UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Área de Estudios de Posgrado

Maestría en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras

Milton Raul Licona Luna

Assessment Practice in a Self-Access Language Learning Center at Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León

Aspectos a evaluar:

4th. semester

_____

Vo. Bo. del Director de Tesis

Dra. Elizabeth Alvarado Martínez

Ciudad Universitaria, San Nicolás de los Garza, N.L., a ____ de _____ de _____

CONTENT

TABLES AND FIGURES

Introduction and Acknowledgments

Teaching and learning a foreign language implies a series of complex procedures that both teachers and learners must cope with to succeed. Undeniably, teachers have a great deal of responsibility so that learners are able to be competent –according to their level- in a new language. For this to occur, teachers should implement a variety of activities that inform whether learning is actually taking place or not; modifying their teaching ways if necessary. This is exactly the importance of assessment in the language classroom. Carrying out in a proper manner any of the types and techniques of assessment will allow teachers to observe the real progress of language learning, moreover, students will get to know their current learning stage and the desirable language learning level. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the different types of assessment and use them as tools that will support them to create better teaching conditions for effective language learning.

The field of Applied Linguistics is diverse and covers a wide range of linguistic issues, among these the teaching and learning processes of a second language or a foreign language. The M.A. in Applied Linguistics for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (offered at the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León –UANL-) promotes the resolving of the issues previously mentioned since the main objective of this program is the improvement on language teaching through the vocational training of language teachers. Students enrolled in such program have the opportunity to carry out and develop research projects based on a case study, where they are able to identify a problem in the language classroom that is related to the teaching-learning process and make a proposal to mend or solve the spotted issue.

This document is the result of a case study and it contains four major sections. The first section deepens in the problematic of the subject, going from the problem statement to the hypothesis, and it intends to indicate the structure of the research project. The second section displays the conceptual foundations dealing with assessment to later allow the case to be observed and evaluated with a proper theoretical basis. This section was developed throughout the second semester of the Masters' program. The third section contains information regarding the methodology and a description of it and what it involves, additionally it displays the data analysis collected through the interviews to teachers from the case study and observations in

such specific context as well as some conclusions. These activities were covered in different moments of the year 2016, which correspond to the second and third semester of the program. Finally, the fourth section states the findings observed, suggesting possible solutions, but focusing only in one (proposal), putting it into practice and discussing some recommendations for teachers in that specific context that might help others who encounter similar situations in their language classroom.

CHAPTER I

I. Problem Statement

Nowadays there are plenty of classifications in terms of assessment within the teaching and learning processes. One of these categories divides assessment into formal and informal. The formal assessment consists mainly on the administering of standardized tests in the classroom. Such assessment measures the academic level of students based on their obtained marks, score or grades, taking certain criterion into account. On the other hand, the informal assessment is developed on a daily basis through the revision of exercises, the involvement of students in the classroom activities and by observing the improvements on students' skills. In broad terms, it can be established that formal assessment usually is a summative evaluation that reflects the results or the progress made in the teaching and learning process, whereas informal assessment provides feedback for the immediate improvement in the aforementioned process.

In a case study carried out by De Jesús García (2015) in the Escuela Normal de Atlacomulco it is stated that:

> the recurring strategies implemented in a classroom to value the students' performance on their learning of the English language are: the use of exams, quizzes, revision of homework, exercises and participation. Seems as though the exams and quizzes are used as cumulative strategies since they make immediate results available about the students' learning; on the contrary, the revision of homework, the exercises and participation are used as formative strategies (128).

This information does not present a predicament yet; nevertheless, my practicum and teaching experience have allowed me to make some observations on this matter:

a) Although informal assessment is more frequent within the classrooms than the formal one, this last one is still considered as of more importance.

b) The results of the assessment, formal or informal, are not always considered as a diagnosis that has an impact on the strategies of the teaching process.

c) When the results are considered as a diagnosis, in the standardized assessments for the most part, these do not reflect whatsoever the individual learning of the students, instead,

they show the students' position in a standard or given condition. This is, classrooms are heterogeneous, yet students are administered standardized tests.

d) Standardization of evaluations affects negatively the teaching practice, since whatever results are obtained are not used as means to design pertinent or relevant strategies for the learning of each student.

e) Such problem does not prevail when the teaching is individualized - when students take private tutoring, or when schools have a system in which students take English classes according to their command of the language.

What type of assessment facilitates a greater learning of the English language? The literature related to this topic displays various points of view about it. For instance, Abedi (2010) in Performance Assessment for English Language Learners states that:

> Standardized achievement tests that are used for Assessment and accountability purposes may not provide reliable and valid outcomes for English language learners (ELLs) because extraneous sources may confound the outcomes of assessment for these students. Performance assessments, by contrast, may offer opportunities for these students to present a more comprehensive picture of what they know and are able to do.

For the last decades this situation has taken educators to set out different ways for assessment other than the standardize one. Hayman (1995) has found within the Applied Linguistic field literature the "alternative assessment", "informal assessment", "authentic assessment", "performance assessment", "descriptive assessment" and "direct assessment" among others. All of them are proposals of processes and techniques of evaluation, which can be incorporated in the classroom activities.

Hence, some research questions can be posed:

- Which is the type of assessment that prevails in the ELT field in the CAADI (Centro de Auto Aprendizaje de Idiomas) en FOD (Facultad de Organización Deportiva) from the UANL?
- How do these types of assessments affect the learning or acquiring of this foreign language? Do the teachers consider the results as a diagnosis to better their teaching strategies?

If the urgency of having well-skilled language learners - who are actually able to communicate in English- is the main objective for every course of English, then:

- What type of assessment is being carried out in the aforementioned CAADI?
- Is it being successful to achieve the objective of developing language skills?
- Which type of assessment is more appropriate so students improve their learning of English?

II. Hypothesis

ELT in FOD relies on the traditional ways of assessment due to the lack of awareness of other types. It is only in few cases where teachers employ an alternative assessment which influences positively the language learning, but such practice is related to the formation and the commitment of the teacher in his/her teaching ways; unlike the academic programs or the given conditions in this institution which regulate the assessment, so it becomes standardized.

III. Justifcation

The proposal of this research project is particularly relevant to the M.A. in Applied Linguistics in English Language Teaching for the following reasons:

a) Justification on scientific research.

For Ramirez (2013) in *Diez años de investigación en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras,* out of all research work done in Mexico from 2000 to 2011, only 4% corresponds to the subject of assessment. Furthermore, a first approach to recent articles in some of the foremost international magazines on applied linguistics and ELT revealed evidence that such matter (assessment) has not been broadly studied. In the magazines *Applied Linguistics*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *The modern Language Journal*, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *ELT Journal*, *Recall* and *Language Teaching* it can be seen how authors share their insights on traditional topics, and others which can be catalogued as novelty, but then again, the subject of assessment is not noticeable. And throughout a revision of the indexes of such magazines edited in 2014 and

2015, three articles associated with assessment could be found, though none of them directly related to the established proposal.

b) Social justification

According to the *English Proficiency Index* from *EF Education First* (Forbes Mexico, 2013) in the last six years the level of English in Mexico dropped from moderated to low. The described situation presents a problematical outlook for the country as it limits its current capability as well as its future economic development. Economic and cultural globalization requires more competitive human resources –internationally speaking.

The report *Sorry. El Aprendizaje de inglés en México* (2015) reads that we have an English failing system, in which diplomas, grades, and certifications are given and yet there is no guarantee of real learning; this is the reason why it is imperative to find solutions for such unfortunate situation. Moreover, this report assures that it is vital for English teachers to have the necessary tools to implement successful methodologies for better teaching ways.

A probable deficiency lays on how teachers are trained in terms of assessment, and in the malpractice of teachers when assessing inside a classroom. Lopez (2010) declares that the lack of training or formation hinders "assessments to be used in a constructive manner so it facilitates the teaching and learning process" (112).

c) Justification for the Master program.

The syllabus of the M.A. in Applied Linguistics for the Teaching of Foreign Languages program from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL), aims to educate or train human resources to engage in the identification and solving of problems, and who are involved in the designing of proposals to improve the teaching practice, always based on scientific foundation.

In this sense, this research project is adequate to the program since it pursuits to explore and deepen the knowledge of assessment and its link with the designing of strategies for language teaching; topic which may be included in the line of inquiry of "Teoría y Práctica de la Enseñanza".

English has become the most taught language worldwide because of its relevance as an unofficial international language; hence it acts as the lingua franca of speakers of other languages. In this sense, the UANL has observed the necessity and the importance of learning a language, especially English, consequently, it has "encouraged foreign language learning through its *Self*-Access Language Learning Center (CAADI), which support learners to reach language competence" (UANL, 2008). Such centers are available not only for students from the institution, but too, for people in general who want to cope with language barriers that this globalized era demands.

It is essential to point out that in these courses English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). EFL is taught and learned in contexts where the target language (TL) –English in this case-is not widely spoken as a first language; consequently, as Thornton (2009, p. 13) suggests "students have fewer chances to practice with native speakers because the language outside the classroom is not English." This situation makes the classroom about the only place where learners can make use of the TL to practice what they have learned, having little or no contact with authentic oral and written language, which may limit the TL acquisition.

The aforementioned research project will be carried out in the Facultad de Organización Deportiva (FOD) of the UANL. This school, as some others, has its own Language Center, and it has recently launched a CAADI (2009), which is aimed for children and adolescents who want to develop their English skills. This CAADI offers eight different levels: Introductory 1, Introductory 2, Basic 1, Basic 2, Basic 3, Intermediate, High, and Advanced level. These levels range from true beginners to B2 level. Students take classes every Saturday morning, for three hours, over a period of five months. Furthermore, students are assessed mainly by exams, in the case of the High level, eight exams (one per unit) throughout the five months, in addition to the mid-term exam and the final one. Participation and homework are taken into consideration for the students' final marks, although the impact is minor compared to the exams. Teachers are asked to design exams (formal assessment) that cover the reading, writing and listening skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. At the end of the course, the average of each student will be obtained mostly from those exams, since these represent eighty percent of their entire grade, in addition to twenty percent assigned respectively to homework and participation in class.

IV. Objectives

General objective:

- To analyze the existent correlation between the ways of assessment and the teaching and learning of English in an institution to generate a proposal of alternative assessment.

Specific objectives:

1. Identify the types of assessment administered or taken into account in an institution. (FOD)
2. Analyze the relationship between the types of assessment and the strategies established by language teachers.
3. Design a proposal or improve an existent assessment so that such assessment impacts positively the English acquisition.

V. Interpretative framework

The approach that is set out to develop this proposal is Assessment for learning from Black and Wiliam (2004) which has its starting point in the following diagnosis:

a) The assessment methods applied by teachers are not effective to promote learning

b) Such methods emphasize the competition among students, not the individual improvement.

c) Generally the feedback of the assessment has a negative impact on students who then believe they are not capable of learning (Black *et. al*, 2004:9)

Therefore, the authors propose to go from Assessment *of* Learning to Assessment *for* Learning, this last one is defined as:

Any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning. It thus differs from assessment designed primarily to serve the purposes of accountability, or of ranking, or of certifying

competence. An assessment activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use a feedback in assessing themselves and one another and in modifying the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessment becomes "formative assessment" when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs (Blacks, 2004:10).

This approach has already been put into practice within studies of ELT in other countries, with results that illustrate the dominance of the traditional assessment. Amongst these studies, we can cite the compilation created by Powell-Davies (2011), under the edition of the British Council.

VI. Methodology

Being this a preliminary research project with loopholes in it, only some methodological aspects will be specified next:

- In spite of the literature research, which is absolutely necessary to carry out (to accomplish objectives number 1 and 3), it is intended to do field work in the CAADI from FOD, which belongs to the UANL.
- It is intended to employ action research, so the ways of assessment can be identified as well as the use of the results in the implementation of teaching strategies (objectives 1 to 3).
- Intervene in the classroom with different ways of assessing students, which will allow them to identify the impact in their language learning (objective 3).

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature regarding assessment in language teaching is varied, and it ranges from standardized tests to every day feedback strategies of learning. Due to this, one may wonder which is the type of assessment a teacher should adopt in the language classroom. My practicum as an English language teacher has allowed me to observe, among other matters, that the assessment forms employed by teachers do not always have an impact in the teaching strategies, and that the use of tests or exams, as almost the only way of assessing students, do not necessarily reflect the actual learning accomplished by the students. The different authors -cited throughout this theoretical framework- have established the differences between formal and informal assessment, what is more, they have mentioned a number of assessment forms directed towards specific objectives within the language classroom.

In this sense, the research carried out and that is part of this paper, aims to answer the following questions presented in this research project: a) Which is the type of assessment that prevails in the ELT field in the CAADI (FOD) from the UANL?, b) How do these types of assessments affect the learning of this foreign language?, and c) Do the teacher consider the results as a diagnosis to better their teaching strategies? Therefore, this is a study that intends to observe the assessment practice in a specific context (case).

The hypothesis that this study takes as a starting point is: "In most institutions where English is taught prevails the traditional ways of assessment when it comes down to ELT. It is only in few cases where teachers employ an alternative form of assessment which influences positively the language learning, but such practice is related to the formation and the commitment of the teacher in his/her teaching ways, unlike the academic programs or the given condition in these institutions which force or regulate the assessment, so it becomes standardize." And the case of the CAADI from FOD in the UANL is no exception to such practice.

This document, within the chapter 2 that refers to the theoretical framework, will display the conceptual foundations dealing with assessment, allowing the case to be observed and evaluated with a proper theoretical basis.

The structure of this chapter contains five components or sections. The first one (2.1) is the state of art, providing a glance of previous studies related to assessment within the teaching practice. It can be noticed that most of the studies have been carried out in the United States and other countries, and finding that in Mexico there is scarce research on the topic. The second section (2.2) points out the difference between assessment and evaluation with the objective of narrowing down the research, and provides a better understanding of these terms, which can be ambiguous if they are not understood. This section makes clear that assessment, unlike evaluation, focuses and takes action during the learning process.

The third section (2.3) distinguishes a couple of techniques teachers can make use of to assess learners, the techniques covered are observation and tests, followed by the last section (2.4) that briefly describes the very basic principles for assessing: validity, reliability and authenticity, that sustain under which conditions an assessment tool should be designed.

2.1 State of Art about Assessment

Standardize assessment and alternative assessment are two of the various and more fundamental issues in the field of language teaching that scholars have covered, described, tested, implemented and improved, having as a result different ways of assessing so that it becomes beneficial for both learners and instructors. Such topics have been approached from different perspectives –mostly internationally- showing the impact and significance of formal (standard) assessment and/or informal assessment within language classrooms.

By having some sort of alternative assessment there will be a positive impact on learners, as it would help them greatly to realize what they have learned but also what there is to be achieved. Some scholars like Erickson and Gustafsson (2005, p. 22), suggest that standardize assessment must be carried out since it is already established in a vast amount of educational systems, and therefore, teachers should be able to make the most of it by taking advantage of everything this type of assessment has to offer. For these authors formal assessment refers to tests or exams while informal assessment implies the ongoing assessment or continuous assessment during classes along the course. Additionally, it is possible, according to them, to develop or carry out a combination both types of assessment. For the latter event, the

aforementioned researchers conducted a survey where they found that the different types of assessment do not operate as opposite, instead, they complement one another depending on what the teacher has for an objective (as class feedback to measure and improve students' abilities, assign a mark or grade or to determine a level of competence). What is remarkable from this case is that formal and informal assessments are viewed as complementary to serve a purpose established by the instructor, therefore, instructors should be able to work with both practices, implementing the type of assessment that best suits the objective(s) set for students to achieve.

Numerous school systems such as the American, require students to obtain certain grade in an administered standardized test, and based on the results of such tests teachers are to be evaluated. Apparently what is important for this type of system is a passing number, thus, teachers strive to prepare students to achieve those numbers. In this regards, Hollingworth (2007, p. 340) suggests that as part of the preparation for the standardize test teachers must provide formative assessments which are:

> Self-reflective, metacognitive tools designed to support instruction to create a learning profile for students to track their progress over time…Encourage teachers to hold individual conferences with students in which performance on classroom assessments is reviewed. In this way, student strengths and weaknesses can be identified and strategies for improvement can be developed.

This type of assessment is aimed not only to help learners to analyze their language skills development, also for them to examine their areas of opportunity and focus on them to eventually improve them. But most importantly, formative assessment seems to be ideal since it prepares students for a standardized test as well as guides them through effective learning, especially in reading and writing matters. The importance of this proposal is that individuals are assessed in such way that at last they will be ready for a more formal assessment having acquired better language skills. In a way, this author shares the same belief with the previous one in terms of having formal and informal assessment to complement each other.

In the same line of thought, Linan-Thompson (2010, p. 970) reflects on the common purpose both formal and informal assessments serve within the Response to Intervention model (hereafter RtI). She mentions the necessity of administering any kind of formal assessment mixed with alternative assessment in order for teachers to establish a diagnosis of students'

abilities, and once having the results, she points out how to proceed to take actions that help students to develop their language skills adequately. Such an idea can be observed as Linan-Thompson declares: "Assessment results are used to determine students' initial knowledge and skill, their need for successively more intensive levels of instruction, and to gauge their response to the intervention provided" (2010, p.970). Within the RtI model, the response refers to the results obtained from the different assessments used, and based on it, instructors intervene so that learners are able to increase their language skills according to their level and/or capabilities. Our context, in language teaching-learning matters, is in much need of an adequate intervention of the teachers so that students are able to overcome the learning barriers and become successful language learners.

Ezir (2013, p.41) distinguishes the different types of assessments and their tasks within language classrooms. For informal assessment, which falls into the category of alternative assessment, she affirms "…is most often used to provide formative feedback. As such, it tends to be less threatening and thus less stressful to the student. However, informal feedback is prone to high subjectivity or bias." According to this author informal assessment takes into account a series of elements that not only will provide a result in the end, moreover, learners become fully aware of their performance as teachers provide feedback to them. It is also observed that this type of assessment lessens students' stress level significantly, and this situation is optimal for students to improve their learning since it is known that individuals who are not under pressure tend to learn better, thus perform better.

Contrastingly, formal assessment may be considered into the standardized assessment category or at least they share some critical characteristics with it. Ezir (2013, p.41) indicates that formal assessment "occurs when students are aware that the task that they are doing is for assessment purposes…formal assessments also are summative in nature and thus tend to have greater motivation impact and are associated with increased stress." Here, learners do know they are being tested somehow or that they are under exam conditions, situation that makes students feel stressed, nervous or overwhelmed, affecting their performance, most likely, in a negative way. When she states that this could also be part of a summative assessment, she implies that the objective is to assign a score or grade, unlike informal assessment where results are seen as a stepping-stone towards the improvement of skills.

Although standardized assessment is important to be taken into account to see what learners are capable of doing with language, Gordon E., McGill, M., Sands, D., Kalinich, K., Pellegrino, J., and Chatterji, M. (2014, p.341) consider that nowadays "we seem more interested in using the measurement sciences for the assessment OF education, when we should be using it also to assess FOR education." In other words, language teachers are more interested in providing scores than what they can actually do with such data to drive students towards successful learning. This leads us to the reflection on how teachers can impact one way or another students' learning. Instructors limit themselves to provide learners with an average rather than having students do something about their results by guiding them towards an efficient way of language learning. Therefore, these authors state the importance of carrying out formative assessment where students are accompanied through the language learning process since such type assessment is a supportive tool. To have a richer idea of what formative assessment is, in words of the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008) describe it as "a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust ongoing teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes." (cited in Gordon et. al 2014, p.344)

It is evident that the topic of assessment within language classrooms has been in fashion in the past, and it has become increasingly crucial to explicate and to adequate some phenomena occurring in language classroom settings. Nevertheless, most of the research has been conducted in the United States as well as in other countries; in Mexico there is little evidence of studies on such an important issue. Undoubtedly, assessment is a powerful tool to be used by language teachers as results can be used and interpreted in a vast amount of ways. However, instructors are in much need of training to be acquainted with the types of assessments, tools, how to interpret them, purposes they serve, but most importantly how to help and support students once having results from assessments.

2.2 Difference between evaluation and assessment

The rationale on assessment is usually that its main purpose, if not the only one, is obtaining grades on students learning. In this sense, it is essential to mention that although it may serve such purpose through the implementation of tests, it should be more intent on giving effective

feedback for students to realize what they can manage in terms of language, and how to achieve greater language skills. Therefore, the concepts of evaluation and assessment must be differentiated. The evaluation seeks a number, grade or level, being the final result of a process. Parker, P., Fleming, P., Beyerlein, S., Apple, D. and Krumsieg, K. (2001, p.01) point out that evaluation "is a judgment or determination of the quality of a performance, product, or use of a process against a standard." There are a number of objectives for evaluation to take place, for instance, to determine the language level of a student, to observe what students have achieved at the end of the course in terms of content, to see how well learners can manage one of more language skills, among others.

On the contrary, assessment serves another purpose. The origin of the word *assess* may be a worthy starting point to understand what assessment is. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2016), assess derives from "Middle English, probably from Medieval Latin assessus, past participle of assidēre, from Latin, to sit beside." With this information it can be inferred that by assessing, there is some type of accompanying or guidance through a process, in this case, the language learning process. It is the task of the teacher to let the learners know where they stand, how much they are progressing as well as how to reach the desirable language objective, and assessing students properly can help to do so.

Cameron, L. (2001, p.214) ascertains this idea when stating: "assessments can motivate learners, help teachers plan more effective lessons, inform the improvement of instructional programs, and support further learning with feedback" (Cited in Yoneda, 2012, p.42). This shows that assessment delivers a win-win situation, where instructors, learners and institutions obtain the desirable objectives. Cameron (2001) also notes that assessment must be a collaborative act between teacher and student, and that it must support the aims of the lesson (p.42). Such statement displays a relationship where the teacher guides the learners by providing positive but real feedback to learners, and using the assessment to modify his teaching ways to obtain better language skills on learners. In other words, assessment is a dynamic system where teacher, students and the lesson plan are involved. Teachers should make clear for learners not only what aspects of the language to improve, but also how they are doing in the process. Additionally, teachers should modify their ways of instructions in accordance with the dynamic

established between the teacher and the students to obtain better results in the language teaching-learning process.

Indisputably, evaluation and assessment are two different processes with dissimilar purposes. However, both aim to improve learners' language skills. Moreover, these learning tools should not be seen as conflicting, but instead, as balancing resources that will support principally learners, as well as instructors and therefore, institutions. The following chart provided by Parker et. al (2001, p. 2) clearly illustrates and summarizes the differences between these two concepts (assessment and evaluation):

Table 1 Comparison between Assessment and Evaluation

	Assessment	**Evaluation**
Purpose	To improve future performance	To judge the merit or worth of a performance against a pre-defined standard
Setting Criteria	Both the assessee and the assessor choose the criteria.	The evaluator determines the criteria
Control	The assessee --- who can choose to make use of assessment feedback	The evaluator --- who is able to make a judgment which impacts the evaluatee
Depth of Analysis	Thorough analysis by answering questions such as why and how to improve future performance	Calibration against a standard
Response	Positive outlook of implementing and action plan	Closure with failure or success

Source: Parker et al. (2001, p. 2)

2.3 Types of assessment

Over the years experts in the field of education have broken paradigms on how and why to assess learning and learners by developing, proposing and implementing a variety of ways in the area of assessment with the solely purpose of assisting both, teachers and learners to attain language learning objectives. These types of assessment have evolved over time from the teachers and researchers' reflection on the necessity of achieving greater learning in their own contexts, which happens to be similar to others, consequently, these are likely to be adapted to circumstances where situations are alike. Having a wide range of types of assessment can make it easier for teachers to put into practice such an essential procedure, resulting in a beneficial teaching-learning process. The two types of assessment that will be developed along this theoretical framework are: assessment for learning (formative assessment) and assessment of learning (summative assessment).

2.3.1 Assessment for learning

When speaking of assessment for learning, it means that the focus of this is in the process, and sometimes it is referred to as formative assessment. That being said, let us recall that a feature of assessment is delivering feedback to learners. In the same line of thought, Jones (2005, p.1) remarks: "the principal characteristic of assessment for learning is effective feedback provided by teachers to learners on their progress. The value of feedback is dependent on two factors: the quality of feedback, and how learners receive and ultimately use it." Hence, to be capable of offering adequate feedback, teachers need to be trained since most teachers are unaware of such practice. Moreover, learners need to know what to do with it –feedback-, once again; teachers must be trained to train students so they are capable of managing the information provided to reach their desirable level of English, in this case.

Assessment for learning is about conducting pertinent action while the teaching-learning process is occurring, not only until the end of the course. Noyce and Hickey (2011) mention the importance of assessing learners this way, stating that this is done "…in order to give useful feedback and make timely changes in instruction to ensure maximal student growth." (Cited in Alvarez, L., Ananda, S., Walqui, A., Sato, E., & Rabinowitz, S., 2014, p.03). Implementing this

type of assessment will aid instructors to identify possible difficulties learners are facing, and consequently modify their ways of teaching in time to achieve greater benefits for language learning.

2.3.1.1 Principles of assessment for learning

Carrying out assessment for learning as well as any other type of assessment might be a challenge for instructors, especially when they are not aware of the procedures to follow to enhance their teaching practices within the terms of such assessment. To cope with this problematic Alvarez et al. (2014, p. 3-4) suggest six principles for effective assessment –for learning-, and they will be described next:

> 1. Promotes student learning: It must be clear that this type of assessment fosters the assessing of students learning on a continuous basis, and by doing so learners are able to actually appreciate their results and whether they have attained the short-term objectives, being involved in the process.

> 2. Elicits evidence of learning through a variety of tasks: Assessment for learning can be executed in different manners for the teacher to gather information about students learning and students learning progress. Shavelson (2008) establishes that such tasks can be planned or opportunistic, and he proposes that tasks can be:

Table 2 Types of Tasks Instructors Can Implement under Assessment for Learning

Type of task	Description	Example
On-the-fly	Formative assessment occurs in response to an unexpected "teachable moment"	To address a misconception evidenced by a student comment, a teacher might pose an impromptu question to identify the source of the misunderstanding.
Planned-for interaction is purposeful	A teacher designs ways to identify the gap between	A teacher might pose pre-pared-in-advance tasks to

	what students actually know and what they should know.	students which are tied to the learning goals.
Curriculum-embedded	Formative assessments are inserted at specific points in a unit	A teacher might engage students in the solution of a novel problem that weaves student understanding of concepts introduced in that unit before deciding whether to proceed to the next unit

Source: Compilation based on information cited in Alvarez et al., 2014, p.3

Analyzing the content of the previous table provides a general insight of great support for teachers to know when to assess, having in mind that such assessing is to be done through the teaching-learning process. From the different tasks teachers will obtain different outcomes that can be used as evidence of the learning process and/or as information to make adjustments to the teaching practice.

3. Changes the roles of teacher and students: Unlike any other ways of teaching and assessing, assessment for learning is student-centered. Teacher acts as the guide, and will clearly state the purpose of the class, the outcome of it, as well as providing effective feedback. As for the learners, according to Shavelson (2008) "not only perform tasks that provide evidence for their current learning, but they are involved in self-assessment." (Cited in Alvarez et al.: 2008, p.4). It has been stated before how much students are in need to be trained so they can be part of this assessment model and be able drive their learning experience based on teachers' feedback and his own reflection once having an outcome and the feedback provided by the instructor.

4. Uses learning progressions to anchor learning goals and monitor learning: As students

reach short-term objectives and teachers observe such progressions, new objectives are set and teachers can plan according to the learners´ needs to become proficient in the aspects of the new language aimed within the objectives. By monitoring students learning and being aware of the their progression and needs, teachers can implement instruction strategies to support learners on the expected language learning.

5. Results in meaningful feedback and adjustments to improve instruction for students: One of the main features of assessment for learning is feedback, which must be clear enough for students to know where they are and where they need to be, providing the necessary tools to help them cope with such situation timely. Moreover, within this principle, Heritage (2013) depicts the importance of the teachers´ intervention to help students develop greater languages skills "Learning opportunities for students are created based on an assessment of what students have learned and what they have misinterpreted." (Cited in Alvarez et al., 2014, p. 4). This is, instructors take into account both what they observe what students have learned as well as the flaws they perceive throughout the language sessions.

6. Enables students to become self-regulated and autonomous learners: Undoubtedly assessment for learning implies a variety of perquisites to those involved in the teaching-learning process. One of these advantages is that during the assessing procedure students gain enough confidence and knowledge to become autonomous learners.

This type of assessment offers efficient language learning experience if conducted properly, taking into account the principles and adequate strategies to carry it out within English language classrooms. On the one hand, teachers must set the goals, define the tasks for students, give clear feedback to learners and be able to adjust their teaching practice along the course. On the other hand, students will be capable of developing metacognitive skills that will allow them to monitor their language learning progress and develop their own ways to acquire more of it.

2.3.2 Assessment of learning

Unlike the prior type of assessment, summative assessment usually comes at the end of the course, and it operates as a tool for the teacher to determine a grade based on students' results but also to analyze how much students have learned until that moment. Moreover, Ezir (2013, p. 41) claims that summative assessment "is used to communicate students' abilities to external stakeholders." This indicates that learners' achievements are useful to further persons other than the teachers and students, in order to improve the overall teaching and learning practice. Stakeholders are, according to Gall, Gall and Borg (2005, p. 453) "individuals who are involved in the phenomenon that is being evaluated or who may be affected by or interested in the findings of an evaluation." These can range from students themselves, those involved in the making of the curricula of the program to the people connected with the education policies matters and employers. The information obtained from the students' summative assessment delivers significant information to the stakeholders for their own purposes; and for the language classroom those scores are useful to realize "students' progress with regard to a course and/or standard" (Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 2009), hence, it may be inferred that summative assessment is a type of standardize assessment since in the end, it measures language learners' skills against an established content criterion.

Due to this, some researchers such as Garrison and Ehringhaus (n.d., p. 01) affirm that "it can only help in evaluating certain aspects of the learning process" data extracted from this type of assessment can give a valuable insight of the efficacy of the program and its content, although it may not show the actual students' learning nor their abilities to manage the language adequately. In the same line of thought Moss (2013, p. 237) explains that "standardized tests create a performance ethos in the classroom and can become the rationale for all classroom decisions and produce students who have strong extrinsic orientations toward performance rather than learning goals." In other words, students might be driven to learn (by heart or any other means) the course language content with the vision of reaching acceptable or outstanding grades, instead of learning for the benefits the language itself provides such as effective communication with native speakers of that language, or when using that language as a Lingua Franca and becomes necessary for communicative purposes, as well as the adequate comprehension of

material written in the target language –English.

In our context the teaching of English language (from my working experience and observation I have made) prevails the summative assessment as the leading and most dominant way to assess students through quizzes or exams (mid-term and final) and without much more implication of teachers in the teaching duties. Instructors are driven by the institutions to focus and look for high numbers or grades, or at least to have students passing with the minimum required. As a consequence, there are a vast amount of cases where learners are in classes that do not correspond to the language level they actually have attained; and this might be the result of employing summative assessment as the only way to assess students.

2.4 Techniques for assessing

To accomplish competently any type of assessment instructors can make use of different techniques that will help them obtain the data that is required for their own purposes. There are plenty of resources educators and researchers have developed to support teachers to attain the outcomes they are pursuing; teachers should select the ones that are appropriate not only with his teaching ways but more importantly, according to the type of assessment(s) they are to put into practice in the language classroom, having always as target an efficient language learning experience. The Waterloo Region School District School Board (2013, p.13) even suggests that "Teachers may develop with students the criteria they will use to assess learning, helping students understand the evidence of learning required to demonstrate knowledge and skills. " This can be carried out as long as it fulfills the language necessities students need to cover and master, and if the type of assessment allows it. This theoretical framework will only focus on certain techniques of assessment: observation and tests.

2.4.1 Observation

Observation is an assessment technique that has been in use in the classrooms. Although it may seem simple, observation requires beforehand preparation since this technique follows a series of

steps to follow through which should be anticipated to assess students well and compile the required outcomes from it. Maxwell (2001, p. 01) asserts that "teacher observation is capable of providing substantial information on student demonstration of learning outcomes at all levels of education." If this technique is implemented correctly it can provide objective and valuable information about students learning status. There are two possible scenarios in which observation may arise suggested by Maxwell (2001).

Table 3 Types of Observation

Type of Observation	Characteristics
• Incidental observation	Occurs during the ongoing (deliberate) activities of teaching and learning and the interactions between teacher and students. In other words, an unplanned opportunity emerges, in the context of classroom activities, where the teacher observes some aspect of individual student learning. Whether incidental observation can be used as a basis for formal assessment and reporting may depend on the records that are kept.
• Planned observation	Involves deliberate planning of an opportunity for the teacher to observe specific learning outcomes. This planned opportunity may occur in the context of regular classroom activities or may occur through the setting of an assessment task (such as a practical or performance activity)

Source: Compilation based on information by Maxwell (2001, p. 1)

The previous chart illustrates how observation can be planned (planned observation), where teachers ahead of time on the kind of activities that could provide outcomes teachers will

expect from students, and based on the observation of those, assess them. Furthermore, the chart provides information about how observation can be unplanned as well (incidental observation); the classroom interaction will certainly present situations where teachers can take advantage of, in order to assess students and generate some sort of language reflection and/or knowledge of it. It is important to point out that there are different aspects that teachers may be observing to assess learners, Maxwell (2001, p.04) mentions that some of these aspects can be events, performances, activities, or artifacts. That is to say, observations may be aimed at the process, at the product of such process or both, as Maxwell (2001, p. 05) describes "An artefact is something constructed by the student, for example, a worksheet, a piece of writing, a painting, a composition,— in other words, a product of an activity that shows evidence of the work done in it. Teacher observation is not primarily concerned with the artefact itself but with the way in which the artefact was produced" It should be noted that although the author mentions the artefact or product is not the main point of observation, it could also be used.

Depending on the type of observations that will be carried out, as well as what is to be observed, teachers can utilize different evidences that will support them to assess students based on the information obtained from those; in the next chart Maxwell (2002, p.7) displays the aforementioned tools:

Table 4 Summary of Types of Teacher Observation Evidence

Focus on product — keep artefact(s)

Focus on activity — record process

- Direct record ('trace')

  o Audio-tape

  o Video-tape

  o Photographs

- Written record

  o Observation sheet

  § Checklist

  § Description

  o Logbook

  § Description of critical incidents

Source: Maxwell (2002, p. 07)

When teachers focus on observing the processes they will be able to gather or record data (evidence) to assess learners through a variety of means. Maxwell (2002, p.8) lists two main ways of collecting such evidence: the direct record and the written record. As for the direct record, teachers can collect the evidence using 'traces', which refer to visual recordings as audios, videos and photographs; these tools are of great help for teachers to observe details they might have not perceived during the actual class. And the written records, that are gathered using observation sheets where descriptions in the form of comments about students' performance are made and the use of checklists, additionally teachers can create logbooks where they record in written form incidents occurred in the classroom; to avoid bias instructors should write them immediately so they print significant and valuable details.

On a daily basis teachers do observe their classrooms situations and students, but if they become more methodical and reflective in their ways of observing, they will be able to assess students in such way that it will have a major and positive impact in the students' language learning. Nowadays there are plenty of technological tools that can easily support teachers to carry out this observation technique.

2.4.2 Tests

Administering tests to learners is one of the most widely known and used way to assess learning, and it is observed at most educational levels and across most subjects, including the English language classrooms. Tests vary in formality and intentions, they can be used within formative assessment as Hughes (2003, p. 05) mentions "informal tests or quizzes may have a part to play in formative assessment" because through these tests instructors can obtain data about the language learning progress and communicate such results to individuals along with the necessary feedback that assessment of learning requires. Alternatively, tests are used within summative assessment and they are a fundamental part of it, since it provides a number, a grade or a mark at the end of the course. Nonetheless, instructors should not have tests as the only means to measure students' attainments as Hughes (2003, p. 05) points it out "The results of such tests should not be looked at in isolation. A complete view of what has been achieved should include information from as many resources as possible." To have a broader and better interpretation of where students are in regards of language learning, instructors might take into consideration different products besides the tests.

English language instructors employ different types of tests in the classroom, and in most cases –that I have observed and lived both as language learner and teacher- tests are administered weekly, monthly, at the end of each unit, in the middle of the course, and at the end of it, resulting in anxious and stressed learners who build a misunderstood idea of what the real purpose of tests are and whether they are useful. In this same line of thought, Hughes (2003, p. 01) acknowledges that "a great deal of language testing is of very poor quality. Too often language tests have a harmful effect on teaching and learning, and fail to measure accurately whatever it is they are intended to measure." Perhaps educational institutions required from teachers constant testing of students because at some extent they do provide some information about the progress of language learning, but they might not be cautious enough on how to do it

and/or to recognize the purpose of them. That being the case, teachers and institutions should be aware of benefits testing can provide if tests are constructed and applied adequately and take action to train individuals involved in the making of tests. Madison (1983, p. 04) alludes that when test are done properly and in accordance with the purposes, they help students to have a positive attitude about it since they will feel they have attained the expected knowledge and that it actually "matches what he has taught them" (Madison: 1983, p. 04), what is more, well-constructed tests will help students learn the language, because they are in a way, forced to study and results can clearly pinpoint which are their areas of opportunity.

As it has been stated before, tests can aim at assessing different features of the language or features related to learners' language capabilities and skills. In this sense, Madsen (1983, p.8) suggests the following classification of tests:

Table 5 Test Classification and their Description

Test	Objective
Knowledge Tests	To show how well students know *facts* about the language.
Performance or Skill Tests	To demonstrate how well a student can *use* the language.
Subjective Tests	To measure language skills naturally, almost the way English is used in real life.
Objective Tests	To be scored quickly and consistently, such as multiple-choice or matching tests.
Productive Tests	Productive measures, like speaking exams, require active or creative answers.
Receptive Tests	Receptive measures, like multiple-choice reading tests, tend to rely on recognition, with students simply choosing the letter of the best

	answer.
Language Subskill Tests	To measure the separate components of English, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.
Communication Skills Tests	To show how well students can use the language in actually exchanging ideas and information.
Norm-referenced Tests	To compare each students with his classmates
Criterion-referenced Tests	To rate students against certain standards, regardless of how other students do.
Discrete-point Tests	In this type, each item tests something very specific such as a preposition or a vocabulary item.
Integrative Tests	Like dictation, combine various language subskills much the way we do when we communicate in real life.
Proficiency Tests	To measure overall mastery of English or how well prepared one is to use English in a particular setting such as an auto mechanics course or a university.
Achievement Tests	Simply measure progress- gains for example in mastery of count-noncount noun use or mastery of the skills presented in an entire language text or course

Source: Compilation based on information by Madsen (1983, p. 8)

From the vast amount of tests forms seems as though language teachers only focus on a limited number of them, thus the results do not provide accurate data that could be useful for stakeholders. If tests designers or teachers from institutions are trained or at least provided with proper information regarding testing and their objectives, meaningful and adequate assessment can be reached, creating opportunities for students to improve their language skills as well as for the teachers to modify their lessons to obtain the sought outcomes. Teachers and those individuals involved in the language course(s) should reflect on the objectives they are looking for learners to attain, and based on such reflection make a selection of the type of tests that are applicable to lead both teachers and students towards greater language learning.

It has already been mentioned the importance of having the course and lesson objectives in mind so that teachers know how to proceed with the selection of tests, however, there is more to be aware of and to take into consideration to design tests. As for Hughes (2003), he claims that some of these characteristics to be taken into account should have a final product where a test:

- "consistently provides accurate measures of precisely the abilities in which we are interested;
- has a beneficial effect on teaching (in those cases where the test is likely to influence teaching);
- is economical in terms of time and money." (2003, p. 08)

Indeed, the objective is clearly the foremost characteristic for testing design, as for the rest of them each teacher and institution may prioritize and even have different features to consider depending on their context and capabilities.

2.5 Principles of assessment in the language classroom

Assessing learning is not an easy task to carry out, nonetheless being informed on how to do it will likely lessen the difficulty of doing so. There are some basic principles of assessment that certainly can support teachers when constructing their tools of assessment so that they are fair, reliable, and adequate in accordance with their objectives. The principles are: reliability, practicality, validity and authenticity.

2.5.1 Validity

For assessment to have the quality of being valid it should asses what teachers have taught during the language sessions and in terms of their objectives; or as Hughes (2003, p. 26) puts it "a test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what it is intended to measure". Teachers must be clear when constructing their assessment tool what they want students to demonstrate from what they have covered during classes, without deviating to other topics, skills, sub-skills, or any other type of content; this is what Hughes (2003) refers to as "content validity".

To obtain accurate results when assessing reading for example, teachers should build an assessment tool that focuses only and reading, so that the outcome reflects the extent of understanding or their reading ability. Then again, teachers should not point out or assess any other feature such as vocabulary or grammar but only whatever is related to the reading skills.

2.5.2 Reliability

The definition of "reliable" provided by the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2016) reads "able to be trusted to do or provide what is needed." In this sense, it can be established that assessment must be designed to be reliable, to be trusted. An assessment tool can be reliable when it is done in such way that the results are regular, consistent and coherent whether the assessment is applied in certain conditions or in different ones. Yoneda (2013, p. 44) remarks that reliability means "that the same score will be achieved from the same type of students no matter when it is scored or who scores it." This is, assessment must be carefully constructed so teachers can obtain similar results within individuals who are in the same level, no matter the conditions or other external factors, therefore, ambiguity should be avoided to minimize bias.

2.5.3 Authenticity

Assessment is authentic when in it teacher utilizes real-world features that make it interesting for learners. Bachman and Palmer (1996, p.23) define authenticity as "the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task." (Cited in Yoneda 2013, p. 45). If learners have a contextualized assessment with authentic characteristics they may feel such task, and hence what they learned from it, is meaningful and

purposeful. To attain the principle of authenticity, Brown & Abeywickrama (2010, p.37): lists a series of qualities assessment must take:

- contains language that is as natural as possible
- has items that are contextualized rather than isolated
- includes meaningful, relevant, interesting topics
- provides some thematic organization to items, such as through a story line or episode
- offers tasks that replicate real-world tasks (Cited in Yoneda 2013, p. 45)

When teachers and test developers keep in mind and apply these basic principles of validity, reliability and authenticity for the construction of assessment tools, it will have a positive impact on learners since assessment will become appealing, less stressing and beneficial for the teaching-learning process. Moreover, assessment will provide teachers with accurate information about the learners' achievements, resulting in better feedback for stakeholders

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, concerned with theoretical aspects, some key concepts with regards of assessment have permitted the observation and understanding of the problem to be studied, and this is the first instance to respond the questions presented in the first chapter: a) Which is the type of assessment prevails in the institutions?, b) How do these types of assessments affect the learning of Foreign Language?, and c) Do the teacher consider the results as a diagnosis to better their Teaching strategies? The chapter was divided in five sections, each of which reads a particular topic: assessment in relation to the teaching practice in different educational systems, the difference between evaluation and assessment, types of assessment, techniques for assessing, and basic principles of assessment: validity, reliability and authenticity.

Although the answers previously mentioned cannot be accurately answered yet, there are some facts that can be foreseen, thus some preliminary conclusions can be drawn based on the theoretical revision of the literature related to the topic of assessment. Such conclusions derive from an exercise of reflection that has permitted the breaking of stigmas regarding assessment, leading to a broader view of the topic. This already represents a progress for the research project

to a certain of extent. Based on that reflection of the scientific studies, the remarkable and preliminary conclusions are:

- Assessment of learning does not necessarily conveys or represents a negative practice.
- If assessment of learning is adequately carried out, it can achieve the learning objectives instructors are seeking.
- The learning objective will depend greatly on the teachers interconnects the class or course objective, what they teach directly with what they intend to assess. Although it would be ideal to implement in the classroom assessment for learning along with assessment of learning.
- To accomplish effectively the use of assessment of learning, assessment for learning or the combination of both, it is fundamental that instructors are informed and/or trained (professional development). But teachers are not they only ones to change their ways for this practice to be successful, it is would be significant for educational institutions where English as a Second Language is taught, to make substantial changes in their policies, in terms of assessment.
- Through the process of assessment feedback is required. Such feedback varies in degrees of formality and in techniques. Observation for instance, can range from mere classroom observation to the recording of classes to analyze details with more precision the simple observation.
- As of assessment for learning, teachers should be able to acknowledge the existent types of tests so they can administer the most convenient according to their course objectives and the objectives of the stakeholders.
- Finally, whether the teachers rely on assessment of learning, assessment for learning or both, effective language learning will highly depend on how instructors use the assessment results to create the necessary conditions for this to happen.

Such preliminary conclusions are relevant for the methodological design of the research project, since they are delivered from the reflection of a theoretical revision, and it is not founded, only on personal experience or individual prejudices. The analysis of these conclusions displays the urgency for teachers to take a plan of action for their professional development growth, to be informed and/or trained in matters of assessment (types, methods, techniques),

always having in mind their objectives, since all of these elements play a remarkable role in a positive impact of assessment for an effective teaching-learning process.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Contextual Framework

The Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (UANL) is an institution of higher education situated in San Nicolás in the state of Nuevo León, Mexico. It is one of the most important universities in Mexico, especially in the northern part of the country. The UANL offers studies at high school level, as well as undergraduate, Master and Doctoral programs that benefit the academic growth of the individuals from the region and others who attend this university from other states and countries.

3.1.1 Self-Learning Language Centers

The UANL offers English courses in its Self-Learning Language Centers (CAADI in its Spanish acronym) to contribute with the professional and academic development of students and other individuals, and being aware of the importance languages have nowadays, especially English. The objective is to "encourage foreign language learning through its Language Centers and Self-Learning Language Centers (CAADI) which support learners to reach language competence" (UANL, 2008). Any person who is willing to learn English or any other language available in the CAADI can enroll in it, students from the university or non-students.

CAADIs are established in the different schools that belong to the UANL and throughout the different campuses, for example in the School of Medicine, School of Psychology, School of Philosophy, School of Engineering, and so on. Each one of these CAADIs vary their target, some of these, for instance, accept only teenagers and adults, others allow from small children to adolescents, students from their own schools.

The current research project is being carried out in the CAADI from the School of Sports Organization (FOD for its Spanish acronym). This center has English courses on Saturdays, and it is aimed to infants, children and teenagers; its main objective is for students to be communicatively competent in the English language. This CAADI offers

eight different levels: Introductory 1, Introductory 2, Basic 1, Basic 2, Basic 3, Intermediate, High, and Advanced level. As a complement and at the end of the last level, students have the option of joining a conversation course to put into practice their oral and communication skills.

The function and mission of the CAADI from FOD, according to their web page (UANL, 2016) are:

Function: The CAADI is in charge of teaching English with a communicative approach in which learners develop their language abilities for the oral and written communication.

Mission: Provide quality second language (English) courses, supporting the education of the students in terms of their linguistic competence, utilizing technological tools.

Although the CAADI from FOD claims to teach English as a second language, let us remember that in Mexico and consequently in Monterrey, English is learned as a foreign language since English is not spoken in the context as a first or main language.

The eight levels taught specifically in this CAADI range from true beginners to B2 level. Students attend every Saturday morning, for three hours, and over a period of five months. Teachers are not asked to use certain methodology as long as they comply with the developing of the learners' communicative competences that they are supposed to achieve.

Furthermore, students are assessed mainly by exams, in the case of the High level, eight exams (one per unit) throughout the five months, in addition to the mid-term exam and the final one. Participation and homework are taken into consideration for the students' final marks, although the impact is not significant compared to the emphasis and priority given to the quizzes and exams. Teachers are asked to design exams (assessment of learning) that cover the reading, writing and listening skills as well as grammar and vocabulary. Only in the mid-term and final exam, oral exams are added. At the end of the course, the average of each student will be obtained mostly from those exams, since these represent eighty percent of their entire grade, in addition to twenty percent assigned to homework and participation in class. The minimum required to pass to the next level is 75.

3.2. Methodological Design

It is vital for any type of research to follow certain scientific procedures to have trustworthy results that show the reality of the studied situation, and therefore, to make it valid. Scholars or researchers can select different research approaches; the two and most common lines are the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach, what is more, both methodological approaches are generally present and used in a vast amount of research, although one of them tends to have more weight depending on the objective that has to be reached.

3.2.1 Quantitative Approach

The quantitative research is of a positivist tradition where what is being studied must be concretely proved by testing the hypothesis under controlled circumstances by experimenting over and over with the scenario, as Creswell indicates, quantitative research "is an approach for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures." (2014, p.32) Results obtained by the interpretation of numbers and statistics in the study will support the evidence that proves the theory or hypothesis established, by doing so, bias is at some extent avoided, making it more objective than not. It is mostly used in the natural sciences or those where numbers are their cores, however, quantitative research is also used within social sciences where opinions, feelings, and individuals' thoughts are not necessarily involved or taken into account, according the objectives set previously for the data and results.

This type of quantitative research comes from a long-time tradition with origins at the beginning of the XIX century, when the social sciences started to appear and scholars try to emulate the procedures carried out in the natural sciences research because this would give the social sciences a scientific character, and anything that was not measurable was invalid. But soon other paradigms emerged, questioning the quantitative approach as the only one way to do science.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research

Within the same XIX century the anthropology thought convenient to employ observation as a privileged way of conducting research, interpret discourses and practices as well as ways of living of population of different cultures, which happened to be very dissimilar to the modern societies.

That being the case, qualitative research is a different approach that lets scholars have an in-depth insight of the participants thoughts that will reveal the results of the research, making it a more humanistic approach, and consequently, preferred by an important and privileged sector: the social sciences researchers. Creswell (2014) states that this type of research

> …is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. (p.32)

Evidently, this type of approach seeks to answer the questions or hypothesis of the study by analyzing the people involved in it and reflect on their context and the data gathered with certain tools that refer to the individuals' behavior, thoughts, discourse, among other features. Qualitative research can seem subjective but supporting evidence with an adequate theoretical framework bias can be avoided, and it should be noted that such method not less valid than quantitative research.

It is important to emphasize that when doing research the researcher is not the one who selects the approach and techniques to be used, instead, it is the problematic itself and the theory that will indicate how such issue should be addressed. While it is true that some disciplines from the social sciences –and because of their nature and origin- tend to work or identify themselves with only type of research, such tradition is falling behind, and nowadays, more and more studies and research employ a mixed methodology, where both qualitative and quantitative approach are utilized.

3.2.3Action-Research

Inside the prior general classification of methods for conducting research, there are others of particular features that allow to develop in-depth research to reach very specific objectives, for instance, there is the comprehensive method, hermeneutic method, dialectical materialism, discourse analysis, action-research, among others. Traditionally, within the social sciences researchers should not intervene in the reality and environment that is being studied, instead, they will explain such reality so that s/he or other scholars take the obtained information and knowledge so they are able to change or modify the observed reality. However, social science research requires somehow a way of carrying out certain experimentation or testing on small groups, to verify how a variable has an influence on others. Furthermore, it is of vital importance the ethical commitment researchers should have towards the studied communities where they seek to solve the social problem(s) detected.

When addressing the educational or school context rather than the social one, the action-research method allows researchers and teachers to carry out research in a specific context and try to solve problems of it: the classroom. For the case of this concrete research project, the action-research method, which is part of the qualitative approach, is relevant since it meets the characteristics to solve the problematic sought.

Action-research is vital because "it allows withdrawing conclusions about the educational reality, contributing in a direct or indirect way to the improvement of the teaching quality". (Blández, 1996, p.21) Such method allows teachers to understand their very own classroom, identifying what is to be changed in order to better their teaching, influencing practices that will lead learners to more efficient learning. Moreover, the research results can help other teachers in similar conditions by providing a reference of the context and issues studied in conjunction with proposals that may work to a certain extents in those similar contexts. This way, in words of Blández, action-research "reinforces professional motivation…and reinforces in its participants the interest to better their teaching practice." (1996, p. 25)

Action-research is then, a scientific and dynamic procedure that intervenes directly in specific educational contexts where teaching/learning issues can be observed and analyzed to

take the pertinent action to enhance better teaching practices, thus improving learning in the classroom. Such procedure can and should be done a number of occasions until attaining the expected results; therefore, action-research can be seen as a "spiral" procedure. Rose et al. (2015) schematize such procedure in the following manner:

Figure 1 Action-research process
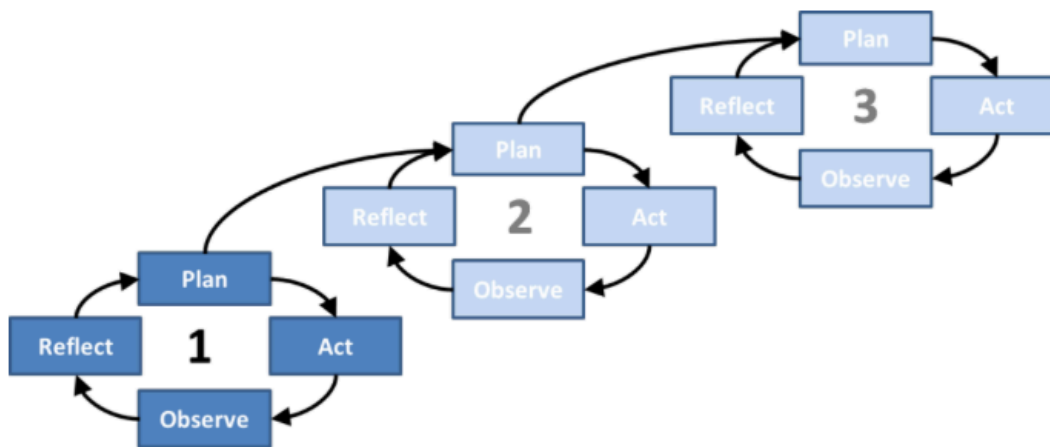
The process, as it was mentioned before, requires plenty of observation of the problematic in the classroom, and then one can reflect on what has been observed in order to plan the necessary strategies to act accordingly. This cycle can be repeated several times to finally cope with the targeted issue and achieve the desired outcomes. Hence, action-research "creates a reflexive faculty" (Blández, 1996, p.26).

To understand better how action-research is conducted and its implications, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) list, in a simplified and clear manner, what is involved:

- Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening,

- act to implement the plan,

- observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs, and

- reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of stages. (p.10)

For the current research project action-research has been selected since the phenomenon to be studied occurs in the English language classroom, and in words of Burns "action-research is contextual, small-scale and localized –it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation…it is evaluative as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice"(1999, p.30). The event to be observed has to do with how assessment is implemented and whether it has an impact on the teaching strategies, and in a later stage of the research project, generate practices that may lead to better teaching practices in terms of assessment.

Action-research in its early stage required reflection on the ongoing phenomenon in the classroom, and later two techniques for gathering data were used: interviews and participant observation, as it has been stated before, this has occurred in the first stages, a subsequent phase, and based on the previous information, is to elaborate a plan of action to intervene in the solving of the targeted issue.

3.2.4 Technique: Interview

An interview "is a conversation kept between two or more people, one who is the interviewer who attempts to gather information through more or less structured questions from the other person." (Blández, 1996, p.77) If the interview is totally structured the interviewer conducts the process based on a pre-defined questionnaire with no possibilities of incorporating and asking other questions to the interviewee; on the contrary, when an interview is not structured, the interviewer has the option of freely formulating more questions that will lead him to the desired objective. And when the interview is neither structured nor free, it is said to be semi structured, in which case the researcher is supported by a interview guide that supports the researcher in managing and regulating the process. The pre-defined questions can change in terms of order, other questions can be added, and even some questions can be skipped or avoided depending on the answers provided by the interviewee.

The latter type Fretchling et al. called it "indepth interview" where there is a set of established questions but the interviewer is free to inquire more if necessary. Fretchling et al. (2010) assert that in this type of interview "the interviewers seek to encourage free and open responses, and there may be a tradeoff between comprehensive coverage of topics and indepth exploration of a more limited set of questions" (p.51)

For this ongoing research project, three are the main characters that are susceptible to be interviewed since they are involved in the context where the phenomenon is taking place and are able to intervene somehow: the English teachers from FOD, the students taking the Saturday English course and the coordinators of the CAADI from FOD. Nevertheless, since the objective is to obtain information regarding the teachers' assessment practice in the language classroom, the way they manage assessment, how they deal with it and so on, the interview is aimed to the English teachers, and the type of interview applied was semi structured.

3.2.5 Technique: Participant observation

Another technique for data collection is the participant observation, which, according to Blández "permits the researcher to insert themselves in the natural scenarios where the action and capture what is really occurring" (1996, p.75) The participant observation differs from the plain observation technique, where the observer is an external agent, only monitoring and examining the scenario, his presence does not affect the environment that is being observed. Whereas in the participant observation, as its name makes reference, the researcher who is at the same time the observer gets involved in the environment, he is affected by it and has an impact in it as well. He becomes part of the observed situation and the community in it, interacting with them to comprehend and interpret the problem of the study, therefore, being also part of the problematic.

This means that, in the case of this research project, as a teacher of the classroom where the issue has been detected, one has the opportunity of accessing to first hand information by observing the issues in the contexts where these are taking place, reflect on the issues and make the necessary changes and rectifications to accomplish better results.

The use of this technique requires an observation guide that leads the observer, a type of field diary where what is being observed can be noted down, and that should be kept for further interpretation.

3.3 Instruments

From the prior information it can be established that the current research project made use of the two mentioned instruments that are part of the early stages of the research, this was done in order to compile the data necessary to structure a plan: the guide for the interview. The making of it took as a starting point the objectives established for the research project and out of the concepts the theoretical framework provides. The number of questions defined for the semi-structured interview is the result of the selection of a greater number; nonetheless the ones selected are thought to be the most relevant.

3.3.1 Interview Guide

The guide of the interview is integrated by seven main questions; each one of them seeks specific information. Next, each of the questions is presented and their purpose will be briefly explained as well as their relevance in this research project.

Question 1: What do you understand by assessment?- This question aims to find out about the teachers' awareness on assessment, to see how they (teachers) conceptualize the term. Yet, this question is not about their practice but it serves as an introduction to explore the teachers' knowledge on the topic.

Question 2: In your classes, how do you verify your students are learning? Why do you do it that way?. With this question it is attempted to collect data that supports to answer the research question: Which is the type of assessment that prevails in the ELT field in the CAADI (FOD) from the UANL? What type of assessment is being carried out in the aforementioned CAADI?

Thus, such information will provide the information to reach established objectives such as: Identify the types of assessment administered or taken into account in an institution.

Question 3: Other than quizzes or tests (or whatever the interviewee mentioned before), what other ways of verifying learning do you apply? This question as well as the previous one serves to have sufficient information to reflect on the types of assessment carried out in this particular CAADI. What is more, the answer will help to verify and with this confirm or deny the hypothesis which suggests that in this CAADI prevail the traditional ways of assessment (assessment of learning), and that in other type of assessment is scarcely employed.

Question 4: How can you notice the progress of your students in Reading/Writing/Listening/Speaking? What about Grammar/Vocabulary/Pronunciation? The analysis of the answer of such question seeks to find out the types of assessment carry out in their classroom, how they assess learners, when and why they do it the way they do it. If teachers do not know what assessment is or they have a misconception of it, by answering this question they will state it indirectly.

Question 5: What percentage of the overall score do you assign to (test/quiz/or tool mentioned by interviewee)? Why? Does the institution where you work at allow you to use your own criteria to value your students' learning? The answers for these questions aims to clarify the part of the hypothesis which suggests that institutions demand from teachers to assess learners in a certain manner, most likely by exams or tests, having only these standardized tests taken into account.

Question 6: After obtaining the results, do you consider these (results) to plan your next lessons? How? Why? This question aims to determine if a part of the hypothesis is correct or not. Such part questions whether teachers consider the results as a diagnosis to better their teaching strategies; it also suggests that doing so it will have a positive impact on students' learning. Furthermore, these questions are the base of an analysis of the relationship between the types of assessment and the strategies established by language teachers in their practice.

Question 7: Have you ever taken any courses, workshops or read any literature related to assessment? If so, when?, where?, what did you learn?. If not, why? These questions have for an objective to know the academic background or experience of the teachers in terms of assessment,

the purpose of this is to observe if such knowledge -or lack of it- influences the way they conduct their assessment practice and how they make use of it.

3.4. Analysis and interpretation of the information

3.4.1 Language teachers are not prepared to assess

The vast majority of the interviewed teachers mentioned that they are not trained to carry out assessment in the classroom. Only a few of them indicated they know in a very general manner what assessment is because they have partaken in courses during their college years, although it is clear that they tend to misunderstand the term or use the term evaluation and assessment interchangeably. For instance, when one of the teachers was asked whether she had taken any assessment course, she responded: "Only they told us the "assessments". They told us the different ways to assess students, not only exams, but using other activities, but I don't remember the exact activities."

The answer of those who admitted taken a similar course or workshop about assessment does not differ much from the one stated in previous lines, they do recall having taken a course, however they seem not to remember exactly what it was about or how to work assessment in their classroom. The way in which most of these teachers assess learners is through assessment of learning (AOF), in other words, through some type of standardized tests so the learners obtain certain grade. It is probable that the way they assess learners derives from experience –previous experience and experience acquired along their teaching practice-, or based on a vague academic thought on assessment practice.

In spite of that, some of the teachers recognize the importance of other ways of assessment within their teaching practice. For example, teacher number 3 (T3) was asked: Have you ever taken any courses or workshops about assessment?, she replied: "Not besides the ones I took in the BA, but I'd like to take one, I think is important to have constant preparation, because at the end of the day you need to step up".

3.4.2 Heterogeneity in the teachers' assessment practice

All teachers hold a B.A. in English Language Teaching; they are women who range between 24 and 32 years old. One of them is currently studying a Masters in Public Management. All teachers belong to the same institution and the ones interviewed work with teenagers; one may think they all assess their learners the same way. Such statement is true at certain extent; they all have quizzes or exams for their learners although the frequency might differ from one to the other. Moreover, they mentioned different percentages for the different features they take into account for grading learners (tests, homework, participation, and so on) even though such percentages are specified by the head of the language office. On the other hand items such as participation are a tad ambiguous, consequently teachers tend to assess this aspect differently. Some talk about projects, others about speaking skills, presentations and even disposition to learn:

T3 mentions: "I have this evaluation but I have to go beyond that sometimes because summative evaluation is not important, it is but you have to change the things, you have to evaluate other aspects of your students and you need to get to know them better, you need to know really if they are learning what you are teaching. It could be willingness to learn…someone who you see has the drive, a lot of energy, he doesn't know anything but he wants to know, so that's one aspect that I try to take into consideration when I'm evaluating some things…some people are not good with languages, they are not good but they are trying, so that effort I take into consideration."

On the other hand T2 points out: "when they do Power Point Presentations (PPP), when they have to present a specific topic in front of the class, they have to explain it, and they give their ideas, more examples about the topic and I observe how they speak, the grammar rules they are following and of course the visual aids".

Additionally T5 explains: what she considers: "Homework, presentations, homework is readings and writings, presentation on cardboards, PPP, I want that they speak in class".

It is somewhat surprising the ambiguity of the term "participation" and what aspects teachers consider to assess that as it can be analyzed from the three different previous statements. Yet, this heterogeneity may be something positive since it enriches the assessment practice, going from assessment of learning to assessment for learning, trying to be flexible and adjust their strategies according to their students and their students' needs, and motivate students in different manners to improve their language skills

3.4.3 The institution and the exams

There is something that stands out in the assessment practice in FOD, this is the evident and considerable importance tests and exam have to obtain students' learning information to assign a grade with the purpose of passing or making the learner repeat the level s/he is studying. When teachers are asked about how they know their students are learning, some of them refer to tests as a way of having this information. Afterwards they are asked what the weigh of those exams is to obtain a grade, from the observation and answers of the teachers it can be said that such tests and exams are the main type and source of assessment practice. Some of their comments on this topic are:

T4: "they need to pass the exams with 75, they need participation, homework, in my case as I ask for portfolios…40% for exams, 30% is for final exams, 20% for written exams, homework and participation 10%".

T5: "Tests is 65%, and participation and homework 15% and the rest is for the way that they talk".

T3: Obviously we have exams, we have a lot of exams, we have the unit exam, depends on the teacher. In my case we have exams for each unit, we also have the middle term exam from unit one to four, and then six to eight in the final exam…Tests 40%, then 10% for homework and participation, the middle term and the final exam about 25%".

It is clear to see how AOL through tests and exams is vital in FOD, some teachers seem not to agree with this, such as T4 when she states: "It is something that the school asks us to do, it is not because I want to. I think the education in Mexico is the same, we have learned in that way, with exams, passing or not etc." She relates such practice with not only an institutional requirement from FOD, but also as part of the whole educational system in our country. Moreover, some teachers feel limited at some extent because of the regulations of such institution, T2 reflects: "Maybe my own ideas or my opinions are not included there (in assessment), because I have to follow the evaluation that they (institution) say. So I cannot create anything. I have to follow that and that's it".

3.4.4 Un-Awareness on assessment.

Although it seems as though teachers are familiar with terms referring to assessment they are not certain what they consist of or how to carry them out. Teachers refer more to activities to evaluate students than assessment. Only one of the teachers distinguished –during the interview- between formative and summative assessment (AFL/AOL):

T3: "Summative is when you have to have the sum of everything and you put it in a number, and formative goes beyond that at some point".

Even though she is able to recognize these two different types of assessment she could not specify how to differentiate one from the other or what they exactly consist of, showing uncertainty about the topic. However, she is aware of the importance on doing things differently in terms of assessment, that not only exams or numbers are crucial, this can be observed when she showed a deeper understanding of assessment when she indicates that:

T3: "I have this evaluation but I have to go beyond that sometimes because summative evaluation is not important, it is but you have to change the things, you have to evaluate other aspects of your students and you need to get to know them better, you need to know really if they are learning what you are teaching".

3.4.5 Assessment for Learning (AFL)

It is clear that despite the fact that teachers are unaware of the concept of AFL, they do recognize the relevance of having some sort of observation on the students' learning and then adjust their teaching practice according to those observations or results. In other words, AFL is present in the classroom, even though it is not recognize as such and it is not done systematically as it should be done.

As for the activities which teachers mentioned they used to assess learners one way or another, there were: exams, activities from the book, speaking activities such as presentations of different topics, writing activities as short compositions, among others. Speaking activities seem to be widely used by most of these teachers, on the one hand they cannot seem to understand AFL, yet with these type of activities used in the way they claim they do it, it can be said that that they carry out AOL to a certain extent:

T1- "I always try to do activities where they can speak and talk, not only to write something or to make written exercises. I like having speaking activities where they can demonstrate me that they are learning".

T2: "when they do PPP, when they have to present a specific topic in front of the class, they have to explain it, and they give their ideas, more examples about the topic and I observe how they speak, the grammar rules they are following…if i realize they are having several problems when speaking or pronunciating I have to focus on that, talk to them and practice what is necessary. That's how I think is good to improve their abilities."

T3: "we have projects, they need to apply what they are learning. At the end of each unit of the book there are projects, so I give them a mini project to work on, and they have to explain what they did to the rest (of the class). I try to make projects to see if they are learning what I'm teaching at that very moment…Every time they present I see the results if they are good, then yes they are in a good path but if they are not good I have to change something in the way I teach,

perhaps the activities, maybe apply more speaking or grammar activities. I take that into consideration because is a reflection of my work most of the time because I'm teaching them".

3.4.6 Assessment of Learning (AOL)

As it was expected, teachers rely on the usual misconception of assessment only as a way of evaluating students through test -most likely- but also reviewing other products. In other words, they tend to evaluate students' applying tests mostly, which will indicate the students' grade and level. Some of them do it for conviction; something that can be observed in their answers, and others only because the system requires them to do so:

T1: "The exam, in the reality the exams…I think the exams are the most important, I mean, not for me, but for the school".

T3: "Well, one we have the exams because you need to apply them, that's necessary because I need to give a report of what I'm doing."

T4: "According with the school we must have exams. In my level we have four exams one mid term and one final exam. In these exams and in my case I evaluate grammar, vocabulary, listening, speaking because I have oral exams every exam and written skills."

T5: "They (tests) are necessary, it is also a way to see how much they learn in class about writing and it also can help them to speak".

In any case, let us remember that tests are part of most- if not all- institutions, therefore teachers should make the most of them, this is, not only use them to obtain mere results, but also to interpret them and to support learners towards a better English learning experience.

Conclusion

The analysis of the information gathered allows having an insight on how teachers conduct their assessment practice in FOD, in this particular case. Therefore and having such information into account, the hypothesis is proven to a certain extent. The hypothesis of this research projects reads that:

In most institutions where English is taught prevails the traditional ways of assessment when it comes down to ELT. It is only in few cases where teachers employ an alternative assessment which influences positively the language learning, but such practice is related to the formation and the commitment of the teacher in his/her teaching ways, unlike the academic programs or the given conditions in these institutions which force or regulate the assessment, so it becomes standardize.

- Through the observations and the data analysis it can be established that in FOD prevails a traditional type of assessment –assessment of learning- through the application of tests at the end of each unit, a mid-term exam and a final exam. The results (in numbers) of these tests and exams make more than 80% of the entire grade for students to pass or fail, something that is already established by the institution and teachers must comply with what the system requires; whereas the other 20% is made up by more subjective features such as participation in which teachers tend to use more their criteria and they claim to do so by having speaking activities, others claim even making use of rubrics so results are clear to learners as they know what they should achieve contrasted to what they actually achieve. These can be considered as AFL since they provide feedback to learners and teachers state they act accordingly in order to guide learners towards successful learning. AOL through the implementation of tests and exams is an institutional requirement for teachers.

It is clear that despite the fact that teachers are unaware of the concept of AFL, they do recognize the relevance of having some sort of observation on the students' learning and then adjust their teaching practice according to those observations or results. In other words, AFL is present in the classroom, even though it is not recognize as such and it is not done systematically as it should be done.

CHAPTER IV. PROPOSAL

Issues related to assessment in the language classroom are mostly associated to the teachers' lack of knowledge on such matters, probably caused by an insufficient or absent teacher training on assessment. Let us recall that the report *Sorry. El Aprendizaje de inglés en México* (2015) reads that we have an English failing system, in which diplomas, grades, and certifications are given and yet there is no guarantee of real learning; this is the reason why it is imperative to find solutions for such unfortunate situation. Moreover, this report assures that it is vital for English teachers to have the necessary tools to implement successful methodologies for better teaching ways.

Indeed, it can be observed through a need analysis established from the interviews held with teachers from FOD that they require proper training so that they are aware of different ways in which they could assess language learners, and guide them towards the improvement of their language skills, since this should be the ultimate objective of every English language teacher. Most interviewed teachers are not quite familiar with the term *assessment*, or misinterpret it with evaluation. Additionally, some teachers describe certain activities, which resemble some type of assessment, but not all of these activities are done in a systematic and proper manner.

The solution for this particular case is to carry out a workshop where the participants are the teachers previously interviewed. The purpose of such workshop is to deliver useful information regarding assessment with the intention of building a better understanding about it (assessment) and its implications in the language classroom. Hence, teachers will be able to differentiate assessment from evaluation in the first place. Even more, they will learn about assessment techniques such as tests, observation and rubrics, having as a final product the designing of a rubric to be implemented in their current English course.

4.1 About findings

Derived of the study it can be stated that:

1. Language teachers are not prepared to assess since they are not fully aware of assessment: Teachers from FOD stated that they are not familiar with assessment nor they are aware of assessment techniques. However, some teachers claimed they carry out different activities to get to know their students' language level and to spot difficulties they may be facing, although such activities are not usually structured, planned or methodical and apparently there is no follow-up when they observe results.

2. The idea of having heterogeneous classes hinders teachers from assess learners properly: Exams and quizzes seemed to be the ideal way for teachers to assess learning, and one of the reason lays on how other types of assessment may result time consuming and therefore, impractical. Such issue is connected and leads to the next finding.

3. Exams and quizzes are mandatory at the CAADI from FOD, so teachers are requested to apply those on a regular basis, especially at the end of each unit, at the middle and at the end of the course, with the purpose of assigning a grade to each learner so that s/he can move to the next level, or not.

Such conclusion are drawn from the interviews held with language teachers from FOD and from the participant observation, but they seem to be a general tendency across institutions and the country since it is common that institutions require that teachers apply quizzes or exams for different purposes, but mostly to assign a grade to learners so that they pass or fail a level, although these grades might not represent the actual learning of language learners.

4.2 Recommendations

For the issues and findings that have been already mentioned there are some recommendations to attempt coping with them, some of these recommendations are not exclusive to attack one particular concern, but they may assist in the resolving of one or more.

1. The information gathered from the interviews shows that not all teachers from FOD have an academic background related to education or English language teaching. Thus, it would be fundamental to hire actual teachers or individuals who somehow are trained in terms of language teaching, for instance, those who posses a TKT diploma or something

similar. By doing so, it will be more likely to have teachers that implement different strategies that will help students to learn English more effectively.

2. As exams and quizzes are part of the institutions' requirements for teachers to assess learners, then it is vital for teachers to find a balance between AOL and AFL. FOD, as other schools or institutions, asks its teachers to have a quiz every two units, plus a mid term and a final exam. Teachers cannot opt out on this situation, applying quizzes and exams are a must, thus, instructors should be able to make use of other types of assessment in addition to the one established. In this manner, teachers will cover the requirement of FOD of assigning a grade but assuring a better language learning by applying another type of informal assessment that helps learners to learn better and teachers to analyze their teaching and modify it if necessary.

3. Language teachers are not prepared to assess. The fact of having actual English language teachers at FOD teaching English does not guarantee that they know or that they are able to apply other types of assessment other than AOL. Even more, one of them suggested it would be useful to be informed and trained due to the importance of knowing other ways to assess students. Therefore, language teachers are in need of professional development, where they can learn about assessment, its types, techniques and the use of specific assessment tools (observation-checklists, rubrics) to verify students' learning in a more individual manner.

4.3 Workshop: Plan of action

Having analyzed the needs to improve teachers' knowledge on assessment and bearing in mind previous recommendations, it can be said that teacher training is imperative so that teachers become acquainted with what assessment for learning is and some of the techniques that are convenient, without being excessively time consuming. Workshops are a good way to demonstrate language teachers about assessment (key concepts, benefits, design, and so on). Therefore, the proposal to encourage teachers in the using of assessment for better language learning to take place is for them to attend a workshop.

This workshop is intended to last from two to three hours, just like a workshop carried out in a convention. In this event the participants will be teachers of English from FOD who have worked or that are currently working with adolescents. There will be three different stages (opening, sequencing and closure), where teachers will acknowledge different practices of evaluation and assessment, focusing and building knowledge on the main topic of assessment, and finally they will design an assessment tool.

4.3.1 Opening

This is the very first stage of the workshop. Here, the topic will be set; some of the questions asked during the interviews will be display so teachers are able to recall some of the information they provided in the interviews. What is more, the group of teachers will engage into brief discussions on some of their answers extracted from the transcriptions of the interviews. The last activity from this stage is to have teachers brainstorm in a list words that they associate with the term *evaluation*, and next with the word *assessment*, such list will be utilized in later stages.

4.3.2 Sequencing

In this second stage, useful information about assessment will be delivered. Once the teachers brainstormed words related with the concepts of assessment and evaluation, the facilitator will explain to the group of teachers what the differences of these two terms are. For further details and as a visual aid, the facilitator will be supported by a video that summarizes such differences in an attempt to confirm previous information. The facilitator will clarify any questions that may arise at this point. To follow, teachers will reflect on the two previous concepts and will write a table of pros and cons for each one of them, and then they will be discussed.

Next, the facilitator will explain further about assessment, presenting some theoretical background, types, concepts, research about assessment in Mexico, techniques, tools, procedures. Afterwards, teachers will focus on test and observation techniques. Since tests are something established by the institution (FOD) the workshop will not have an emphasis on it. However, the observation technique will be explicated so that teachers are aware of systematics ways of doing so. As observation requires the aforementioned systematic feature, instructor will display ways of gathering data (tools) since the collecting of such data will be vital for teachers to observe their students' necessities, weaknesses, strengths, and so on. All of this with the

purpose of modifying their teaching ways and leading language learners towards better learning by creating the necessary conditions according to the information gathered with their tools.

A rubric is a tool that is convenient and practical to gather such data that will let teachers know about the learning process of students. Furthermore, they serve as a supporting aid that will tell students where they stand and where they need to go in terms of the development of a desirable skill, level or mastery of topics. Thus, instructor will inform teachers about such important tool, in addition to this, teacher will display an example so that teachers are able to visualize a rubric. Teachers will be provided with a useful webpage to create their very own rubrics (http://rubistar.4teachers.org), the instructor will start working on a new rubric on the web page to demonstrate teachers how it is done, but they will also participate to create such rubric by providing ideas, discussing criteria for the rubric and so on.

4.3.3 Closure

In this stage teachers will work on their own rubric as instructor monitors and supports them. Teachers will be asked to select a current topic, skill, or sub-skill from the English course and level they are teaching. Next, they will be provided with a handout or if computers with Internet service are available they will work on creating such rubric. When finishing teachers will be led to a discussion in terms of how to manage such rubric, when it is appropriate to use them, what elements could be modified, and so on. As this is the final stage it is important for teachers to reflect on the topic, their current practices on assessment and how it is possible to adjust their assessing and teaching ways so the teaching experience is beneficial for learners. As a final activity, teachers were given a survey containing questions related to the workshop, assessment, knowledge about the subject matter, feasibility to implement AFL, and willingness to put it into practice among others.

Workshop:

<div align="center">
Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León
Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
Maestría en Lingüíistica Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras
</div>

Workshop: Assessing learners in the language classroom
Time: 150 minutes

Aimed to: English language instructors working with teenagers
Goal: Deliver useful information regarding assessment in the language classroom.

Objective: Through the workshop, English language teachers will be informed about assessment (theoretical background, concepts, and techniques) and they will reflect on their own practices, moreover, they will be guided towards the construction of assessment tools to put be implemented in their classes.

Stage	Activity	Materials	Time
Opening	Teachers will recall the topic (assessment/evaluation) by trying to remember they interviews they took part in and their content. Some chunks of the interviews may serve as a support for them to remember.	OHP Presentation Recordings/ chunks of interview scripts Board	10min.
	Teachers will brainstorm words they relate with evaluation, then words they relate with assessment.		3min.
Sequence	Teachers will learn the main differences between assessment and evaluation so that they acknowledge such differences. (Explanation and video)	Presentation Video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wePut0cfzA Pros and Cons handouts	10min. 10min.
	Teachers will write down pros and cons about the two previous concepts and they will be discussed.		5min.
	Teachers will be informed about the importance of assessment in the language classroom in Mexico by providing interesting facts about language learning in the country.	Computer Speakers	20min. 15min.
	Teachers will go through different assessment techniques and tools.	Board Presentation	
	Teachers will focus on the observation technique and the		

| | different tools that can be useful to assess language learners. First teachers will come up with their very own ideas, next they it will be shown how they can make observation systematic, objective and useful.

Teachers will learn about rubrics and the important role they may play in learning English if used properly.

Teachers will be shown how a rubric can be made, providing useful examples and resources (to design one or to look for ready-to-use rubrics that may fulfill their needs and topics) | Web page:

http://rubistar.4teachers.org | 10min.

20min. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Closure | Each teacher will be given a handout, which is similar to the one in the web page to design a rubric, and they will create their own rubric based on a topic or skill from their current English courses to be implemented.

Teachers will present their rubrics.

Teachers will reflect on the use of rubrics and other ways of assessment, as well as the feasibility of actually putting it into practice, discussing possible outcomes. Finally they will answers a survey related to the workshop. | Handout or computer | 30min.

10min

10 min. |

4.4 Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn after the workshop was implemented, and these are derived from what was observed and discussed during the session, as well as from the outcomes produced by teachers and the survey they answered in the closing section of the workshop.

The general objective of this PIA was: "to analyze the existent correlation between the ways of assessment and the teaching and learning of English in an institution to generate a proposal of alternative assessment." This could be reached by being a participant observer in the CAADI from FOD where the study was carried out, in addition to the interviews in which teachers from this institution participated. From the results obtained, a plan of action was developed in order to inform and teach the teachers to have a different type of assessment in the classroom other than quizzes, in order to fulfill the requirements of the institutions but more importantly to support students through the language learning process.

As for the specific objectives, it will be explained below:

1. Identify the types of assessment administered or taken into account in an institution. (FOD): The information collected, as it has been mentioned before, was through participant observation and interviews. On the one hand, teachers must comply with the institution by having quizzes and exams; on the other hand, teachers explained they sometimes did have other ways to check on their students' progress in language learning, such as observations on students' performances and rubrics.

2. Analyze the relationship between the types of assessment and the strategies established by language teachers: As teachers claimed they carried out both AFL and AOL, they were questioned whether the data gathered through the assessment was somehow useful. Teachers claimed they modify their ways to re-teach certain topics. However, this is very unlikely to occur since they have also stated the lack of time to have different types of assessment in the classroom, much less they would have time to go over a topic they have

already taught. Moreover, the amount of topics to be covered during the course leaves little or no time left for teachers to stop, re-teach or explain further.

3. Design a proposal or improve an existent assessment so that such assessment impacts positively the learning of English: This objective was reached by delivering a workshop in which the interviewed teacher participated to be more acquainted with AFL, which, at it has been formerly described, has a positive impact in language learning.

Let us recall the hypothesis of this research project, which reads as follow: "ELT in FOD relies on the traditional ways of assessment due to the lack of awareness of other types. It is only in few cases where teachers employ an alternative assessment which influences positively the language learning, but such practice is related to the formation and the commitment of the teacher in his/her teaching ways; unlike the academic programs or the given conditions in this institution which regulate the assessment, so it becomes standardized."

Indeed, teachers are reluctant to change their ways, in terms of assessment. From the beginning of the workshop teachers revealed a negative attitude towards the discussions and the activities developed through the session. It became complicated to make them participate and engage them into discussion, there seemed to be a lack of interest about the topic. Also, the answers from the survey revealed this unwillingness to have other types of assessment besides quizzes and exams even though they believe AFL is important for them to teach and for students to learn; and that such tools are easy to design, they consider that the implementation of the assessment techniques shown in the workshop are time consuming, difficult to manage and it is very likely that they will not put them into practice. This can be established with some of their answers, for instance: "we don't have the time and the system doesn't allow it" (T1), "it is difficult to use them all the time" (T2), "they're not easy to apply because we need more time" and "it wouldn't be easy" (T3). These answer display the reluctance, to a certain extent, of teachers to modify their ways.

There was an evident inconsistency in the teachers' statements on assessment. When these teachers were first interviewed, only one of them mentioned a different type of assessment that she actually used in a regular basis: the rubric. This same teacher considers it is relevant to use this type of assessment tools because "they help us to analyze if our students are learning or

if we need to apply different strategies." (T5). As for the rest of the teachers, during their interviews none of them stated to know or to use rubrics to assess learners, contrary to what was discussed in the workshop, where they mentioned to be familiar not only with rubrics, but even with the webpage to design rubrics, stating that they had used them before. Then again, during the survey all of these other teachers indicated assessing learners that way is time consuming, not allowed by the system, it is not easy to carry out, and so on. Therefore, what they said in the interviews and what it was discussed in the session does not match. This leads to the conclusion that although teachers might be familiar with assessment tools and techniques they do not apply any of them in their classrooms due to the reasons previously established.

Teachers were asked to design a checklist and a rubric based on any of the topics they are currently teaching. This was done with the purpose of showing their understanding on the designing of these tools. Teachers spent about thirty to forty minutes to design both tools; when analyzed, it shows that teachers are capable of designing them properly; the content on them is relevant and clear. Unfortunately, as it has been acknowledged before, teachers at first showed their unwillingness to work on the designing of these tools, attitudes that lead to believe it is very unlikely that they make use of the tools already designed and this type of assessment on a regular basis.

All in all it is clear that teachers are in much need of training that supports their professional development so that they are able to support their students towards more effective English language learning; however, having trained teachers who know about assessment, assessment techniques and tools is not sufficient, it is vital and of more relevance that teachers actually change their ways by being more open to suggestions and be more willing to adopt positive attitudes that will make them improve their teaching ways. Having the knowledge and the capabilities to assess students is useless if teachers are reluctant to modify their ways for the benefit of everyone involved in the English teaching-learning process.

REFERENCES

Abedi, Jamal (2010) *Performance assessment for English Language learners*. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education, California.

Alvarez, L., Ananda, S., Walqui, A., Sato, E., & Rabinowitz, S. (2014) Focusing *Formative Assessment on the Needs of English Language Learners*. San Francisco: WestEd.

Bachman, L. F. & Palmer, A. S. （1996) *Language testing in practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Black Paul , Harrison Christine, Lee Clare, Marshall Bethan, and Wiliam Dylan (2004) *Working inside the black box: assessment for learning in the classroom*. Phi Delta Kappan, No. 1, vol. 86. PDK International, Arlington.

Blandéz, A. Julia. (1996) La investigación-acción: Un Reto para el Profesorado. Guía Práctica para Grupos de Trabajo, Seminarios y Equipos de Investigación. INDE Publicaciones: Zaragoza

Brown, H. D. & Abeywickrama, P. （2010) *Language assessment, principles and classroom practices (2nd ed.)*. White Plains: Pearson Education, Inc.

Burns, Anne. (1999*) Collaborative Action-Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Creswell, J. (2014) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* SAGE: USA

De Jesús García, Raúl Gabriel (2015) *La evaluación en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera: hallazgos en la Escuela Normal de Atlacomulco*. Revista de Educación y Desarrollo, No.32, Universidad de Guadalajara, Guadalajara.

Erickson, G. and Gustafsson, J. (2005) Some European Students' and Teachers' Views on Language Testing and Assessment. *A Report on a Questionnaire Survey*. Sweden: Göteborg University

Ezir, Eli. (2013). *Assessment and Testing in ELT: the Difference Between Assessment and Testing*. Yakarta.

Forbes México (2013) *México se resiste a aprender inglés*. November 05th. 2013. Online article. Retrieved from: http://www.forbes.com.mx Viewed: June 02nd. 2015.

Frechtling, J.(2010) *The 2010 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation.* NSF

Gall, J., Gall, M., and Borg, W. (2005) *Applying Educational Research. A Practical Guide*. Boston: Pearson.

Garrison C. & Ehringhaus M. (n.d.) *Formative and Summative Assessments in the Classroom.* Dover:Measured Progress.

Gordon, E., McGill, M., Sands, D., Kalinich, K., Pellegrino, J., and Chatterji, M. (2014) *Bringing formative classroom assessment to schools and making it count*" Quality Assurance in Education, Vol. 22, No. 4 pp. 339-352

Hamayan, Else (1995) *Approaches to alternative assessment.* Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, No. 15, Cambridge University Press.

Hollingworth, Liz. (2007) *Five Ways to Prepare for Standardized Tests Without Sacrificing Best Practice*. The Reading Teacher, Vol. 61, No. 4 pp. 339-342

Hughes, Arthur. (2003) *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, Cheryl A. (2005) *Assessment for Learning*. Liverpool: Learning and Skills Development Agency

Kemmis, Stephen and Robin McTaggart (1988) *The Action Research Planner*. (3rd edition).Deakin University Press: Australia

Linan-Thompson, S. (2010) Response to Instruction, English Language Learners and Disproportionate Representation: The Role of Assessment. Psicothema, Vol. 22, No. 4 pp. 970-974

López, Alexis A. (2010) *La evaluación formativa en la enseñanza y aprendizaje del inglés.* Voces y Silencios, No. 2, vol. 1. Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.

Madsen, Harold S. (1983) *Techniques in Testing*. New York: Oxford University Press

Maxwell, Graham. (2001) *Teacher Observation in Student Assessment*. Brisbane: Queensland School Curriculum Council.

assess. (2016) in Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved on February 02, 2016, from: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/assess

Mexicanos Primero (2015) *Sorry. El aprendizaje de inglés en México*. Mexicanos Primero Visión 2013, A. C., México

Moss, Connie M. (2013) *Research on Classroom Summative Assessment.* McMillan, James H. SAGE Handbook of Research on Classroom Assessment. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Parker, P., Fleming, P., Beyerlein, S., Apple, D. and Krumsieg, K. (2001) *Differentiating Assessment from Evaluation as Continuous Improvement Tools.* Proceedings-Frontiers in Education Conference. Vol. 1

Powell-Davies, Philip. (2011) *New directions: assessment and evaluation. A collection of papers.* British Council, England.

Ramírez Romero, José Luis (2013) *Diez años de investigación en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*. Pearson Educación, Mexico.

Rose, S., Spinks, N. & Canboto, A. (2015) Management Research: Applying the Principles. Routledge: New York

Thornton, John G. (2009) *Learning English as a second language in South Korea: Perceptions of 2nd year college and university students and their English speaking instructors*. The University of Southern Queensland.

UANL.(2015) Modelo Educativo de la UANL. Retrieved from: http://mediasuperior.uanl.mx/00/modelo-educativo.pdf

Wisconsin Center of Education Research. (2009) WIDA Focus on Formative Assessment. Madison: University of Wisconsin, Vol. 1, No. 10

Waterloo Region District School Board. (2013) *Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting Handbook Grades 9 to 12*. Ontario: Waterloo Region District School Board.

Yoneda, Mitaka. (2012) *Designing Assessment Tools: The Principles of Language Assessment.* Bull Mukogawa Women's University Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 60, pp. 41 －49

1. Rubrics

NAME: _____   Date: _____

Vacations Vocabulary	Need to improve.	Good	Well done	Excellent
Employs vocabulary in conv.	Ss cannot use any word. Or uses less than 5 words.	Ss of able to use 10 to 6 words.	Ss are able to use 15 to 11 words.	Ss use all the words/ vocabulary in a conv.
Identify Vocabulary	Ss are not able to less than 5 words, or any word.	Ss identify 10 to 6 words.	Ss identify most of the words.	Ss identify each word/ vocabulary word
Spells Vocabulary.	Ss cannot spell vocabulary or do it with a considerable quantity of mistakes.	Ss spell voc. with some mistakes.	Ss spell vocabulary with 2 or 3 mistakes.	Ss spell vocabulary correctly.

Comments:

NAME: _____   Date: April 6th, 2017.

	Excellent	Good performance	Satisfactory	Needs improvement
Grammar	Grammar studied in class was used to communicate effectively.	A few difficulties that interrupt fluency of speech.	Grammatical errors that interrupt fluency of speech.	Grammatical errors severely interrupt flow of speech.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary studied in class was used to communicate effectively.	A few difficulties arose from not using appropriate vocabulary.	The vocabulary is limited.	Lacks of vocabulary.
Listening	Student is able to respond the question with appropriate answers.	Student is able to answer most questions.	Student failed to answer most questions.	Student didn't understand the questions.

Comments:

NAME: Basic 2B   Date: 4/4/17 Daily Routines
                                      Speaking Rubric

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Fluency	fluid speech volume is *excellent*	Smooth and fluid speech. Few hesitat...	Speech is relatively smooth, some hesitation and unevenness	memorize phrases
Pronunciation and accent	is excellent good effort.	Pronunciation is good.	Pronunciation is good but some mistakes	Pronunciation is lacking
Vocab	Excellent control of language features	Good ly control, good range and variety	Vocabulary range is lacking	Vocabulary that is used does not match the task
Gramar	Accuracy and variety of Grammatical structures	Some errors in grammatical structures	Frequent grammatical errors even in simple structures.	Meaning is obscured.

Comments:

NAME: Melissa Guerra   Date: _____

	Need to improve	Fair	Good	Excellent
Vocabulary	Uses few words. Forgets easily, and does not recycle any of the vocabulary.	Uses some words from the vocabulary and does not use previous vocabulary	Uses appropiate vocabulary, but does not recycle much of it.	Uses appropiate vocabulary. Uses the vocabulary seen in the unit, and recycle words from prev units
Grammar	Incomplete sentences. Lack of syntax. Basic structures, does not seem to even try to use the new grammar	there are minor problems in w/syntax and uses some correct sentences. Uses not all the grammar	Uses correct sentences, but syntax is not appropiate. Uses the grammar seen in class	Uses the best sentence structure Uses the grammar seen in class and previous.
Topic	Does not seem to understand the topic very well.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic.	Shows a good understanding	Shows full understanding of the topic.

Comments:

2. Checklists

Class: __Basic 2 B__   Date: __6/04/17__

- ☐ I can identify what a daily routine is?
- ☐ I can use the simple present.
- ☐ can identify and use the third person
- ☐ I can identify and use frequency adverbs in a daily routine
- ☐ I can write about his/her daily routine.

Class: English – "Things to do"   Date: Sat 8th, 2017
topic 4

☐ ·They are able to use previous and new vocabulary to complete the project

☐ ·They are able to use "present continuous" to express duty in a proper manner.

☐ Can you use the previous structure and the new to create conversations

☐ ·Can understand questions in present continuous

☐ ·

Class: _Oral presentation_   Date: _April 6 th, 2017_.

- ☐ · Appropriate vocabulary.
- ☐ · Appropriate grammar.
- ☐ Logical structure.
- ☐ · Spoken, not read.
- ☐ · Contact with the public.

Class: Advanced   **Date:** April 6th

- ☐ • Use narrative tenses to write a story.
- ☐ • They are able to write inflections.
- ☐ They use verbs in the correct tense.
- ☐ • They use the correct grammar structure.
- ☐ • They identify the use for each tense.

3. Surveys

1. Was the information useful?

   Yes, it was.

2. Do you consider the assessment techniques presented are to a certain extent easy to design?

   Yes because we can use different tools such as books or information from internet.

3. How feasible will it be for you to use such assessment techniques on a regular basis?

   Actually, I always use them.

4. How important is it to implement these assessment techniques? Why?

   They are the most important part of being a teacher because they help us to analyze if our students are learning or if we need to apply different strategies.

5. Does the information contribute to your professional development? If so, how?

   Yes, because now I know more tools that I can use on internet.

1. Was the information useful? Yes

2. Do you consider the assessment techniques presented are to a certain extent easy to design? Yes, but we need to have time

3. How feasible will it be for you to use such assessment techniques on a regular basis? Yes but its difficult to use then all the time

4. How important is it to implement these assessment techniques? Why? its very important because it give us the real knowledge of the students, and we can modify or ways to teaching

5. Does the information contribute to your professional development? If so, how? Yes, sometimes I forget the real meaning or the terms and we only focus to teach the information and that's it, its important that we consider to implement these techniques all the time.

1. Was the information useful?

   Yes, it was.

2. Do you consider the assessment techniques presented are to a certain extent easy to design?

   Yes, I do. But they're not easy to apply because we do not have enough time.

3. How feasible will it be for you to use such assessment techniques on a regular basis? It will be easy but we don't have time and the system doesn't allowe it.

4. How important is it to implement these assessment techniques? Why?

   Becouse you realize about the real students' learning and their abilities. They help you to help them or teach them better.

5. Does the information contribute to your professional development? If so, how?

   Yes, it does. It is important to know this information because you know how important is ! students learn and the way they do it.

1. Was the information useful?

   Yes, it was.

2. Do you consider the assessment techniques presented are to a certain extent easy to design?

   Yes, they are. But they required sometime to actually get them right.

3. How feasible will it be for you to use such assessment techniques on a regular basis?

   It wouldn't be easy at first. I think I should give it time to see how can I worked it out.

4. How important is it to implement these assessment techniques? Why?

   In my opinion, it is really important, because that could help us ~~achieve~~ to achieve more, to understand more and to be better teachers.

5. Does the information contribute to your professional development? If so, how?

   Yes, it does. I think that, as a teacher, you need to keep improving in order to be able to give "THE extra" to your Ss and to keep on learning from them, as well as from the tools that as a teacher you need to have to improve in everything.