

Comparison between Perception and Use of Alternative Assessment Techniques in Teaching of English at Secondary Level

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Abstract

The quantitative, survey type study was aimed to explore the difference between the perception towards alternative assessment and practical application of alternative assessment techniques by the secondary school teachers of English subject in tehsil Gujrat. There were total of 146 teachers teaching English subject in the tehsil. It comprised both rural and urban schools, so the researchers selected 21 teachers from 74 rural teachers and 19 urban teachers from 72, using stratified random sampling technique. For survey a tool comprising three sections was adapted. The first section was about demographic and instructions and purpose of survey. The second section contained 21 statements to be rated on five point Likert scale for the measurement of perception about alternative assessment, whereas third section comprised 17 statements to measure the use of alternative assessment techniques. The researchers made personal visits to ensure the 100% response rate. Frequency, percentages and t-statistics were employed to analyze the data. It was found that the secondary school teachers had a high perception towards alternative assessment but use of these technique is not at the level of perception. Indicating the gap between the perception and use of alternative assessment techniques by the secondary school teachers while teaching English in tehsil Gujrat. The researchers recommend in-service training of the Secondary School Teachers of English subject for the use of alternate assessment during teaching learning process. The exposure to alternate assessment maybe helpful in developing constructive and encouraging attitude towards assessment methods in the classroom.

Keywords: Alternative Assessment, Implementation, Traditional Assessment, Assessment Type, Learning Outcomes, Secondary School Teachers

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Introduction

An important component of the learning process is classroom assessment. Instructors spend a large part of their instructional time in assessment activities. So it is obvious that there is a deep and active relationship between teaching learning and assessment system. Both are interrelated and strengthening each other (Popham, 2005). By conducting authentic and relevant assessment teaching learning process improves a lot. Assessment endorses instruction (Torrance, 1995). There is strong relationship between teaching strategies and assessment techniques employed during the teaching learning process. So from this viewpoint it is perceived that assessment is a rudimentary factor in teaching learning practice and procedures and without true evaluation may not be possible.

According to Cotton (2005), classroom assessment is such a mechanism that can be utilized to indicate attainment level or mental caliber of a learner. Herman (2001) likewise gave the similar view that assessment is a continuous process and through this approach learners' information and understanding can be perceived and detected. Herman (1991) stated that it is a practice which is being used to know the current knowledge and proficiency level of learners.

All the activities executed by teachers and by the pupils provide feedback for effective teaching and to adjust learning according to that feedback (Black & William, 1998). From the above discussion it may be concluded that assessment play an indispensable role in maintaining the learning process active.

Cresswell (2001) stated that, old and traditional sorts of assessment activities are not suitable for assessing the expressive and communicative skills. The traditional usual tests just evaluate the students' caliber of identifying the exact and correct answer. They do not focus on critical thinking and creativity. So, with the passage of time it became clear that new teaching methods are the dire need of the age, in order to incorporate novel viewpoints. Therefore, assessment approaches should be adjusted accordingly. According to Brown (2004) traditional assessment cannot prepare students critical thinking and creativity.

Theories Underlying Assessment Practices

With the passage of time, due to the findings of different research studies and new demands of the modern age in the area of information, there is a need that assessment methods should also be changed. Modern psychology has exposed advanced and new facts of the working of the mind; According to the new demands of the learners the teacher are trying their best to device innovative and novel methods, techniques and styles of teaching (Shlayer, 2000). The most famous and distinguished schools of thought differ in the philosophy for the use of assessment techniques are as under:

1. Behaviorism. This theory is formed on manifest adaptation and alteration in behavior. Behaviorism focuses on an innovative behavioral system, recurring

repeatedly and frequently unless it converts into a predictable routine. The behaviorist movement remained dominant in the early part of the 20th century. Ivan Pavlov and John B. Watson (1878-1958) and Skinner were the Behaviorism's unsurpassed and well known philosophers. Ivan Pavlov discovered classical conditioning; John B. Watson rejected contemplative approaches and tried to restrict psychology to experimental psychology whereas Skinner desired to offer ethical basis to behaviorism (Shepard, 2000).

2. Cognitivism. In 1950's the American Psychology manifested itself in Cognitivism. One of the chief supporters of cognitive psychology was Jean Piaget. In this period behaviorist theory was considered narrow as it restricted the person's capability to just facts gaining. In the 1960s, the theory of cognitivism became very popular. This theory recommends that learning is not a simple process but it involves more complex procedures. Simple rote memorization cannot accomplish the requirement of real and accurate learning process. Conventional methods of assessment true/false, MCQs and matching columns cannot achieve the aim of actual assessment. Theory of cognitivism advocates that learning is a forceful and dynamic process of mind construction (Stecher, 2010) which cannot be performed in sluggish and inactive mental state of mind. That's why teaching learning process require assessment methods that should be more activity based and develop learner's problem solving and reasoning skill. So in this way alternative assessment is more appropriate to learning as it needs students to incorporate and create.

3. Constructivism. In last decade of 20th century, a new theory constructivism was developed. Constructivism is student centered. All the educational activities revolve around the learner. This theory is a reaction against behaviorism and cognitivism. Students do not acquire knowledge by passive rote memorization and by captivating facts. Learners are the vigorous and energetic participants in learning process. They frame their own concept and understanding, develop their own perception and draw their own inferences, and construct their own intellectual notions (Perkins, 1992).

Traditional Assessment

Teachers normally use written test comprising MCQs or short answers questions based on memorization is named as traditional assessment. It is a learners' cognition test. Generally Multiple Choice Questions, True/False Questions, completion test and matching columns are included in traditional kinds of assessment. The basic purpose of this assessment is to recall or recognize facts. Construction or creativity is alien to traditional assessment. It is commonly conducted in a measured and calculated manner.

Alternative Assessment

The expression alternative assessment can be normally called, an assessment method which is alternate to customary traditional written tests. In alternative assessment students display the capability and understanding. This capability cannot be measured by using MCQs, T/F or matching. Open ended questions indicate learners' reasoning ability and critical thinking power (Worthen, 2003). In alternative assessment various approaches are being used to find out learner's knowledge and understanding to exhibit what they can implement.

1. Observation
2. Portfolios
3. Peer Assessment
4. Anecdotal Records
5. Audio and Video Recordings
6. Checklists, Rating Scales and Rubrics
7. Diaries, Journals and Writing Folders
8. Self-Evaluation
9. Presentation /Demonstration
10. Open Writing

Move from Traditional Assessment to Alternative Assessment

Educationists think that shift from customary and conventional assessment to alternative assessment is because of changes that are occurring in the work. In the past, institutions prepared learners for industrial and mechanical determinations that were considered the pillar of the economic system. Institutions concentrated on necessary proficiency, knowledge and rudimentary understanding (Wallen, 2006). In the past traditional paper and pencil tests appropriately calculated the information based knowledge. Now the trend has been changed; as the move from industrial to an information-based economy, the different and fresh place of work require workers to use high-level of skills and knowledge to solve multisided and multidimensional issues (Rogers, 1991) and for achieving all these objectives, alternative assessment may prove fruitful, because alternative assessments focus on evolving imaginative and creative skills. These disregard rote memorization and factual understanding and learning. These assist students to prepare them for the manifold jobs which may prove very useful for them in the forthcoming economy.

The different innovative theories in learning and education have focused on to put more emphasis on achievement of practical and useful knowledge, rather than just getting the pieces of data. The shift from traditional paper pencil test to alternative assessments may be termed performance assessment (Pollock, 2001).

In Pakistan as in many other developing countries, the assessment practices of public secondary schools are predominantly rooted in summative processes based on

traditional paper pencil test. Little, if any, attention is given to alternative assessment approaches. Analyses of different research studies revealed that alternative assessment techniques are considered as all-inclusive and wide ranging assessment tools that broadened their variety of assessment approaches and scheme, stimulated collective and cooperative learning, indorsed and encouraged rational powers of learners and established learners' keen interests in English language (Shahid, 2002). Although teachers faced many problems such as greater load, overloaded classes, a lot of syllabus, learners' negativity and more than that annual board system. Instructors want to change away the inflexible, rigid testing to a flexible assessment system (Rahmani, 2012). According to Siddiqui (2010) solution to the problem is that professional development programmes for the teachers should be launched on a large scale in order to introduce alternative assessment techniques as a complementary assessment system rather than short term, small scale trainings.

Research Design

Quantitative research approach was employed to address the major objective of the study. The major focus was to explain the level of gap between perception and use of alternative techniques while teaching subject of English. In quantitative approach, survey was the appropriate design used by the researchers, survey questionnaire used for this study was adapted from Shehzadi (2017) measuring perception and use towards alternative assessment. English teachers of Teshil Gujrat of Punjab province at secondary level were the population of the study. There were total of 146 secondary school teachers teaching English as subject. Both rural and urban schools were included in the population of the study. Therefore, using stratified random sampling technique, 21 rural teachers out of 74 and 19 urban teachers out of 72 constituted sample for this research. Objectives of the study were further articulated into three hypotheses.

- **H₀₁:** There is no difference between the perception towards alternative assessment and use of alternative assessment among secondary school English teachers of tehsil Gujrat.
- **H₀₂:** There is no difference between perception towards alternative assessment of teachers in English subject across locality in tehsil Gujrat.
- **H₀₃:** There is no difference between the use of alternative assessment by secondary school teachers in English subject across locality in tehsil Gujrat.

Quantitative techniques were adopted for the study. A questionnaire consisted of two parts; one part for the perception and other for the use of alternative assessment techniques was adapted from Shehzadi (2017) study.

Development of Instrument

The researchers adapted a questionnaire from Shehzadi (2017) study after reviewing the similar tools for the measurement of perception and use of alternative assessment. The questionnaire was based upon five point Likert scale, for perception

component and Always = 5, Usually = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1 for measuring the use of alternative assessment. The tool was consisted of three parts: first meant for demographic information, second comprising 21 statements measuring perception towards alternative assessment and last section comprised 17 statements to investigate the level of use of alternative assessment.

Method of Data Collection

As the data were collected from the public sector teachers of secondary schools, so permission from higher authority and the heads of the respective schools were obtained before administration of the questionnaire. Researchers had made personal visits to the questionnaire filled. It helped to further explain the tool where it was necessary. Personal visits were beneficial for the study in a sense to avoid ambiguity, ensure 100% response rate and timely filling of the questionnaires.

Results

Data collected from secondary school teachers was of quantitative in nature. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to find out the opinions of the SSTs and then t-test was employed to find out the level of difference between rural and urban SSTs.

Table.2

Secondary School Teachers' Perception of Alternative Assessment techniques

Sr	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	To me portfolio encourages learners to be involved in self assessment of learning.	21	19	-	-	-
2	I perceive portfolios are systematic and purposeful developed documents to assess learning over time.	17	23	-	-	-
3	Portfolios are important assessment tools to investigate depth of students' knowledge in English teaching.	16	22	2	-	-
4	To me pattern of students leaning may be explored by developing portfolio of students work over the period of time.	11	22	7	-	-
5	I consider observation as a potential tool to provide feedback and optimise performance of the learners.	21	19	-	-	-
6	I consider self-evaluation as an essential element for productive learning.	18	21		1	-
7	Students are usually more motivated while	12	25	3	-	-

	performing their own work.					
8	To me self assessment of learning help to strengthen the student teacher interaction.	15	22	3	-	-
9	Self assessment is helpful in identification of own strengths and weaknesses in learning.	15	18	7	-	-
10	To me focused group interview produces insights for developing strategies for better achievement.	15	23	2	-	-
11	Peer assessment is useful in making the learners active participants of learning process.	12	25	3	-	-
12	In my point of view peer assessment work as active technique in assessment of students learning.	17	22	1	-	-
13	I am of the opinion that teachers should prepare checklist to track the learning progress.	14	21	4	1	-
14	To me assessment work as motivational technique and help learners to be active participants.	16	20	3	1	-
15	Journals have long been in exercise to assess a learner's perception of a subject on a theme.	18	22	-	-	-
16	To me open ended questions may be utilised to provide chances to learners for elicitation of their understanding.	13	24	2	1	-
17	Open ended questions provide learners more opportunities for appropriate engagement to learning activities.	19	21	-	-	-
18	I feel that demonstration requires students to display knowledge and skill that may not be judged by MCQs or T/F test.	18	19	2	1	-
19	Teachers may use interviews to collect a lot of information about different aspects of students learning.	18	22	0	-	-
20	I use anecdotal record for specific observations of individual student behaviours.	17	20	3	-	-
21	Teachers may use anecdotal record to get in depth understanding of the learning process of the individuals.	19	17	4	-	-
Overall Sum		342	447	46	5	0
Percentage		40%	53%	5%	2%	0%

Table 2 presents the variation in the percentages of alternative assessment techniques. 40% SSTs were strongly agreed indicating their positive perception towards alternate assessment techniques and 53% agreed whereas just 5% responded uncertain and just 02% SSTs were disagreed and 0% strongly disagreed. To comprehend the position more precisely, graphical presentation of the percentages may be very help.

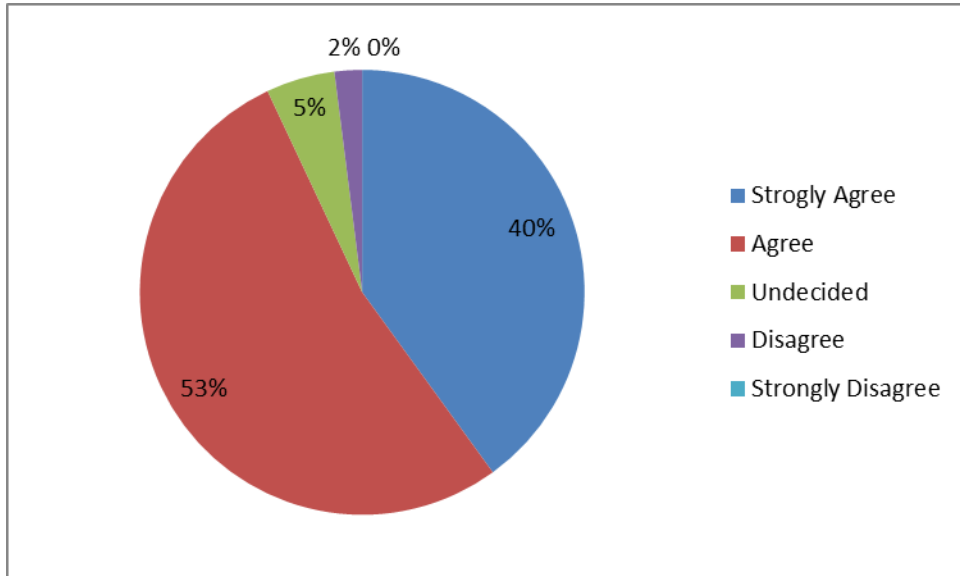


Figure 1. *Perception in percentages*

This figure presents the overall percentages of the perception of alternative assessment techniques. Overall 83% teachers were agreed and just 5% teachers remained undecided, just 2% teachers disagreed. It shows that SSTs have a high level of comprehension of alternative assessment techniques.

Table 3

Utilization of alternate assessment by SSTs in English

Sr	Statements	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	I use portfolio in assessing student’s learning of English language.	11	24	5	-	-
2	I interpret portfolios data for investigating the depth of the English knowledge in students.	15	20	5	-	-
3	I employ observation as classroom assessment tool for evaluating student’s progress in English language.	11	26	3	-	-
4	I utilize self-assessment in involving the learner directly in the learning process.	12	24	3	1	-
5	I conduct focused groups for acquiring information on highly personal or socially sensitive topics of English.	8	25	7	-	-

6	I assign the students work to other students for assessment.	18	15	7	-	-
7	I use check list in English language to determine whether students have mastered the desired outcome.	10	23	7	-	-
8	I administer check list to determine whether students have mastered the desired outcome.	11	28	0	1	-
9	I ask students to write journals as classroom assessment tool for evaluating learning progress.	13	21	6	-	-
10	I utilize classroom projects to improve understanding of the student's ability.	16	18	5	1	-
11	Open writing helps me for assessing learner's manifestation of his own potential and approach.	7	23	7	3	-
12	Open ended answers (produced by the students) for getting additional information from the students are helpful to me.	10	22	7	1	-
13	I conduct demonstrations as alternative assessment technique to reflect everyday situations within realistic and meaningful contexts.	10	25	3	2	-
14	I conduct one on one interview to reveal students' critical thinking.	10	22	6	2	-
15	I operate anecdotal records to get useful insights into the students learning.	14	21	5		-
16	Anecdotal notes are used by me to record specific observations of individual student's behaviour.	10	22	8		-
17	I can maintain anecdotal records easily.	8	24	8		-
Total Frequencies		194	383	92	11	
Percentage		28%	57%	13%	2%	0%

Table 3 shows the various levels of percentages of the use of secondary school teachers' alternative assessment techniques. 28% SSTs claimed that they always use alternative assessment techniques, 57% SSTs were of the view that they usually use these techniques in their class. 13% SSTs use these sometimes and 2% teachers claimed that they rarely have utilized these techniques in their classes. In Figure 2 Graphical presentation of the percentages of use of alternative assessment techniques are shown.

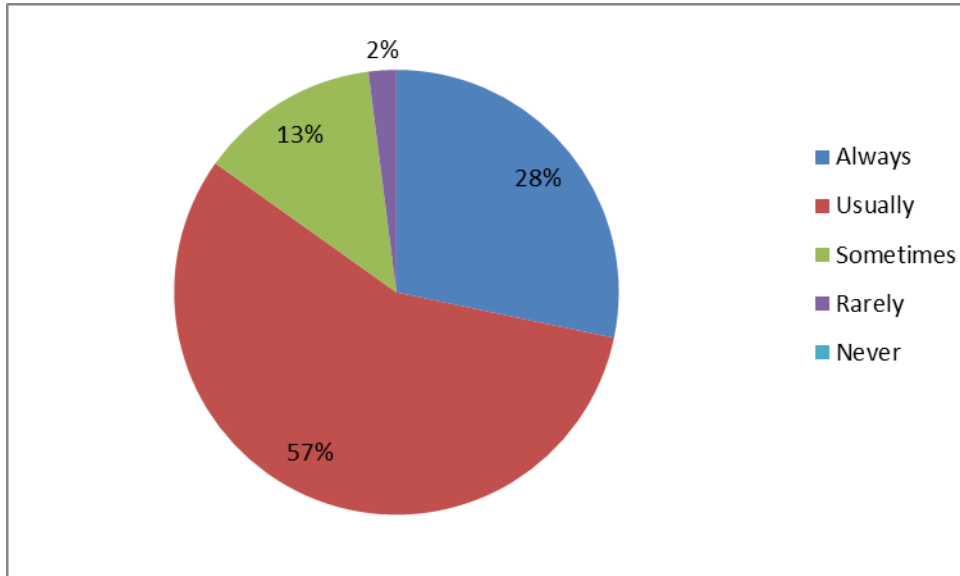


Figure 2. Graphical presentation of the percentages of Use

The graph presents the various percentages of the use alternative assessment techniques in a more precise way.

Table 4

Secondary school teachers mean score of overall perception and use

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall Perception	90.45	6.93
Overall Use	64.45	4.65

Table 4 shows that the mean of “Over Perception” of alternative assessment techniques of rural and urban locality is 90.45 and the mean of “Overall Use” of alternative assessment techniques of both the localities rural and urban are 64.45.

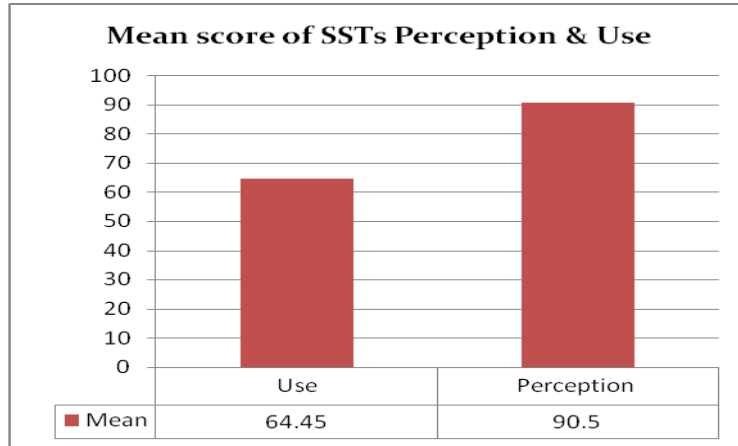


Figure 3. Graphical representation of the mean score of perception and use

The difference in the mean score of overall use and overall perception of alternative assessment techniques has been presented in the graph. This graph presents the confirmation to reject the null hypothesis that the secondary school teacher’s perception and use of alternative assessment techniques are significantly different from each other.

Table 5

Comparison of rural and urban Secondary School Teacher’s perception of alternative assessment techniques

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Std. Error	df	t-value	Sig
Perception Rural	21	89.47	8.33	2.02			
Perception Urban	19	91.50	5.12	1.28	26.81	-.836	.06

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

The summary of the statistics could not provide enough evidences to reject the null hypothesis. The mean score (M=89.47) of perception of rural secondary school teachers was different from the mean score (M=91.50) of urban secondary school teachers but the mean difference (MD=2.03) were not statistically significant. The null hypothesis was accepted to provide the result that perception of rural and urban teacher of tehsil Gujrat towards alternate assessment was same.

Table.6

Comparison of rural and urban SST's Use of alternative assessment techniques

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	df	t-value	Sig
Rural	21	65.88	4.31	1.04			
Urban	19	62.93	4.65	1.16	30.41	1.882	.83

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

In order to test the hypothesis again t-test was used. It highlighted that the mean score (M=62.93) of use of rural secondary school teachers was different from the mean score (M=65.88) of urban secondary school teachers but not statistically significant. There were no significant evidences to reject the null hypothesis, which indicated that teachers of both urban and rural locality were utilizing alternate assessment for teaching of English at secondary level equally.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this quantitative study were as following the mean score of the “Perception” of alternative assessment techniques is 90.45, and the mean score of the “Use” of alternative assessment techniques is 64.45. The t-test and descriptive statistic employed, explored that they were significantly different from each other. So, the first null hypothesis that there was no significant difference between perception and use of alternative assessment techniques was rejected. There was no significant difference between rural and urban secondary school teachers on the perception of alternative assessment techniques. More over rural and urban secondary school teachers were not different in the use of alternative assessment techniques.

From the findings of the study researchers concluded that teachers’ have high perception towards alternate assessment. They have a clear cut understanding of various alternative assessment techniques but SSTs are not willing to use alternative assessment techniques as per their level of perception towards alternative assessment. Moreover, rural and urban secondary school teachers are not significantly different from each other.

The first finding is in consonance with the conclusion of the study conducted by Grabin (2007) for the use of alternate assessment. The results and conclusions of the study showed that the teachers have the perception and awareness about alternative assessment techniques but not actually using it in the classroom. So, there is a great difference between perception and practice. So, the study concluded that mostly teachers use traditional assessment practices in their classes. Second and third findings are in consonance with the results of the study “Classroom Assessment Practices of Ohio teachers” by Craig (1998). The common judgment about measurement practices

vary by locality. From these studies it can be concluded that alternative assessments techniques are being used mostly by teachers in urban schools whereas teachers in countryside background are not so much interested in alternative assessment techniques. Findings of the studies also revealed that teachers thought alternative assessment techniques as an extra burden. They still considered traditional assessment practices appropriate. These studies also pointed out that substantial practice of alternative assessment techniques may prove very useful at all levels of education. English Language Secondary School Teachers' in-service training with special reference to alternative assessment techniques in classroom is suggested, this training may also lead to improve constructive and encouraging attitude towards assessment methods in the classroom. According to the new learning theories, reforms should be made in traditional assessment system.

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