

# Subsuming Effective Methods and Approaches Towards Designing and Adopting Learning Assessment Tools for EFL Learners.

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the effective methods that can be incorporated in designing a constructive, technical-based, theoretical approach and assessment towards teaching undergraduate EFL learners of the engineering stream. In spite of impressive growth in the increasing students' strength in institutions and the number of institutions, quality becomes the worst hit in the rapid expansion of the education system. In order, to ensure quality education, and providing it in the areas where it is needed has become the limelight issue. The real challenge of transforming the system by incorporating effective methods and approaches in designing and adopting various assessment methods would go a long way in making education and institution a part of our existence. This paper explores various theoretical methods of assessing students' use of language and the methods of effective approaches towards learning. The first is the effectual use of technology or provision of technology that has become mainstream in engineering classrooms which is also a better tool for assessment. Computer-Aided Assessment helps to assess all the four skills of the learners. The second is the redesigning or re-modeling of classroom spaces to support active learning which would increase and widen the area of understanding and observing ability in students which is a prerequisite. This includes ideas on gathering information, giving feedback, the strategic use of questioning, and instigating peer and self-assessment. And the last is the appropriate use of leading-edge assessment, as a tool that is an essential part of research-based instruction through which students can build their caliber. This leading-edge assessment technique is used to measure how programs of this type impact students learning and develop professional competence. Assessment in education is focused on measuring specific learning outcomes among participants. This study is based on student-centered approaches to teaching and learning which calls for different methods of assessment. In the student-centered classroom, the learner requires individualization, reciprocation, and amalgamation. New ways of using technology may also initiate student-centered instructions that can be a part of assessing students. Apart from this many of the learning activities in student-centered undergraduate classrooms themselves become a form of assessment that provide instructors with better information about students' understanding and response than they could procure from conventional assessments and discourse-based instruction.

## Keywords

Research-Based, Student-Centered, Assessment, Re-Modeling, Learning Activities.

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## Introduction

Language education is a sector where learners can access to information through open-access resources, online courses, virtual classrooms and social networks based on information and communication technology. These are being increasingly used to give, promote interaction and communication, and enhance digital literacy skills to assess and to improve their ability towards language learning. In order to enlarge the potential of technology in language teaching, it is essential that assessment with development is necessary. It is also important that the use of ICT is introduced and assisted in a sustainable way and in a wide range of pedagogical advances that promote lifelong learning.

“Success in learning a foreign language depends on a number of basic aptitudes, for example: 1. Auditory, 2. Linguistic and 3. Memory. But factors other than aptitude often make a successful linguist, e.g. attitude to learning, a good learning style, interpersonal communication skills, intercultural competence, etc., Skehan (1989) & Skehan (1998). There is a useful collection of articles on Modern Language Aptitude Testing (MLAT). The website of Second Language Testing Inc (SLTI) has comprehensive information on Language Aptitude Testing. “The Language Aptitude Tests suite by Paul Meara, James Milton & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (2001) consists of five discrete tests: aural memory for sound strings, visual memory of paired associates, aural recognition of unfamiliar words, the ability to form sound and symbol correspondences and grammatical inferencing skills” Technologies foster and cater to the needs of teaching and learning particularly in relevance to English language learning in the field of engineering education. Universities and Colleges are becoming adept at using the technological tools as a part of the curriculum to impart knowledge and understanding especially for the students of engineering in the field of English Language Learning. In addition, technologies for learning, when used well, can advance technical based instruction through their capacity to engage students, facilitate interaction, and enable students to engage and involve in language learning phenomena. The integration of technology and English practicing and learning skills has many benefits for the teachers to promote English communication among EFL learners. With these technologies at ease students are encouraged and motivated to practice their English language skills more fluently and effectively.

Apparently, most of students can communicate in English with confidence around the world. They also learn and know about culture and lifestyles of foreign countries. Many technological tools have been expressly developed or adapted to suit the needs of EFL learners. These range from the relatively simple as setting up of English Lab with more sophisticated and user-friendly software's like interactive computer-based simulations with audios of different accents and students to records their activities through online mode to that of Mobile Assisted Learning (MAL) using mobile apps to develop language skills. Various learning technologies can enhance students' learning, retention of understanding, and knowledge about language learning. In fact, various learning technologies alone cannot improve the language learning, but it depends on how well the technology is used by the student to gain insight into the subject.

### **Assessment:1- Technological Assessment Techniques:**

There are various ways to assess the language skills through language lab facilities or simply ICT. Use of appropriate technologies to assess the students' progress in language learning and providing them with the feedback. Use of technological tools like computer Aided Assessment (for example: Globberena Software for language laboratory) to assess an integral part of language learning. Using the assessment and the outcome to improve student's language learning. Computer Aided Assessment conceals a range of assessment strategies and is immensely developing as a new technology for assessing and improving the language skills of the learners thus computer technology is deployed as part of the assessment process. For example, assessment on interactive exercises and tests completed on a computer and to produce coursework using a word-processor. Database or spreadsheet retains the record of students work to give feedback and receive information. This will also help the teachers and the students to receive marks and feedback, this kind of intimately useful technology is used in assessment process. Students can read a given topic and replay and listen again and do the activity accordingly and will be able to get the practicality to understand the pronunciation of different accents by repeatedly listening to it again and again and improving their listening skill. Globberena software helps to develop more effective control on individual learner by monitoring their activities



remotely and incognito. It can also be modified according to the class convenience. After the submission from the students there is automatic recording of feedbacks from the students on the activities. This also helps the learners compare, evaluate and repeat with native accent with alert options for clarifications. "The integration of technology and English practicing skills has a lot good benefits for them to promote English communication among EFL learners. They are motivated and encouraged to practice their English skills more fluently and effectively." Shu Ching Yang & Yi-Ju Chen, (2007).

Nowadays, learning is seen to take place in the context of social environments; learners are apprentices in a 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991) who mutually support each other through active participation (van Lier, 2004). The strong emphasis on community has prompted a drive to align foreign language teaching with sociocultural perspectives (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). Apart from these learners will also be exposed to various group discussions and interactions. Automated students' attendance and feedback is customised. Flexible time with logging in options are an add on advantage for undisturbed learning. Enables teachers to interact with individual students without disturbing other students in the class. With this self-assessment and teacher's assessment learners would be able to take up e-exam with supervisors to monitor activity. If students spend much time in practising all the skills it would help them pick up well for the conventional mode examination as well. Rick Moog, a chemistry professor at Franklin & Marshall College, came to understand the various roles of assessment in the 1990s, when he began developing the group learning activities that would later evolve into Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL). "Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) is the supplementary tool which assists the teachers for English language teaching and learning in any courses that the learners improve their English communication including the culture appropriately. The learners are able to practice their English communication skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing anywhere anytime via electronic devices e.g., smart phones, i-pads, etc. They can practice these English communication skills repeatedly as they like. The more they practice English communication skills, the more they will be able to communicate in English fluently. They also can communicate with world population effectively." J. Boonyopakorana (2016). An equally important aspect of language assessment focus its effects on language learning, language teaching, and knowledge within the field of language studies. The floor of technology in language assessment, therefore, needs to empower and embrace both the efficiency of technical achievements and accomplishments, which is evident in every segment through the success of testing programs in constructing technology-based tests, as well as the effects of these tests. "In this regard, a means of developing skills to work with technology is provided, which in turn aims to promote technological competency and the means for teachers to see themselves becoming increasingly proficient in TELL pedagogical procedures over time." W. Aisha & W. Goodith (2013).

#### Assessing of all the four (LSRW) skills:

Skill	Assessment by computer (output)	Assessment of the output by the teacher
Listening	Computer can assess restricted range of different types of responses (different accents) to test comprehension.	Listening tests can be presented on a computer, students' answers can be stored in the computer and assessed by a teacher. Self-assessment assessment is also possible for student's betterment.
Speaking	Though very limited yet Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) software is developing promptly can be used for timely results but is still unreliable to be used in precise testing.	Students can record their own voices (with different accents) on a computer for assessment by a teacher. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also feasible.
Reading	Computer can assess a limited range of different types of responses to test comprehension exclusively.	Reading tests can be taken on a computer, students' answers can be stored automatically and assessed by a teacher. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also feasible.
Writing	Spellchecking, grammar checking, and style checking are possible, and some progress is being made in the development of programs that can	Students' answers can be stored electronically and assessed by a teacher. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also possible.

## Other Types of Tests: (Websites)

BBC Languages: Basic tests in a variety of languages to enable learners to assess their knowledge, plus a range of online courses are offered at different levels: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/>  
The Council of Europe European Language Portfolio: provides an attractive, enhancing and motivating way for individual learners to maintain an up-to-date record of their language learning experience and to track their changing levels of performance. It also contains can-do statements which help learners to assess their language skills: <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/>  
Goethe-Verlag: Free tests in 24 languages and 552 language combinations: <http://www.goethe-verlag.com/tests/>

TOEFL: A huge expertise vividly available for testing English language competence and there is already a thriving computer-based testing industry. Test Of English as a Foreign Language website: <http://www.toefl.org/>

Versant Tests: Formerly known as the Spoken English Tests (SET), the Versant Tests are delivered over a telephone or on a computer and scored by computer. Once administered, numeric scores and performance levels that describe the test-taker's ability to understand and speak the selected language are generated within minutes and can be viewed online. Tests can be taken anytime, anywhere: <http://www.versanttest.co.uk/>

Linguanet Worldwide: This project has recently undergone expansion to incorporate an interface in a number of new languages and addresses in particular the needs of adult learners and independent learners. The site includes advice on ways of assessing and improving one's current ability in different languages (including links to websites that offer diagnostic and placement tests), communicating electronically with other language learners and finding appropriate resources. A substantial online catalogue of language learning resources is also being built up here: <http://www.linguanet-worldwide.org/>

Graham Davies's Favourite Websites page, which contains an extensive list of websites that offer interactive exercises and tests.

## Assessment:2- Classroom Assessment Techniques:

The student-centred classroom involves changes in the roles and responsibilities of learners and teachers, in the delivery of instructional strategies, and learning. Modern language classrooms require modification to adapt to the rapidly-enhanced technological innovations in terms of designing, planning, teaching, and assessing. In lieu with the upheaval trend and interest in exploring the internet, technology-based tools, and environments for assessment purposes of foreign language learning has envisioned for a classroom assessment technique. Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are a set of designed activities that teachers can use to quickly assess students' comprehension. They are generally used to assess students' understanding of the course and to assess students' knowledge on the overall program. CATs are meant to provide immediate and fast feedback about the entire class students level of understanding and also to some extent individual students. The teacher then can use this feedback to give information and instruction, such as speeding up or slowing the pace of a lecture or explicitly addressing areas of confusion. Teachers can create their own CATs to meet the specific needs of the course and students. This will help to identify a specific question where the students' response will influence the teaching and provide feedback to assist their learning. Then planning how to analyse students' responses, such as grouping and arranging them. After using a CAT, the students will share with the results, thus they would understand the assessment has communicated and identified their specific difficulties of their own.

With the further integration of technologies in language learning, however, assessment challenges abound. Applied linguists have generally focused on the use of technologies in language testing (e.g., Chapelle & Douglas, 2006; Dooley, 2008) at the expense of developing a better understanding of classroom-based assessment practices (Rea-Dickens, 2004). Teachers tend to be critical of assessment techniques that focus on grammatical accuracy and vocabulary (Shohamy, Inbar-Lourie & Poehner, 2008) because such measures are seen to distort the profile of learners' abilities and set a standard that often could not be met by native speakers. In an influential article, Bax (2003) intends for the full integration of technologies in foreign language

teaching contexts. Successful integration, according to Bax, is such that technologies go “almost unnoticed” (p. 23) in a classroom, much like we no longer notice paper and pens in our daily routines of teaching. In a related article, Chambers and Bax (2006) advocate changes in the physical configurations of learning spaces, greater institutional support and leadership, and a drive to reduce workloads to spur professional development opportunities; unfortunately, with some exception, the assessment of foreign languages is an area that is generally ignored in discussions of technology integration (Blake, Wilson, Cetto & PardoBallestar, 2008).

Getting students involved in a classroom activity would be the primary goal. This will enable building excitement and invitation to attend to the sessions. Visual inspiration through classroom gadgets would help understand and have complete involvement in the activities. Researching and brainstorming methods can also be implemented. Organising tools based on usage would enable students identify and access the content. These types of changes in classroom all differ from those in the traditional, teacher-centre classroom where students' priority is ignored. But in the student-centred classroom, the learner needs individualisation, interaction, and unification. Individualisation ensures that learners are empowered to create their own activities, giving them their own pace to make and select their own authentic materials. Learners interact through team learning and by teaching and interacting with each other. During the learning process, learners integrate what they have learned with prior learning and construct new meaning. Effective formative assessments conducted during the course of classroom instruction can make students' thinking “visible” to the instructor and the students themselves, notes the National Research Council (NRC) report *Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment* (National Research Council, 2001, p. 4). Redesigning or re-modelling of classroom spaces to support active learning would increase and widen the area of understanding and observing ability in students. Designing classrooms with overhead projectors, smart boards and speakers for the classroom will enlighten and enhance learners of language with enthusiasm and innovation.

#### Assessing of all the four (LSRW) skills:

Skill	Assessment by self / peer (output)	Assessment of the output by the teacher
Listening	Students can assess themselves after listening and checking for the results or answers and redo if necessary.	Teachers can assess the students tests by verifying and cross check with the given answers.
Speaking	Students could pair up for the task and one can assess the other.	Teachers assess the task by asking the students to speak.
Reading	Students can read the given tasks and check with their peer group for the answers.	Reading tests can be assessed by the teachers with the answers
Writing	Checking the grammar part, and sentence formation are possible, the students themselves by verifying with the answers given.	Students' answers can be assessed by a teacher with the help of answer key.

#### Assessment: 3- Learning Edge Assessment techniques:

Active learning is not related to face-to-face (traditional) classes or online classes. It depends mostly on how to keep the students engaged in the process of learning and achieve well when they are assessed. Thus, student engagement is not problematic in traditional classes only but also in online classes. “Online course delivery faces additional barriers to engaging students not typically present in face-to-face courses including the fact that course design and development must occur before the actual delivery of the material, effective time and resources management is necessary on the part of both the students as well as faculty when online, methods of encouraging student communication and interactions amongst themselves and faculty differ greatly from face-to-face delivery methods, and the efficient implementation of teaching tools used to deliver the online course is a challenge for many faculty.” (Khan, A. et. al, 2017)

To ensure the quality of the learning process, it is sensible to look at some of the key components in online courses such as the design of instructional material for the content delivery, student



assessment of material, discussion management, time management and frustration handling. However, this paper sheds the light more on the leading-edge assessment to probe into new tools that could assist in finding out new ways to assess the students/ learners in a way that suits this kind of change in the world of learning and teaching.

Because of the physical difference between an online course and a face-to-face learning environment, it is critical to use appropriate assessment techniques in an online course. When instructors attempt to adapt the assessment, methods used in face-to-face classrooms, assessments in online courses may pose greater challenges. As a result, it's significant to employ assessment methods that are appropriate for online learning. Both formative and summative assessment can be useful in online classes, just as they can in face-to-face classes. Summative assessments are used to determine a student's level of proficiency at the end of a class or unit. Formative assessment provides feedback that both the instructor and the students can use to improve the course as it is currently being taught. Instructors should use a variety of assessment techniques and avoid using methods that are redundant. (Vonderwell & Boboc, 2013; Bloom, 1994).

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a system to evaluate the curriculum, not only for assignments, as previously discussed, but also to evaluate assessments as well as to identify where content is introduced and how content grows in difficulty throughout the course. This is accomplished by comparing the outcome goals (whether knowledge, emotional, or skill based) to the goals of previous assignments to ensure that goals are attainable (not too difficult), and assessments are measuring concepts that have been expressed in previous coursework. Furthermore, this allowed for the verification that content was introduced at a lower Bloom Taxonomy level and that higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy were introduced as appropriate over time. When evaluating assessments, the most important question to ask is "does the content address the necessary level(s) where it was intended in the curriculum?" In a research study, a departmental group assessment process was created, where program-level outcomes were identified. The group then embedded these outcomes into relevant courses and individual assessments were designed to address the respective outcomes. This allowed the department to ensure content was weaved throughout the curriculum. Bloom's Taxonomy, can be used to ensure that assessments meet the educational goals of the course.

The American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) (1987) provides a set of best practice principles for assessing student learning. According to the AAHE, assessment should be viewed as a vehicle for educational improvement and is effective when learning is reflected as multidimensional and longitudinal; meaning performance is revealed through increasing growth over time. One way to accomplish these goals is to establish a clear process for goals and objectives. This task necessitates the use of a multidisciplinary approach to institutional improvement. This finding is supported by the 11 key findings for best practices in assessing learning outcomes (Benchmarking Study, Best-in-Class Report, 1998), which recommends that assessment plans to be strategic in nature. This includes incorporation into the organization's culture as well as other ongoing performance improvement efforts. Ultimately, good assessment takes a continuous, systematic, and multidimensional approach (Leskes, A., et al., 2004).

Creating effective rubrics is essential for assessing outcomes in any course. The Quality Matters Higher Education Rubric, fifth edition, 2014, offers a set of general standards that include course overview and introduction, competencies, assessment, instructional materials, technology, support, and accessibility to ensure students achieve the desired learning outcome. The overall goal of rubrics is to teach students that learning is their responsibility and to encourage self-reflection. This will assist students in visualizing their identified strengths and weaknesses. One way to accomplish this is to have students use the rubric as a self-reflective exercise before submitting an assignment. This not only strengthens self-accountability but it also helps to guide students in expectations of the assignment. A final note on assessments, polls are a great tool for engaging students in an online course and to assess how well students are learning concept. They can be administered quickly to determine student progress as well as being useful as a basis for follow up discussions. By doing so, students' engagement in course and progress towards course objectives can be quickly assessed and content can be adjusted as needed. By providing faculty a clear representation of student understanding, faculty are able to guide learning accordingly.

The difference between grading and assessment is obvious. Generally, the goal of *grading* is to evaluate individual students' learning and performance. Although grades are sometimes treated as a proxy for student learning, they are not always a reliable measure. Moreover, they may incorporate criteria – such as attendance, participation, and effort – that are not direct measures

of learning. Moreover, assessment goes beyond grading by systematically examining patterns of student learning across courses and programs and using this information to improve educational practices.

In language testing, questions of “validity” imposes itself. ‘Validity’ in testing and assessment has traditionally been understood to mean discovering whether a test ‘measures accurately what it is intended to measure’ (Hughes, 1989: 22), or uncovering the ‘appropriateness of a given test or any of its component parts as a measure of what it is purposed to measure’ (Henning, 1987: 170). This is precisely what we have to do, so that we can produce a chain of reasoning and evidence from what we think a test score means, and the actions we intend to take on the basis of that inference, back to the skills, abilities or knowledge that any given test taker may have.

New digital assessment and learning is expected to take ever more innovative forms, some of which we are actively exploring: Quiz your English is a gamified, multiplayer mobile application for practising vocabulary and grammar skills. Game-based assessment is seen as a fun and ideal way to immerse learners in the cycle of learning and assessment. Virtual reality technique is being trialled as a medium for simulating real-life tasks and eliciting more authentic learner performance. These future assessments will pave the way for a learning ecosystem where technology supports meaningful experiences for learners.

## Conclusion:

Technology has become an integral part of day today lives and will continue to change the way it is been used and learn languages. Learning English language and assessment through different modes with its test design, keeping the test concrete or the language skills being assessed up-to-date, and uniting assessment with learning will definitely take a twist in formulating ideas of language learning. Future assessment in language learning will move away from the one-time test model to a undoubtedly personalised and engaging learners knowledge and experience that displays on the mastery of both technology and humans.

It is true that language assessment is evolving into a new phase, but it should be always remembered that learners are at the centre of every aspect of the process and we make these changes to better help people learn English and prove their skills to the world. An integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment is always probable to be more successful than an arbitrary approach. Thus, teaching methods, learning methods and assessment methods need to adhere if learners are to learn effectively and if valid and consistent results are to be achieved from assessment procedures. Though there may be draw backs to set these methods but still can be neglected as a minor issue and could be focused on the major growth by implementing approach.

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