



## The effectiveness of implementing innovative strategies of assessment in the Algerian ESP classrooms

### L'efficacité de la mise en œuvre des stratégies innovantes d'évaluation dans les classes ESP Algériennes

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**Abstract:** *The present study takes part in the field of the analysis of the assessment forms in the Algerian university context. It targets, at the same time, the sensitization for the integration of innovative techniques in the assessment practices. It also introduces the challenges the practitioners face when designing assessment practices in the ESP classrooms. It is from experimental research carried out at ABOU-BAKR BELKAID University of Tlemcen. This analysis is carried out using an approach that is both quantitative and qualitative, where the interpretation of the data dominates; and for this, assessment in its traditional and innovative techniques has served as a primary theoretical reference.*

**Key words:** *innovation, assessment practices, ESP classrooms, practitioners, learning measurements.*

**Résumé:** *La présente contribution s'inscrit dans le champ de l'analyse des types d'évaluation en contexte universitaire algérien, l'étude vise à la fois la sensibilisation à la nécessité de l'intégration des techniques innovantes dans l'évaluation mais aussi, à la présentation des défis auxquels sont confrontés les praticiens lors de la préparation des pratiques évaluatives dans 'la classe ESP'. Et ce, à partir d'une recherche expérimentale réalisée à l'université ABOU-BAKR BELKAID de Tlemcen. Ladite analyse est menée grâce à une approche à la fois quantitative mais aussi qualitative où domine l'interprétation des données. A cet effet, les travaux de recherche sur l'évaluation traditionnelle et innovante nous ont servi une référence théorique de base.*

**Mots clés :** *techniques innovantes, pratiques d'évaluation, classes ESP, praticiens et innovation, mesures l'enseignement/apprentissage*



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The present study is devoted to highlight the pivotal role of innovation in assessment that is debated and studied by many academicians and practitioners. Various educational studies centered on the disruptive innovation and the successful assessment strategies. Assessment is an important issue that the teacher has to cover in the teaching/ learning process. It presents an essential role in the 21st century as it bridges the gap between teaching and learning. It is “The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving learning and development.” (Palomba and Banta, 1999: 4). Assessment in its characteristics could be seen into two main forms; traditional and innovative. The former pertains to traditional methods that focus on learners' scores and performance. In this vein, Quansah (2018) announced that traditional assessment methods appraise students' lower-level thinking skills by orienting them to memorizing and recalling knowledge. The latter however, puts emphasis upon innovative strategy that represents a new image for measuring students' competencies. It is a key driver of educational advancement. Although different assessments have been recently used, the common target of these appraisal operations is to “develop next generation assessments aligned with new academic standards ” (Wolf et al., 2016: 158). According to Bragg, Whitworth and Firth, (2019), designing new styles in assessment has the power to be classified as best practice by language experts, tutors and examiners. In the area of ESP, The practitioners try to innovate, to share contemporary and recent techniques in their teaching. This could be also found when assessing the students' learning. Nevertheless, assessment specialists are progressively reflecting on the ideas behind special assessment practices as well as on the role of assessment in education. In the same context, innovation in assessment is identified as one of the major targets in the teaching-learning process.

The problematic of this study underlines that practitioners, when assessing their learners' performance, use the classical and traditional assessment techniques that seem redundant and subjective in some sorts. This would automatically be neglected by the ESP students. To advance deeply in this study, we have already traced our objective that is specifically to analyze the degree of creativity in the assessment practices of the English for Specific Purposes practitioners, and the new strategies implemented for enhancing the quality of their measurements that is the focal point of this survey. In the field of ESP, assessment and innovations represent another challenge for the practitioner. Innovative strategies are administered for identifying, reporting and then, facilitating assessment processes. In this context, innovation makes assessment practices as new in their design and circumstances. It portrays new prospects of assessment which are particularly addressing twenty-first-century intensions. The current hypothesis is that the Algerian ESP practitioner opts for innovative strategies, when assessing the students' performance enrolled at the University of Tlemcen, to facilitate grading and counting marks.

We have adopted an approach that is both quantitative and qualitative in order to shed light on the fundamental questioning of theory and practice that encounters the matter of innovation and assessment, which is presented as follows: how can innovation strategies regulate the vision and conceptions toward assessment? The following research questions are set to reinforce the main question:

- ▶ What assessment techniques do ESP practitioners use to enhance the teaching quality?

- ▶ What characteristics should innovative assessment include to reach the targeted output?
- ▶ To what extent does innovation in assessment benefit the learning quality and behavior of the Algerian ESP students?

## 1. Methodology

This research is empirical as it pertains to the elements gathered in a situation under study and which is also characterized by the description of reality. It requires quantitative and qualitative analyses. This corresponds to a corpus made up of a questionnaire comprising questions through which practitioners specializing in ESP in different departments were interrogated as well as an interpretative analyses were taken from the collected data.

A group of ten practitioners is selected to take part in the present study. They are actually teaching English at the level of different ESP departments in Tlemcen University. They have been assigned to their experience in ESP settings. This long time experience would allow the researcher to gather the necessary information for the advancement of the study.

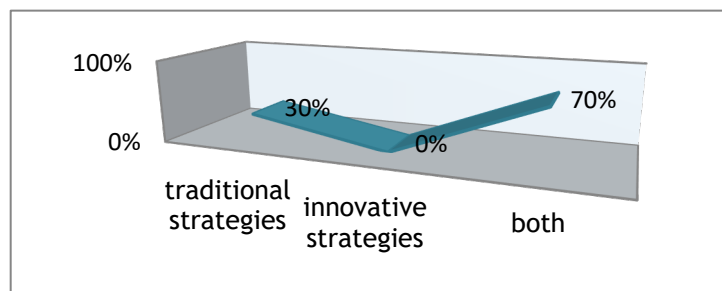
## 2. Results analyses

We will examine throughout this current study the information gathered from the participants in the questionnaire to reach the main objective that aims at determining the degree of innovativeness of Algerian ESP practitioners and answer the underlined questions.

### 2.1. Multiple-technique practices in assessment

We initially opted for the quantification of innovative teachers in their assessment practices from those who utilize the traditional methods in their appraisal procedures. The focus has been directed towards teachers able to combine traditional and innovative assessment). The graph below shows the rate of using either traditional, new or a combination of techniques in assessment.

Graph1: Strategies employed in assessment



According to the collected data, it is noticed that no practitioner is dealing with exclusive innovation in his assessment. The considerable portion of respondents uses traditional methods in their assessment which are estimated to 30%. However, the largest number of teachers uses rather a multiplicity of methods ranging from traditional to innovative ones in their assessments. This portion of teachers equals a rate of 70%. This explains that innovation is present during the various assessment practices carried out by the Algerian practitioner specializing in teaching a specific language. This combination of approaches with adaptation to the assessment context and the needs of ESP students are according to the Algerian teacher more promising than the exclusive use of a single type of assessment. Such an

approach provides greater flexibility for practitioners to establish a learner-centered assessment system.

We are pointing out that assessment practices can take various forms that should not be considered as competitive but rather as complementary to another (Siarova et al., 2017). Moreover, different types of innovative tools that have been employed by ESP teachers were represented to us as follows:

- ▶ Digital formative assessment tools (including feedback, online surveys, polls, and scoring games)
- ▶ Classroom interaction ( peer and self assessment)
- ▶ Remind- send quick tests to students to check for understanding
- ▶ Chatty - lets students chime with questions or opinions during the lecture
- ▶ Quiz let (a mobile app, quick quizzes).
- ▶ E-assessment ( Moodle, E-quizzes and Google form)
- ▶ ICT's grading tools
- ▶ Portfolios

## 2.2. Innovative assessment and its effect on ESP teaching

This question aims at determining the attitudes of the ESP practitioners vis-a-vis the new assessment tools and their effects on the teaching / learning process. As noticed, seven of the participants (70%) argued that when assessment and innovation are interconnected together, they could bring improvement in the teaching process. Three respondents, on the other side, declared that the students' learning would not be, by a meanor another, affected through involving innovative strategies with assessment. This second group encompasses teachers who prefer to use simple and classical types in their assessment because they see that there will not be any advancement in the learning process.

At this stage of measurement, innovation in assessment is valuable in enhancing the process of teaching. The association between innovation and certain assessments starts raising some assumptions about the relationship between these two elements with the educational outcomes. Nowadays, any deeper appraisal procedure would require more creations and innovations to gain time, practicality, objectivity, and transparency of the students' outcomes and of their influence on the whole ESP teaching and learning environment. Key drivers of innovative assessment and their impact on education could be seen as follows:

- In accordance to the teaching staff including; stakeholders, practitioners, and students who agree to accept assessment in its new dimensions.
- Innovation in assessment and teaching development are strongly connected to generating improved techniques of assessment practices and the targeted knowledge.
- The use of modern technologies in assessment and the application of ICT tools is particularly a key promise for innovation and teaching.

It is noticed that innovation is good and even necessary but should always rely on standards of assessment. Hence, the combination of innovation with assessment can help in developing a wide range of performance measurements of both; what students learn and what teachers teach.

### 2.3. Characteristics of innovative assessment for the Algerian practitioner

The carried out annotation mainly pertains to the statistical analysis of the specific characteristics of the innovative assessment of the Algerian teacher specializing in ESP. Below, is table.1 which demonstrates the main characteristics.

Table 1:Recapitulation on the specific characteristics of the innovative assessments for the Algerian ESP practitioners

CHARACTERISTICS OF INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT	Q 0 1	Q 0 2	Q 0 3	Q 0 4	Q 0 5	Q 0 6	Q 0 7	Q 0 8	Q 0 9	Q 0 1 0
Include instrumental technologies.	X	X		X	X	X				X
Involve motivated participants to intervene in any new form of tasks.							X		X	X
The same characteristics as in the traditional methods (validity, authenticity, fair....etc).	X		X	X		X	X	X		
Provide grades anonymously. Integration of machines in assessment).		X	X		X			X	X	X

Among the teachers' choices, it should be noted that three characteristics were selected by six teachers, i.e. 60 %; namely: the first, the third and the fourth choices, in other words:

- ▶ Include instrumental technologies,
- ▶ The same characteristics as in the traditional methods (validity, authenticity, fair....etc),

Provide grades anonymously. (Integration of machines in assessment).

Teachers had the option of selecting several characteristics at the same time; and as it appears clearly in the table above , the choices made by each of them vary between (1-3 and 4) except the three teachers (7-9 and 10) had included characteristic n° 02 (Involve motivated participants to intervene in any new form of tasks.). This explains that the ESP practitioner rarely involves the learner in the assessment practices. In contrast, he has a predilection for the use of technological tools, preserving the same characteristics as in traditional assessment or for anonymity during his assessment practices.

### 2.4. What improvements could innovative assessment provide to the Algerian ESP student?

We focus our attention on the significant effect of innovative assessment on the ESP students' skills (writing, speaking, reading, and listening) and the sub- skills including the personal and psychological progression.

The impact of innovative strategies of assessment was investigated via a question asked to the participants. A number of positive points have been furnished to boost the ESP learners to strongly accept these forms of assessment. Hence, Innovative assessment is regarded as effective in the developments of the personal and linguistic capacities of the ESP students. In fact, with the implementation of new assessment forms, according to some respondents, the students' literacy will be promoted. Accordingly, decisions on assessment will have a noticeable impact on the students' personalities. "The new forms of assessment through which learners have an active role, make them aware of their learning processes and develop a sense of responsibility for their learning" (European Commission, 2018, cited in Kapsalis, 2019: 11). Improvements would take time to occur as students need to adapt their learning efforts with the employment of the new forms of assessments.

According to the answers, it is noticed that (67%) of the informants confirmed that it is very possible to associate the innovative strategies with assessment, but it requires careful consideration to adapt them with the practices of the teaching-learning process. Occasionally with some special learners, it is impossible for a teacher to assess their learning progress that is why he needs to be creative and adaptive of innovative strategies as ICT-based assessment to enhance the students' literacy effectiveness. It is then important to be creative in teaching as well as in assessment. The new vision to the appraisal practices allows the ESP students to take part in assessment. Furthermore, achieving innovative objectives and fostering creativity requires more innovative testing criteria and, accordingly, more open assessment methods are required. The combination of innovation with assessment can help develop a wide range of performance measurements for the ESP students.

### **2.5. Innovation in assessment and its support to the ESP students' learning**

This part sustains the answers of the previous one. Some of the informants replied that innovative techniques can bring novelty into the service of the ESP learner, mainly at the level of their psychology. All in all, various effective changes have been brought out indicating that new assessment strategies can help the students rely on themselves and become more self-confident. The answers revealed that these strategies are fruitful in the empowerment of attitudes of the students. Consequently, they gain ownership of their learning and develop their motivation and become self-sustained learners to assume the responsibility as active partners in the assessment practices. This part also highlights the positive effect and the change of the new form of assessment on the success of the ESP learners, on their self-efficacy, engagement, and motivation. The respondents further declared that these new forms illustrate their efficacy and potentiality to increase the students' motivation, creativity, and self-reliance. It was also added that assessment encourages active learning, fostering a number of skills like; reflection, critical thinking, self-awareness, as well as giving the learners insights into the assessment process in order to be autonomous students to appraise their own learning competencies.

On the other hand, the skillful practitioner can boost his students' engagement for learning and for assessment. Potentially, it is through the introduction of innovative approaches to assessment, teachers can measure complex cognitive skills and give effective feedback to reasoning processes.

### **3. Discussion**

This study focused on developing measurement models for promoting the teaching/ learning process. As part of this contribution, it was well noticed that there existed some teachers

who do not privilege E-learning and E-assessment so that they prefer to appraise the students' learning through the traditional strategies that they interact directly with the learning environment. In contrast, innovation could be presented during various assessments carried out by the Algerian ESP practitioner. Consequently, the combination of approaches with adaptation to the assessment context and the needs of ESP students are according to the Algerian ESP practitioners more promising than the exclusive use of a single type of assessment. Such an approach provides greater flexibility for practitioners as well as to establish a learner-centered measurement system. This combination empowers the students' creativity and engagement by increasing their capability to express and explain subject content (Lee et. al, 2008). According to the observed points, it is also remarked that though innovation is prominent and even necessary, it should always rely on standards of assessment. The results of the innovation assessment will show performance on each element of the innovation system helping in providing practical recommendations. This combination of innovation with assessment can help develop a wide range of performance measurements for both students and institutions.

In assessment practices, prosperous innovation is the resultant connection between the practitioner's actions with his/ her behavior. This denotes that he is the centre of this process because he is responsible for accommodating new assessment strategies that are, in nature, new pedagogical strategies to be represented as activities, tests, or exams. On the other hand, it is better to inform the ESP students about the principles of integrating innovative strategies within assessments. The practitioner's movement in these measurement activities is inadequate without the participation and the presence of the students. By implementing innovative strategies in assessment, the ESP students are able to plunge deeply with the subject content, i.e. when generating an output employing various assessment tools; it develops the ESP students' subject engagement. Furthermore, they will promote their employability and gain authentic skills like reflection, motivation, and critical thinking. Thus, the success of assessments should be gauged by the extent to which learners are making progress in their learning. In order to engage a good assessment and have an eye on the ESP students' achievements for ascertaining that they have reached the necessary knowledge and skills, it is very crucial that the practitioner should not rely heavily only on one assessment method. He has to be creative and more attentive to employ diverse forms of assessment. In view of the obtained results, deploying new ways of assessment can be a good source of effective teaching and learning.

For the shift from test-based assessment to oscillating between varieties of assessment tools within a system of assessment based on task clarity, the relevance of learning goals, and the student's belief in success would certainly contribute to innovative learning expectations.

To conclude, teaching is an activity that goes hand in hand with assessment and vice versa. Its degree of innovativeness reflects on that of assessment. In other words, the teacher who creates new ways of teaching is the one who has the ability to innovate in assessment in order to avoid redundancy and routine and gain transparency and objectivity. Further, it is not adequate to advance in teaching and assessment without considering the new methods and techniques of progress measurement. The assessment practices require further updating and adjustments to be a purposeful core in the teaching/ learning processes. The changes in design and features would make a change in objectives. This particularly concerns the categorization of learning outcomes and values (formative, summative, peer, and/ or self-

assessment). In the area of assessment, the instructors want to present various forms and give chances for the learners to demonstrate their learning capacities. For ensuring feasible assessment methods, it is important to include innovation to gain certain transparency that comprises clear and directive instructions and does not, by means or another, discriminate or favor a particular group of students and grade them related to the merits of their performance. It is argued that diverse techniques in assessment represent supportive aspects that the students are inspired with to take part and play a more active role and in the design and implementation of an innovative assessment approach. Furthermore, they will gain certain autonomy to assume their responsibility in the teaching/ learning process as whole. The use of innovative assessment enables the Algerian ESP students to acquire a large amount of learning skills to transfer knowledge and competencies and dispositions between learning the target language in its specific dimension and assessment of competencies.

Redesigning the procedures of assessments and bringing other new forms would, supposedly, bring better appraising techniques that can be motivating to both practitioners and students. However, the present findings cannot be generated to a larger scale of ESP practitioners and students because the quantitative aspect has not gained the necessary portion required. Besides, within the present paper, ESP learners were not included in the data collection to provide an overall concluding assignment of the new proposed techniques in assessment. For this and that, the paper remains a modest contribution in the field of teaching/learning and assessment.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I

#### TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you in advance for responding anonymously to this questionnaire, the answers to which will contribute to the completion of a doctoral thesis in English at the University of Tlemcen.

#### Personal information:

1. What is your age group?



Less than 30   
[30- 35]   
[35- 40]   
[40 years and over]

2. Teaching experience: 0-5  5-10  10 and more

3. Specialty area

Didactics   
English for Specific Purposes   
Linguistics (sociolinguistics, applied)   
Literary Studies and Civilization

QUESTIONS

1. Which assessment tools do you use?

Traditional   
New   
Both

2. What should be the characteristics of an innovative assessment practice to achieve your teaching objective?

3. Do you see improvements in the results of your learners when implementing new forms of assessment?

YES   
NO

Say why?

.....  
.....

4. Can assessment and innovation together bring support in the learning process?

YES  NO

4.1. What support can innovation in assessment bring in terms of ESP students' literacy and personality ?

.....  
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Thanks for the valuable contribution