that the discussion only focused on the validity, reliability, link and relationship between language learning and performance-based assessment. Therefore, this essay has thrown up these issues in need of further investigation.

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