In the name of God

Alternative assessment


- Defining alternative assessment
- Factors having contributed to alternative assessment
- Features of alternative assessment
- Types of alternative assessment
- Problems with alternative assessment
Defining alternative assessment

A. An alternative to traditional testing
B. Continuous classroom assessment
C. Accommodations for students with special needs
D. Fairness and equity: individual diversity
Alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the educational setting.
Contributors to alternative assessment

I. At conceptual and paradigmatic level: rooted in and related to
   A. Authenticity
   B. Social constructivism and sociocultural theory
   C. Assessment culture
      1. Processes of learning
      2. Unique performance of individuals
      3. Active role played by learners in assessment procedures
      4. Nature of outcomes as more detailed and thickly described
II. At theoretical or strategic level
A. Criticisms leveled at standardized testing
   1. Unfamiliarity with format and language of the test—test taking strategies than concepts
   2. Norming on a population unlike the one being tested
   3. Cultural and linguistic bias
   4. Anxiety-creating nature of testing settings
   5. Construct-irrelevant variance (extraneous factors)
B. Changing nature of educational goals
C. Increasing importance of the relationship between assessment and teaching and learning
D. Critical perspectives
Characteristics of alternative assessment

A. Is informal
B. Is nonintrusive to the classroom
C. Reflects the curriculum implemented in the classroom
D. Provides information on the strengths and weaknesses of each student
E. Offers a menu of possibilities to measure students' abilities
F. Is multiculturally sensitive and free of bias and norming
G. Presents a holistic view of language and an integrative view of learning
H. Relates to developmental appropriateness
I. Focuses on both processes and products
J. Engages learners in the assessment processes
K. Requires learners’ production, human beings as raters, co-construction of knowledge, real-world contexts and actual performance
Types of alternative assessment

A. Portfolios
B. Journals
C. Conferences
D. Self- and peer-assessments
E. Observations and interviews
Portfolios

A. Purposeful collection of students’ work
B. Gottlieb’s (1995) CRADLE approach to portfolios
C. Characteristics:
   1. Foster intrinsic motivation, responsibility, and ownership
   2. Promote student-teacher interaction with the teacher as facilitator
   3. Individualize learning and celebrate the uniqueness of each individual
   4. Provide tangible evidence of a student’s work
5. offer opportunities for collaborative work with peers
6. Permit assessment of multiple dimensions of language learning
7. Facilitate critical thinking, self-assessment, and revision processes
Journals

A. A free account of one’s feelings

B. Types:
   1. Dialogue journals
   2. Grammar journals
   3. Responses to readings
   4. Strategies-based learning logs
C. How to make journals more effective
1. Introduce them to the learners
2. State the objectives of the journal
3. Give guidelines of what types of topic to include
4. Provide optimal feedback
5. Designate appropriate time frames and schedules for review
6. Provide formative, washback-giving final comments
D. Uses of journals
1. Writing as a thinking process
2. Individualization valued
3. Communication with teachers
Conferences

A. What do we do in conferences?
1. Comment on the drafts
2. Review portfolios, journals, or any other documents
3. Respond to journals
4. Give feedback
5. Assess the work samples
6. Advise learners
7. Set goals
8. Clarify the disambiguates
B. Uses of conferences
1. Foster students’ reflection on their own learning processes
2. Help students develop better self-images
3. Elicit language performances on particular tasks, skills, or other language points
4. Inform, observe, mold, and gather information about learners
Self-assessments and peer-assessments


A. Either formative or summative
B. Conceptual support for self-assessment:
   1. Theories of cognition, constructivism and learner autonomy
   2. Principles of autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and cooperative learning
   3. Democratic perspectives
C. Advantages:
1. Promotes learning
2. Raises learner awareness
3. Aids in the establishment of learner goals
4. Encourages greater effort
5. Boosts self-confidence
6. Facilitates awareness of the distinctions between competence and performance as well as self-awareness of learners’ strengths and weaknesses
D. Disadvantages:
1. Inflation of one’s abilities
2. Inaccuracy
3. Learners' attitudes and feelings
E. Conceptual support for peer-assessment: same as self-assessment

F. Advantages:
1. Logistical
2. Pedagogical
3. Metacognitive
4. Affective
G. Disadvantages:
1. Inaccuracy
2. Ethical issues—bias, animosity, hurting feelings
3. Difficulty understanding the criteria
4. Not taking evaluation seriously
Problems with alternative assessment

A. Reliability, validity, and objectivity issues

B. Standardization and uniform mechanism issues

C. Implementation issues
Students who want to know more about alternative assessment could consult the following references:

- Language Testing (guest edited by Tim McNamara, 2001, Vol. 18, No. 4)
- Brown & Hudson’s (1998) the alternatives in language assessment
- Brown’s (2004) chapter on Beyond tests: alternatives in assessment