



**ASSESSMENT STATEMENT
ADULT ENGLISH**

**GESTIÓN EDUCATIVA / DISEÑO Y
DESARROLLO DE PROGRAMAS**

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1. OBJETIVE

In order for assessment practices to have a significant learning impact, there are several key principles that need to be taken into account. The following principles are the result of the work and insights of AEP teachers in different academic discussions such as Teacher Development Training Sessions (TDTs), tutoring and supervision meetings, academic committees, among others. Although the list is not exhaustive, it is expected to be comprehensive and context-specific. Each one of these principles includes a descriptor and a rule of thumb to consider when implementing assessment practices in English classes.

2. GENERAL GUIDELINES

2.1 Introduction

Assessment is a continuous and systematic process of gathering data that informs the teaching and learning actors about the achievement of communicative, language, and learning goals in order to take appropriate action toward the desired exit profile for each block of the AEP. Assessment practices must be reflective in nature seeking to raise awareness of progression in the attainment of learning goals, factors hindering learning, and possible action plans that both deal with learning problems and maximize students' strengths.

According to O'Malley & Pierce (1996), portfolios, oral interviews, project exhibitions, writing activities, story or text retelling, experiments demonstrations, constructed response items and teacher's observation are some types of authentic assessment. The AEP has incorporated this type of learning tasks to set the scene for meaningful assessment to take place.

2.2 Assessment principals

The concept and application of assessment need to be introduced progressively. There should be a gradual introduction not only of different assessment practices but also of the philosophy of alternative assessment. The approach to qualitative assessment advocated in the program can surely be a novelty within the Colombian education system and students need to be taken from a general understanding of our philosophy to a more specific step-by-step way to assess. The program actually provides essential tools to guide assessment practices. Exit profiles, evaluation checklists, and course syllabi set the ground for teachers and learners to conduct assessment with a clear picture of the expected learning outcomes.

Rule of thumb: Teachers must be fully knowledgeable of the contents of exit profiles and evaluation checklists and they should find ways to gradually familiarize learners with these tools. By taking a close look at these documents, students will be able to realize that assessment does not focus only on the linguistic analysis of their mistakes but also on their learning experience as a whole. Therefore, constant reflection moments throughout the course are extremely beneficial to enhance students' understanding of the approach to assessment in the AEP.

Assessment is effective to the extent that clear criteria are presented to students before they perform. Once students are made aware of what and how they will be assessed, their performance will be more goal-oriented and they will be clear as to what they need to focus on in their learning. As training takes place, students should be able to participate in setting these criteria by proposing how they expect to be assessed.

Rule of thumb: Teachers should always set criteria at the beginning of an assessment moment. Most importantly, teachers should keep these criteria in mind to collect evidence of students' performance, give feedback to students, and/or have them peer or self-assess. Besides the criteria, teachers should provide a model that will allow students to understand what exactly is expected from them.

Assessment must always be constructive in nature. The result of the reflection moment that assessment propounds must be for learners to understand what they can do to perform better next time and define what strategies they can apply to enhance their learning.

Rule of thumb: Teachers should plan their assessment making room for a step that allows students to comprehend what they can incorporate in their performance to tackle their weaknesses: a routine, a strategy, an action plan.

Assessment must be directly related to the objectives of the lesson, which helps the teacher define the assessment moments when lesson planning and focus his/her observation of students' performance in class.

Rule of thumb: Based on the nature of the lesson, teachers should decide on two strategic moments of the class when students will best apply the language, communication, and learning components that the lesson seeks to develop.

Assessment cannot be restricted to or centralized on teachers. Different types need to be explored and sustained in class. Self, peer and group assessment need to be introduced and students need to be trained on how to do it. This does not mean that all types of assessment need to be implemented in every class. The program suggests implementing two types of assessment per lesson, one in each assessment moment.

Rule of thumb: Teacher should carefully train students on how to participate in self and peer assessment since these are not commonplace practices in our culture. Models of interaction to give feedback should be provided according to the level of students.

Evidence gathering is an essential element to provide students with accurate feedback and to keep track of their performance. This practice ensures efficacy in decision-making moments (i.e. passing, failing, tutoring, reclassification, etc.). Providing students with personalized and specific feedback based on keen observation and note taking causes an extremely positive impact on learners as they realize they are being treated as unique individuals and are being taken care of.

Rule of thumb: While students interact during any activity, teachers must be moving around taking notes on students' performance. Every teacher should develop a personal system that best suits him/her to gather data and that allows for a more systematic tracking of his/her pupils' performance. Charts, lists of students, notes on notebook, among others, are some examples of such techniques.

Assessment needs to be both process and outcome-oriented. After feedback is given to students, it is essential that they understand how well they performed in light of the criteria that was set. Both strengths and weaknesses ought to be highlighted and the outcomes needs to be discussed with the student.

Rule of thumb: Every time an activity is assessed, teachers should open a space for reflection about the results and goals of the activity (whether they were achieved or not) and the process that was followed to achieve those goals.

Ongoing assessment is necessary to make students autonomous and eventually self-critical as they will incorporate analysis of their own performance naturally and willingly into their language learning process.

Rule of thumb: Teachers should gradually challenge student to carry out more insightful reflections about their own performance. Likewise, responsibility for the design and application of action plans should shift from the teacher to the learners as they progress in the program.

Depending on the type of activity to be assessed and the assessment tool, the amount of time allotted to the assessment moment can vary. However, assessment should not take time from instruction, but be an organic part of it. In addition to that, different assessment techniques should be implemented in order not to make assessment a monotonous or meaningless practice.

Rule of thumb: Teachers should plan a reasonable amount of time for assessment. Neither long periods of repetitive questions nor a rash revision of objectives at the end of the lesson are considered appropriate assessment practices in the AEP.

3. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

3.1 The assessment cycle



Regarding the process to conduct assessment in the program, there is a series of steps that need to be followed:

- Introduce the concept of assessment to new students. In beginning stages, the use of Spanish is suggested as a way to aid students' understanding of the notion.

Present the type of assessment to be used and describe the roles that learners will have in the particular assessment moment.

Set and clarify the goal to be achieved (communicative, language, learning).

Based on the above, set the appropriate criteria to assess the activity. It is suggested to include three specific points. Vague aspects such as pronunciation, attitude, fluency are to be avoided.

Model how to carry out the assessment activity to obtain the expected result. You can use an interaction model or prompts.

- Gather data (using the tool that suits your teaching style) and analyze them in light of the criteria. If it is self or peer assessment, make sure students do not have to assess and perform the task at the same time, otherwise they will not be focusing on gathering and analyzing valuable data.
- Pose reflection questions and provide meaningful feedback both on strengths and areas to improve.
- Set an action plan to ensure progress (if there is an action plan already being implemented, simply follow up on it). All this is done in the light of the expected goal and the criteria set at the beginning.
- Start the cycle again with the second assessment moment of the day – or in the next lesson- and by using previously gathered data.

It is important to follow all of the previous steps, especially at the beginning of the process when students are starting to get trained or any time a new block begins.

3.2 References

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