

CALL Environments

Second Edition

**Research,
Practice,
and Critical Issues**

**Edited by Joy Egbert
and Elizabeth Hanson-Smith**



Teachers of English to

Part III. Authentic Task

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 8. Theory and Research: Investigating Authenticity | 111 |
| <i>Carol A. Chapelle and Hsin-min Liu</i> | |
| Explorations | 130 |
| 9. Classroom Practice: Content and Language | 131 |
| <i>Elizabeth Hanson-Smith</i> | |
| Explorations | 144 |
| 10. Critical Issues: Limited-Technology Contexts | 145 |
| <i>Senem Yildiz</i> | |
| Explorations | 160 |

Part IV. Exposure and Production

- | | |
|---|-----|
| 11. Theory and Research: Interaction and Awareness | 163 |
| <i>Lloyd Holliday</i> | |
| Explorations | 171 |
| 12. Classroom Practice: Language Knowledge and Skills Acquisition | 173 |
| <i>Deborah Healey</i> | |
| Explorations | 193 |
| 13. Classroom Practice: Tasks for Collaborative Learning | 194 |
| <i>Elizabeth Hanson-Smith</i> | |
| Explorations | 209 |
| 14. Critical Issues: Creativity and CALL | 210 |
| <i>Keun Huh</i> | |
| Explorations | 222 |

Part V: Time and Feedback

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 15. Theory and Research: New Emphases of Assessment | 227 |
| <i>Chin-chi Chao</i> | |
| Explorations | 241 |
| 16. Classroom Practice: Practical Classroom Assessment | 242 |
| <i>Joy Egbert</i> | |
| Explorations | 258 |
| 17. Classroom Practice: Assessing Instructional Goals | 259 |
| <i>Dafne González and Rubena St. Louis</i> | |
| Explorations | 275 |
| 18. Critical Issues: Professional Development | 276 |
| <i>Philip Hubbard</i> | |
| Explorations | 292 |

Chapter 17

Classroom Practice: Assessing Instructional Goals

Dafne González and Rubena St. Louis

Focus

The end of the 20th century marked a change in the way language, language learning, and the language learner were conceived by teachers as well as students. As national boundaries receded under the effects of globalization, emphasis on the structural nature of language as form shifted toward a view of language as communication. Continuing research into the areas of motivation, cognition, multiple intelligences, individual learning styles, and learning strategies (see Reid, 1998) has led to reassessment of the roles that students and teachers play in the learning process. The increasing use of technology and the penetration of the Internet into the four corners of the globe have opened up a wide range of new possibilities and a shift in paradigm for language learning and teaching. Teacher-centered classrooms have begun to make way for those in which students participate in classroom decision making, goal setting, and selection of objectives and materials. Teachers are now beginning the slow and sometimes painful process of ceding power to students, who are thus being given the opportunity to take more responsibility for their own learning.

These dramatic changes have led, and must lead, to a reassessment of the role of evaluation in the language classroom. *Alternative assessment* has given students the opportunity to take control of their own learning. In this chapter, we consider the advantages of alternative assessment and the different ways in which it can be implemented in blended and online courses.

Background

Evaluation Versus Assessment

Evaluation has been part of the language learning and teaching process for centuries, and its purpose has been that of collecting data to make sound decisions about classroom teaching and learning. Traditionally, many teachers have looked at evaluation as a way of testing their knowledge of a particular aspect of language at a specific point in time. Students often hear of the weekly vocabulary *quiz* or grammar *test*, or the TOEFL *exam*. Aebersold and Field (1997) state that these are the types of tests associated with traditional evaluation. In standardized as well as classroom testing, multiple-choice items tend to be used (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996) along with true-or-false and open-ended questions. This type of testing is dictated and controlled by the teacher, who maintains a position of authority in the classroom with regard to when, what, and how language is evaluated.

However, teachers have found that the results from these types of tests do not paint a true picture of student performance because they do not adequately cover the range of objectives and the diverse ways in which they are accomplished through work carried out in the classroom. Traditional tests do not take into consideration each student's individual learning style, level of intelligence, aptitudes, and cultural values—all of which influence the language learning process; neither do they reflect the processes and cognitive strategies that a student may use to accomplish a task. Traditional exams often must place language in an unnatural, decontextualized context and not within the social and communicative settings in which it is really used. Other factors (e.g., the surroundings in which the test is administered, students' emotional and physical condition) can also influence test performance, thereby giving an inaccurate picture of their true ability (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). Thus, although traditional tests are designed to evaluate a product at a certain point, they cannot show the process that leads to a given product. But a different view of evaluation is provided by alternative assessment.

As language learning and teaching do not exist in a bubble, but rather change from the outside world, the definition of evaluation must also change to keep in line with current trends. At present, evaluation is seen as being closely linked to psychological, social, cultural, environmental, and personal factors. The emphasis is not only on what students learn, but also on how they learn (Nunan, 1999), and there is a move toward making students more active and responsible for their own learning (Benson & Voller, 1993). In this view, students have an important role to play in their own learning, and they should work with the teacher to determine not only the content to be learned, but also the weight and importance of different aspects to be considered (K. Smith, 2000). Just as learning is an ongoing process, so too should its evaluation reflect procedures; this in principle

provides the information they need to help them make correct decisions about their learning. Alternative assessment, which "reflects student learning style, motivation and attitudes on instructionally-relevant objectives" (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996, p. 4), encompasses all aspects of the learning process.

Alternative assessment deals with collecting data that show how students learn, how they process, and complete tasks within a specific time frame, and how they interact with the teacher to have a general view of the student's academic performance over a period of time. This type of assessment is in contrast to traditional assessment, which looks at the student's academic performance at a single point in time. With alternative assessment, language can be seen as a process rather than a product, and students are viewed as active participants in the interaction. As opposed to the constraints of an exam situation, alternative assessment allows for a variety of data collection methods to trace the learner's social, cognitive, and affective development.

Alternative assessment can be used in a variety of ways, such as:

- Observation of student work in traditional or e-portfolios
- Observation of the student's performance in the classroom
- Observation of student-student interactions

- Use of technology (e.g., WebQuests [Dodge, n.d.-b])

Alternative assessment helps the teacher determine instructional possibilities and helps the student:

- Monitor the student's progress through an extended activity cycle or project
- Reflect on the student's progress and help the teacher determine instructional possibilities and

One of the most important aspects of alternative assessment is *self- and peer evaluation*. Students reflect on and critically evaluate not only their own learning and performance, but also that of their classmates. Murdoch (1998) and Phillips & Lowe (2003) consider this learning activity to be an important part of the evaluation scheme. The reflective process involved in self- and peer evaluation develops critical thinking skills, encourages student autonomy, and promotes a positive attitude toward learning.

Alternative assessment also promotes a positive attitude toward learning, and helps to change the view of teacher and student roles (Hansen, 1998; O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996; Sinclair, McGrath, & Lamb, 2000). Students become part of the learning process, rather than a passive consumer of it.

Alternative assessment can also promote *collaboration* that helps students learn in their future professional field. To this end, when teachers use alternative assessment, they should make it clear that goals and objectives should be clearly defined at the beginning of the assignment to focus the activities and tasks and to lay down the parameters for evaluation. Students should be made aware of their individual roles and responsibilities, and the importance of accepting negative as well as positive feedback. The active role they should play in solving any problems should be emphasized. Perhaps the most important, the fact that all participants

should be treated fairly and with respect. Group work also develops critical thinking and builds research, organizational, and writing skills. By using alternative assessment, the teacher is not only evaluating language skills but also allowing students to use other skills that will be of equal importance in the future. The real-life situation is felt more keenly than if traditional assessment had been used.

Alternative assessment takes into consideration both the process and the product of student learning. Further, it does not exclude traditional types of exams, but rather adds more varied methods of collecting data. If, as Genesee and Upshur (1996) state, the essential bases of evaluation are information gathering, interpretation, and decision making based on the information obtained, then the more varied the information teachers receive, the better equipped they will be to make the right decisions when developing their language teaching curriculum.

CALL-Based Versus Face-to-Face (f2f) Assessment

Technology has always been a key tool for learning, and it has kept up with the trends in language testing. As early as the 1970s, students used computer programs to practice grammar through drills (e.g., CALIS from Duke University [no longer available]). More recently, they have done so through interactive CDs and the World Wide Web, in a format that was also generally used for traditional testing. For standardized testing, many universities have item banks where tests are generated randomly (e.g., the ESL Placement Examination at the University of California, Los Angeles [Henning, 1986], the item bank at the language department of the Simón Bolívar University [Champeau, Marchi, & Arreaza, 1994]). Computer-adaptive language testing (CALT) selects standardized items from a databank based on the responses given by the student. Students are tested until their proficiency level has been reached, thus avoiding questions too far above or below their level. Students can work on items at their own pace and are not pressured by the psychological constraints of the f2f testing environment. With CALT, feedback is immediate, allowing students to see the areas in which they made errors and so making them aware of the work to be done in the specific area. If the bank contains enough items, there is a lower chance of students becoming acquainted with the questions. Also, unlike humans, machines are very precise and accurate when marking and reporting results. The disadvantage is that the infrastructure needed and the high program costs take this option out of the hands of the individual classroom teacher.

However, the Internet has placed within the range of classroom teachers a number of resources that can be used for authentic assessment. Not only can videos and recordings be found on the Internet, either from news or organizational sites, but a number of educational sites also offer source materials. Authentic language in authentic settings allows testing that is much more

in keeping with the communicative nature of language. Moreover, there is a greater chance of being able to tap into individual student learning styles, capture students' attention, and feed their interests with up-to-date topics, so that learning occurs even when they are being evaluated, an extremely difficult task to accomplish in an f2f classroom.

Once the material has been found, online software can be used to generate different kinds of exercises for testing: multiple-choice, multiple-correct, matching, drag-and-drop, short-answer, and open-ended questions. The answers can also be programmed so that, as in CALT, students receive immediate feedback. Software allows students to be evaluated anywhere, anytime, for instance, by podcast or cell phone, again removing the constraints of traditional pen-and-paper testing. Some programs like *Quia Web* (Quia, 1998–2007) even generate statistics that can be useful for further decision making about instructional goals. Computer-mediated communication tools, such as text and voice chat, weblogs (blogs), wikis, forums, podcasts, and virtual environments, can also be integrated into class activities that can be evaluated according to specific criteria. Just as new dimensions are opening up with alternative assessment, so, too, is technology giving teachers a wide range of synchronous and asynchronous means of communication that can be manipulated by both the teacher and the student and used to show the authentic and communicative nature of a living language.

Examples and Discussion

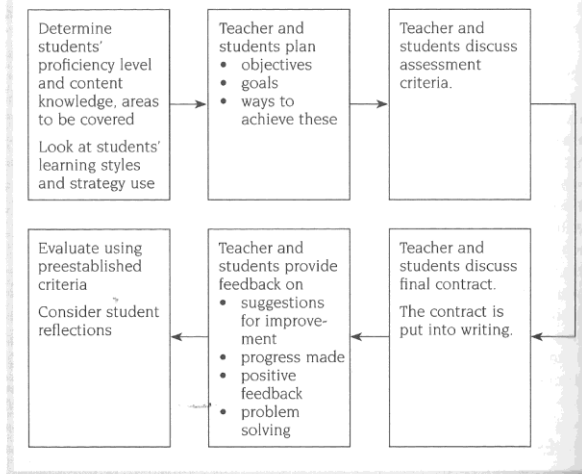
Some typical assessment strategies include contracts and e-portfolios, which can be used to evaluate classroom activities alongside assessment tools such as checklists, rubrics, and Know–Want to know–Learned (K–W–L) charts. These will each be discussed in further detail.

Contracts in Language Learning

Robinson (1987) first defined a contract as an agreement between a learner and a tutor or a learner and himself or herself, and since then, the concept of contracts has grown to include how the individual will meet specific instructional objectives, what will be learned, how objectives will be met, the time period for completion, how the student will self-evaluate, and how the teacher will assess student learning. As a result, contracts can be said to help students learn how to manage their learning process. Figure 17-1 shows the basic steps needed in drawing up a learning contract.

As the flowchart in Figure 17-1 indicates, contracts involve the active participation of students as well as teachers. Students' individual learning styles, needs, and views with regard to goal setting, resources needed, and time available for achieving goals, as well as the type of evaluation to be used, are

Figure 17-1. Basic Steps for Creating Contracts in Language Learning



essential factors. The use of rubrics and checklists, which ensure that students and teachers know what is being evaluated and the criteria for evaluation, is also important. Feedback on student progress can be given through checklists, rubrics, and observation forms as well as in discussions with students using chat or meetings in virtual rooms. Students should also be encouraged to evaluate their own work and the learning process through reflection on what they have achieved, any new perceived needs, and how these should be met. This self-monitoring will help them make the necessary changes to their work plan. Evaluation of the final product should be performed using the preestablished criteria, and students should include reflections on their performance, perhaps using a blog, and what they learned during the period.

Learning contracts can thus be seen as both a teaching strategy and an assessment tool geared toward self-directed learning. By allowing students to negotiate their work plan based on what they perceive as their needs, teachers share the decision-making process in the classroom. Doing so gives students a sense of control over their learning, which is reflected in a greater

responsibility toward their work and higher motivation and interest in learning (St. Louis & Pereira, 2003). Contracts also give students the opportunity to choose the types of activities they would like to have assessed. Students are assessed not just on selected activities, but on the criteria established by specific rubrics (González & St. Louis, 2002). Alternative assessment contracts are geared toward individualized learning. However, activities that foster collaborative learning through group work should be included:

- *Vocabulary games* created with programs such as *Quia Web* (Quia, 1998–2007), *Makers Pages* (n.d.), or *Hot Potatoes* (Arneil & Holmes, 2006) can generate different kinds of exercises, in addition to multiple-choice and true/false, such as drag-and-drop (which involves eye and hand movement), matching, and Hangman (see Kelly, 2003b). Images and audio can be added as well, to appeal to different learning styles.
- *Research activities* in the form of WebQuests (Dodge, n.d.-b; *Filamentality* [AT&T Knowledge Ventures, 2007b]) set the task processes and clearly describe the outcomes expected. Students must use critical thinking and organizational skills to complete their project. These activities can also be enriched by the use of multimedia and collaboration.
- *Oral presentations* for a foreign audience live online or videotaped and uploaded to a Web site motivate students to give their best performance (González, 2005), whether individually or in groups. Self- and peer evaluation through blogs and forums where other people can leave comments is also a plus. Students realize that they have an authentic audience and not just the classroom teacher interested in giving a grade.
- *Process writing* using blogs or wikis allows students to receive feedback from their teacher and their peers.
- *Class preparation* in English for specific purposes courses involves students preparing a class as if they were professionals already working in the field. Students must research their topic and can use Internet resources to present as varied and interactive a class as possible. As in real work situations, teams are often the best option.
- *Videocasts or streaming videos* taken from Web sites (e.g., *Real English* [The Marzio School & Real English, 2007]) offer dictation or listening comprehension with interactive pre- and postactivities prepared using online exercise software such as *Quia Web* (Quia, 1998–2007), *Makers Pages* (n.d.), *Hot Potatoes* (Arneil & Holmes, 2006), and *Script-O!* (The Reading Matrix, 2000–2005). (See Appendix D for more testing tools.) The variety of exercises that

can be generated with these free software products can appeal to different learning styles.

- *Podcasting* and *audioblogging* can be used for short oral presentations, interviews, and reflection on readings and videos. (*PodOmatic*, 2007, is an example of an audioblog site.)
- *Storytelling* using Microsoft Photo Story (2004), Windows Movie Maker (2007), iMovie (2006), or *BubbleShare* (2004–2006) to enhance photos with written texts, music, animation, and voiceover allows students to inject their personality into the activity and use all the senses.
- *Multimedia exams and quizzes* can be generated by students (individually or in teams) and teachers using the software mentioned previously.
- *Chat sessions* held while working on projects may be used to evaluate turn taking, negotiation of meaning, and other more subtle forms of communication in an authentic context (González, 2003).
- *Online jigsaw readings* present each student with a different piece of the reading or aspect of a project, and groups must work together and share information to complete the activity (see González, 2006, for a fuller description of jigsaw reading).

These are but a few of the different kinds of activities that can be included in the contract and used with resources and applications found on the Internet.

Alternative Assessment Instruments

Considering the variety of activities and the subtasks needed for their completion, teachers and students must have a clear idea of what is to be evaluated and how to do so. In alternative assessment, validity and reliability are maintained through the use of instruments that include checklists, rubrics, scales, and inventories.

Checklists delineate factors, aspects, components, criteria, and/or dimensions of a task, or properties that should be taken into consideration while it is being carried out (Scriven, 2005). Advantages of using checklists include having a list of criteria that ensure that no important aspect is forgotten, that all students and tasks are evaluated equally, and that the same criteria are available for subsequent reevaluation (Stufflebeam, 2000). A well-designed checklist reduces both the Rorschach effect (the tendency to see what one wants in the data) and the halo effect (being carried away by a highly valued factor; Scriven, 2005), thus ensuring better objectivity and credibility in the evaluation process. In addition, the large amount of data received from

checklists makes them excellent diagnostic tools that can help the teacher determine if individual and course instructional goals are appropriate.

Checklists (see Table 17-1) are essential in the planning stages because the information about what is required of students allows them to plan their course of action in terms of resources, time and material, level of performance, and the final product expected. Students and teachers can also monitor and evaluate the learning process at any stage before getting to the final product.

Figure 17-2 is an example of a checklist created to give qualitative feedback to students working collaboratively in a chat to complete a task (González, 2004). This checklist can be used while the students are chatting or later with the chat log or recording. The following criteria are used:

- *helping*—The teacher observes the students offering assistance to each other.
- *listening*—The teacher observes the students working from each other's ideas.
- *participating*—The teacher observes each student contributing to the project.

Table 17-1. Types of Checklists

Type	Characteristics	Example
Laundry	A list of items that should be taken into consideration, with <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> indicating presence or absence of item	"To do" list
Sequential	Items placed in strict hierarchical order, with one step dependent on the other	Steps in experiments
Weak sequential	Order of the items important only for physiological or efficiency reasons	Job requirements
Criteria of merit	Complete and concise items based on criteria with an assigned numeric value; criteria should be clear, comprehensible, applicable, and measurable	Oral presentation

Note. Adapted from *The Logic and Methodology of Checklists*, by M. Scriven, 2005, Western Michigan University, http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/papers/Logic%20methodology_oct05.pdf

Figure 17-2. Qualitative Feedback Checklist for a Chat Session

Chat # 1	Date:	Topic of discussion:					
Scoring: Never—Sometimes—Always							
Skills	Helping	Listening	Participating	Persuading	Questioning	Respecting	Sharing
Group 1							
Group 2							
Group 3							

- *persuading*—The teacher observes the students exchanging, defending, and rethinking ideas.
- *questioning*—The teacher observes the students interacting, discussing, and posing questions to all members of the team.
- *respecting*—The teacher observes the students encouraging and supporting the ideas and efforts of others.
- *sharing*—The teacher observes the students offering ideas and reporting their findings to each other.

Rubrics give samples against which the performance is judged; they are used for tasks that involve oral or written production. (A number of online rubric generators, such as *RubiStar* [ALTEC & University of Kansas, 2000–2006] and *teAchnology: Rubrics* [n.d.], may be found in Appendix D.) Although general rubrics can be formulated to cover multiple tasks, it is important that they be used with the specific tasks and goals of instruction to be evaluated (National Capital Language Resource Center, 2003–2004). Students can check their performance at any time against the standards and expected outcomes established in the rubric, and this feedback allows them to correct any weak areas and plan the strategies that they should use to improve them (see Table 17-2).

Rubrics, however, are not always useful for classroom evaluation because they might not provide students with enough information on their performance. Analytic rubrics provide teachers and students with more information about the learner's strengths and weaknesses; however, they have been criticized for

Table 17-2. Types of Rubrics

Type	Characteristics	Use
Holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses 4- or 6-point scale ranging from <i>needs work</i> to <i>excellent</i> • Considers language as a whole • Scores student's best performance 	Large-scale composition testing
Analytic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses categories representing different dimensions of student performance • Allows each category to be graded separately and added to final score 	Evaluating written work, looking at content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics

not giving a more holistic assessment of the learner's performance (National Capital Language Resource Center, 2003–2004). Figure 17-3 shows an example of an analytic rubric used to assess students' participation in group chat meetings (González, 2004).

K-W-L (Know–Want to know–Learned) charts are an inventory (see Figure 17-4) that allows the teacher to assess the depth of students' prior knowledge of a topic while making students aware of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they can use to enhance learning. Students activate their prior knowledge through the use of pictures, key words in a text, or charts. They then make predictions based on this information and categorize the data to be used. Students fill in the last column with information they have learned. Adaptations to this basic chart have been made by Campbell Hill, Ruptic, and Norwick (1998), who include a fourth column, *further wanderings*, in which students write questions that have emerged as a result of their research, thus giving added incentive to continue exploring the topic. Teachers can use K-W-L charts to assess students' oral production, participation in class discussions, and ability to focus on the topic or work in groups. K-W-L charts also allow teachers to rethink their lessons based on where students are weakest or strongest. (For further information, see Saskatoon Public School Division, 2004.) The K-W-L chart can be posted to a Web page or sent to students via e-mail for them to complete and post to their e-portfolio (see Figure 17-4).

Rubrics, checklists, and K-W-L charts are but a few of the different assessment instruments that can be used in alternative assessment. Quite a few Web sites provide other types of instruments that teachers can use to personalize their evaluation process, for example, *Curriculum Bytes* (Prairie Land Regional Division #25, 2004). A number of these sites are included in Appendix D.

Figure 17-3. Analytic Rubric

	Excellent (5 points each)	Very Good (4 points each)	Satisfactory/Good (3 points each)	Needs Improvement (2 points each)
1. Participation related to technical aspects	Student actively participates in discussion with moderator and other participants.	Student asks and answers questions from moderator and other participants.	Student asks and answers questions from moderator.	Student answers questions posed by moderator.
2. Participation related to content	Student actively participates in discussion with moderator and other participants.	Student asks and answers questions from moderator and answers questions from other participants.	Student asks and answers questions from moderator.	Student answers questions posed by moderator.
3. Use of content vocabulary	Student makes good use of most of the new content area vocabulary.	Student uses properly some of the new content area vocabulary.	Student barely uses the new content area vocabulary.	Student makes no use of new content area vocabulary.
4. Demonstration of content knowledge	Student demonstrates full knowledge of content.	Student is at ease with content; fails to elaborate fully.	Student is uncomfortable with content; demonstrates basic knowledge.	Student does not have grasp of information; cannot answer questions about the content.
5. Social engagement	Student actively participates in non-technical/academic topics voluntarily.	Student incorporates some nontechnical/academic topics in conversation if asked.	Student socializes a little (e.g., offers greetings).	Student restricts his or her participation to technical and academic aspects.

Note: From *Demas de la evaluación del aprendizaje de inglés con Propósitos Específicos a través de soporte electrónico: Estudio de un caso* [Dilemma in the evaluation of English for specific purposes through electronic supports: A case study]. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Universitat de València, Spain. by D. González. 2014.

Figure 17-4. K-W-L Chart

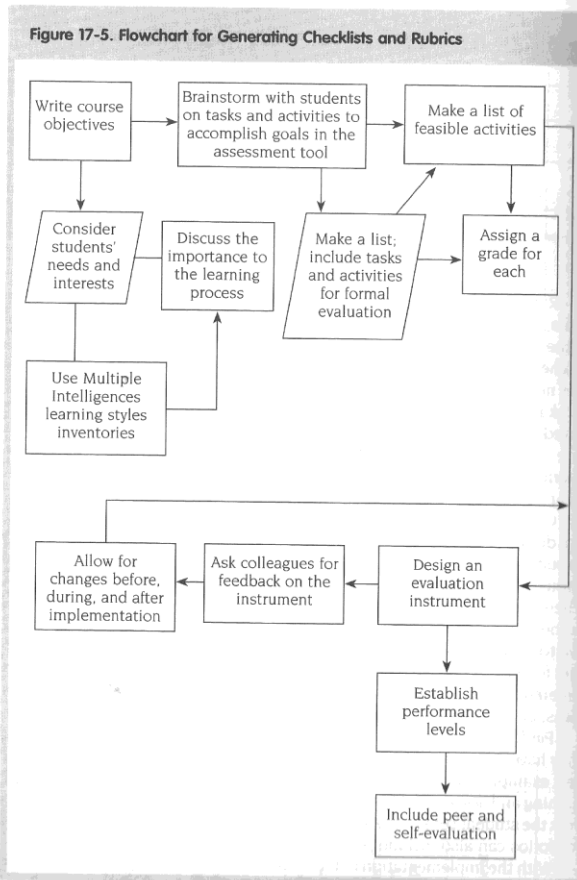
What I know	What I want to know	What I've learned

Rubrics and checklists can be used when evaluating WebQuests, podcasts, chats, chat logs, and activities in blogs and wikis. They are extremely useful in the latter because, without actually physically correcting the product, the teacher can note the different areas in which students have improved or those that need work. The teacher can either e-mail the information or embed it as a link in the student's blog or in the course Web site. Students then use this linked reference to find and correct their mistakes. Over a period of time, this type of information can serve as an indicator of students' overall progress. Rubrics and checklists are crucial to guiding students in the process of self- and peer evaluation. For generating your own rubrics, see Figure 17-5.

Creating checklists or rubrics may appear to be a lengthy process, but doing so becomes almost second nature if they are used consistently throughout all your courses. Bear in mind that different skills can be assessed through one activity, and not all activities and tasks need to be evaluated. When designing the evaluation instrument, remember that the different skills needed for carrying out each activity should be listed, as should the objective to which each refers. Assign a mark for each component so that the total sum for each is equal to the total percentage assigned for the activity. Finally, remember to include students in the decision-making process, listen to their ideas, and incorporate their ideas in the evaluation instrument.

Portfolios are collections of complete works organized in systematic form. They have been used by artists and architects for many years to showcase the best examples of their work. The concept has been adapted by educators as a learning and assessment tool that includes reflection on and self-evaluation of work the student considers as representative or as fulfilling learning objectives. Portfolios can also include peer evaluations and the teacher's comments.

With the implementation of blended and online learning, *e-portfolios* or *webfolios* have begun to be used for assessment. Webfolios are static pages whose functionality is derived from the inclusion of hyperlinks, whereas e-portfolios are dynamic pages that include student work (Batson, 2002). E-portfolios should allow the addition of the self- and peer evaluations. They



generally include the notion of a digital resource (personal artifacts, instructor comments) demonstrating growth, allowing for flexible expression (i.e. customized folders and site areas to meet the skill requirements of a particular job), and permitting access to varied interested parties (parents, potential employers, fellow learners, and instructors). (Siemens, 2004b, ¶ 3)

Because alternative assessment is a dynamic process that promotes the use of metacognitive strategies, e-portfolios fit well with student-centered teaching approaches, and each stage in their creation contributes to students' lifelong learning:

- collecting and saving artifacts that represent success and growth
- selecting those artifacts that show the achievement of objectives
- reflecting on work done
- evaluating growth
- setting learning goals to overcome gaps in the learning process
- making work available for peer and teacher feedback (Barrett, 1999–2000)

E-portfolios can be created on a CD, on a static Web page, or in an interactive space where peers and teachers can leave feedback, such as a guest book, blog, forum, voice board, wiki, videocast, or videoblog (see Tosh & Werdmuller, 2004, for a discussion of blogs as e-portfolios). Formatted portfolio applications, both commercial and free, are available on the Web (see Appendix D). However, for security and convenience, it is preferable to provide space on the school's own server. Wikis are ideal for e-portfolios because they can be password protected. They allow students to post and organize their work where they can receive teacher and peer feedback, and no knowledge of HTML is required. Whatever format is used to create an e-portfolio, the essentials are to formulate the objectives clearly and to provide self-reflection on the selected activities. E-portfolios, as a cumulative record of work, can present the teacher with multiple views of the instructional process as seen through the eyes of the students throughout the course of a term.

Conclusion

We have briefly summarized the main characteristics of alternative assessment and its importance for assessing instructional goals in situations where the student is the center of the learning process. We have also suggested the combination of contracts; Web-based activities evaluated with criteria clearly established in rubrics, checklists, and inventories; and reflective e-portfolios used to implement alternative assessment in Web-enhanced, blended, or wholly online courses. These types of assessment allow for sufficient time

and feedback to the language learner and lay the groundwork for growth in autonomy.

However, when using alternative assessment, teachers lose power and control, and more work is involved—preplanning, correcting drafts, providing ongoing feedback—and students may not be used to taking responsibility for their learning. To overcome these problems, a change of paradigm is necessary. As suggested throughout this volume, learning is not information transfer, and students are not passive recipients of information. Teacher training in this new vision of the assessment process is needed. Modeling, coaching, and scaffolding should be considered as follow-up activities for training sessions. Teachers as well as students need to be aware of the importance of the learning process. Furthermore, the validity of assessment in blended and online courses has been questioned by administrators and teachers who see quantitative exams as the only reliable source of evaluation; they are afraid that students will cheat in the online exams. Formative and summative evaluations that take place throughout a course, with the help of alternative assessment techniques and instruments, such as those suggested in this chapter, are crucial for e-learning. A well-formed assessment plan will help teachers and administrators see that they have nothing to fear.

Explorations

1. Thinking of your own educational context, would you use any of the alternative evaluation strategies suggested in this chapter? Which ones? Why?
2. How would you involve your students in the design of any of the assessment instruments you use? How could you best make use of this involvement as part of the instructional process?
3. How can you best give your students opportunities to reflect on their learning process? Explore some of the learning tools, such as rubrics, checklists, and K-W-L charts, suggested in this chapter.
4. How would you include self- and peer evaluation in your assessment plan? How would you use that evaluation to revise your instructional processes?
5. Given the resources of your instructional context, what Web tools would you incorporate into your assessment plan? How would you prevent students from cheating?

