

Introduction

Background

This resource guide provides English as a second language (ESL) teachers with formative assessment instruments they can use to evaluate their students' progress in learning English. The Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT) recently published three packages of formative assessment instruments for French as a second language. These instruments were developed through a project funded by the Department of Canadian Heritage, the National Core French Assessment Project, that identified the need for formative assessment instruments consistent with a communicative/experiential approach as a national priority.

ESL teachers expressed a need for similar instruments to CASLT. Despite the hundreds of ESL textbooks on the market, there are few texts that offer instruments specifically designed to evaluate student progress in tasks requiring authentic communication of messages, ideas, feelings, and/or opinions. Most texts tend to contain multiple-choice items and discrete-point tests with little relationship to the kind of learning that occurs in classrooms. Often these materials evaluate only one or two of the four language skills, usually reading and writing. Rarely do we find materials that evaluate all four skills. Finally, there is a need for books containing assessment tasks that focus on formative evaluation, namely ongoing evaluation that provides teachers and students with useful feedback on teaching and learning during the course of the semester or year. In accordance with its mandate to promote the advancement of second language teaching in Canada, CASLT produced a package of formative ESL assessments that includes a variety of speaking, listening, writing and reading tasks that can easily be integrated into the second language classroom activities.

Target Audience

The range of ESL classes across Canada defies easy classification. ESL is taught at the elementary, secondary, college and university levels. It is taught in formal academic settings, such as schools and universities, and in informal settings, like church basements and community centres. The range of ESL programs is as diverse as the audience. ESL is taught to a wide spectrum of learners — to Francophone students in Canada; to young newcomers in provinces with high immigration rates; to their parents and relatives in adult classes held in continuing education programs; and to adult immigrants in universities and work places.

Our resource guide is designed primarily for ESL teachers who instruct young people in elementary and secondary schools and aimed at the intermediate level of ESL programs. However, it also includes some useful tasks specifically aimed at advanced students. In addition, many of the tasks give instructions for adapting the evaluation tools for beginners.

Choice of Assessments

The assessment instruments were selected from the three documents produced within the National Core French Assessment Project. They were chosen because they were deemed worthy performance tasks for the two ESL target groups: Francophones and recent immigrants. Designed by teams of FSL teachers and subsequently field-tested in schools across Canada, the tasks were then translated, modified, or rewritten to better meet the needs of ESL learners.

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CASLT encourages collaboration between FSL and ESL educators as an effective way to produce useful second-language material. Language instruction — regardless of the language you teach — shares the same goal: teaching learners to communicate effectively.

Content

The resource guide contains twenty assessments to evaluate the four skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Each assessment contains various tools to evaluate learning: peer evaluation, self-assessment, group evaluation, and teacher rating scales. Each task is based on a topic that would appeal to students, for example, making friends, finding jobs, or school life.

Language Skill	Task	Level	Topic
Speaking	Interviewing Creating a Phone Message Making a Presentation Participating in Small-Group Discussions Creating a Role Play	All Beginner/Intermediate Intermediate Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced	Making Friends Making Friends Sports and Leisure School Jobs
Listening	Listening to Recorded Texts Listening to a Presentation Listening to a Pizza Order Listening to a Dialogue in a Restaurant Listening to Radio/TV Ads Listening to an Informative Text	All Intermediate/Advanced High Beginner/ Intermediate Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced	Multiple Sports and Leisure Food Food Media Animals
Reading	Reading an Article Reading Menus Reading Help Wanted Ads Reading Brochures	All Intermediate Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced	Multiple Food Jobs Travel
Writing	Writing a Formal Letter Writing an Informative Booklet Sending an E-Mail Card Writing a Nomination Letter Writing about Oneself Writing a Tourist Brochure	All All Beginner/Intermediate Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced Intermediate/Advanced	Multiple School Making friends School Oneself Media, Travel

These assessments were written by teachers, for teachers. They can be reproduced for classroom use. The teachers' task is to choose the most effective and valid forms of assessment for their particular educational setting, the special needs of their students and the type of knowledge, skill, or level of competence they want to assess. Sometimes teachers will need to modify an instrument so that it is more closely related to the learning outcomes of their specific program. Of course, the instruments teachers will find most useful are the ones they will design themselves. It is our hope that the prototypes in this resource guide will serve as a starting point for teachers as they develop their own evaluation tools.

Formative Evaluation

In the process of learning a language in a school context, students obtain linguistic knowledge, acquire communicative skills, gain a certain degree of familiarity with another culture, and develop strategies – and practice four dimensions of language proficiency in communicative tasks that are meaningful and engaging to them.

Evaluation of language learning can take several forms, depending on the goal we have set. It may be more or less formal; it may be carried out by a teacher or an external examiner; and it may be focused on the student, the teacher or the program of studies. Whatever form it takes, evaluation is essentially a **judgment**, based on a comparison between what is observed and an established benchmark. On the basis of a set of data drawn from a student's performance, the evaluator makes inferences about the degree to which the student has mastered the content.

However, while we recognize the importance of this evaluation goal, we also wish to provide students with **feedback** that goes beyond a simple judgment of whether or not he or she has mastered content. What we really want to achieve is a direct and positive influence on the student's progress in learning. The kind of evaluation that allows us to develop such a supportive relationship and to provide the student with the required assistance is formative evaluation. In the following pages, we will present the concept of formative evaluation and its role in the teaching of English as a second language.

Goals

The ongoing evaluation carried out by teachers in the classroom as part of the instructional process, that tells the student how well he or she did on a specific task, not compared to other students, but in relation to desired outcomes, is what we call "formative evaluation". Harley, d'Anglejan and Shapson (1990) have defined formative evaluation in this way:

Formative evaluation has as its goal the ongoing gathering of information which will inform teachers and students about the degree of success of their respective efforts in the classroom. It allows teachers to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in relation to specific curriculum outcomes and thus guides them in organizing and structuring instruction. Formative evaluation provides students with feedback about their progress in meeting clearly identified learning outcomes.

Formative evaluation is therefore useful to both teachers and students. It is useful to teachers, since it allows them to assess the effectiveness of their teaching methods and to choose the most appropriate activities, taking into account each student's progress. Formative evaluation is useful to students because when they receive information about their strengths and weaknesses with regard to the outcomes to be achieved, they can develop more effective learning strategies.

Having defined the concept of formative evaluation, we can provide a more detailed picture by answering the following questions:

WHY?

All effective teaching requires a means to verify student learning at regular intervals and thus allow for quick intervention with students who demonstrate certain weaknesses or strengths. In this way, formative evaluation serves as a **mechanism to regulate teaching**. It allows the teacher to evaluate the impact of instructional strategies and to take the necessary corrective measures in order to achieve the expected outcomes. Since the main aim of formative evaluation is to ensure quality teaching and not to simply assign a student mark,

it is important to remember that it does not always provide data that can be used when calculating a score for a school year or even for a school term.

WHAT?

Formative evaluation cannot be global. It focuses on the skills necessary to carry out a single task, on the learning conditions upon which the teacher can act, or on the performance of certain students experiencing difficulties. Most often, the aim is to determine the achievement of a limited number of outcomes or the mastery of some aspects of proficiency. In order to determine achievement or mastery, the teacher must make a judgment, comparing the actual performance of a student to the expected performance. The latter is usually described in the course of studies. This is why formative evaluation is **critereon-referenced**, since student results are not compared to each other — to assign a ranking, for example — but rather are interpreted in terms of criteria defined in the statement of desired outcomes.

WHEN?

Formative evaluation is an ongoing process. This means that evaluation should be systematic, regular and integrated into the process of teaching. When teachers observe and collect information on an ongoing basis, they send a message to the student that the language learning process is always growing and evolving.

Linda Allal (1979) makes a distinction between **interactive evaluation** and **retroactive evaluation**. Interactive evaluation takes place as the student is learning. The teacher analyzes information gained from oral questioning, observation during a learning activity, homework and so forth. Retroactive evaluation is done at the end of a learning sequence. It may take the form of a synthesis activity, a short test, a reflection on what was learned during the unit, etc. **It is important to clearly target what is to be evaluated.** Retroactive evaluation often helps a teacher to decide whether or not students are ready to go on to the next sequence.

WHO?

Since formative evaluation must be integrated with teaching, the teacher is the only person who can initiate formative evaluation. Authorities such as the school, the school board or the Ministry of Education are not part of this process. On the other hand, because formative evaluation is also an important element in developing students' own learning strategies, the responsibility for evaluation is shared between **students and teacher**. This is why a process of formative evaluation assumes that, at certain times, students will have an opportunity for self-evaluation with respect to the expected outcomes. Similarly, students should be given the opportunity to evaluate each other's performance. Working with peers is an important motivator for promoting autonomous learning and developing metacognitive strategies and techniques that will allow each student to learn better.

HOW?

Because it has serious decision-making implications, summative evaluation imposes strict requirements on the development of instruments and the uniformity of their administration. Formative evaluation, however, can make use of both formal procedures (a test, for example) as well as informal ones (non-systematic observation, for example). Nevertheless, in order for it to be effective, it must be carried out with a certain amount of rigour. No inference is possible if the evaluative judgment relies on information that has **no logical connection with the desired outcomes**. While measurement instruments (a test made up of questions with multiple-choice responses, for example) can be used in second-language teaching, observation techniques (rating scales or anecdotal notes, for example) tend to be the preferred tools.

Guiding Principles of Formative Evaluation Design

Principle 1

Formative evaluation should be consistent with a communicative/experiential methodology

ESL language instruction and content should encourage students to view the language as exciting, relevant and applicable. Since language is, first and foremost, a means of communication, students' language learning in the school context must be centered on living new experiences that involve communication (Tremblay, Duplantie and Huot, 1990), and our assessments must also emphasize the communicative goals of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Principle 2

Formative evaluation should be directly linked to learning outcomes

Since the achievement, progress, strengths and weaknesses of our students can only be evaluated with respect to expected outcomes, our assessments must reflect those outcomes. These outcomes are divided into four categories that take into account the Canadian Language Benchmarks Proficiency Checklists for ESL (1996): communication, language, culture and strategies.

Principle 3

Formative evaluation is task-based

Nunan (1989:11) defines a task as a piece of meaning focused work involving learners in comprehending, producing and/or interacting in the target language. Based on targeted learning outcomes, we have designed tasks that allow students to put their skills, knowledge and strategies to use. A short talk in front of an audience, a role play, an information-sharing game or the writing of a letter to a friend are all tasks that can be carried out and evaluated according to various themes and topics covered in ESL programs. And because the tasks are linked to expected outcomes, they are accurate and meaningful indicators of "who can do what".

An appropriate task is one that is adapted to the age and cognitive level of the students and able to be completed in a reasonable period of time. A good task must motivate students to work hard at performing at their highest possible level and engage the students by capturing their interest and their energy (Lewin and Shoemaker, 1998).

Principle 4

Formative evaluation cannot be global

The purpose of formative evaluation is to closely monitor the student's progress in learning and to detect problems along the way in order to make necessary adjustments both with regard to the teaching process and the tasks presented to the student. Formative evaluation therefore can only deal with a few learning outcomes at one time, focusing on a limited number of skills, items of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

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In order for our assessments to be effective, we have grouped them according to the four language skills. We want to emphasize, however, that separating out the four skills for purposes of formative evaluation does not imply in any way that they are not inter-connected with respect to teaching.

Principle 5

Formative evaluation aims at improving students' performance through quality feedback

The process of assessment is not complete without communicating results. Our instruments provide students with constructive, precise feedback, either orally or in writing, after completing each task. Formative evaluation goes beyond merely judging the level of mastery of the expected outcomes. Its purpose is to inform students about their strengths and weaknesses compared to established expectations and, if necessary, suggest corrective measures. Given the recursive nature of tasks in ESL classes, students may be able to gradually correct certain difficulties and progressively perfect certain aspects of their language proficiency. It is this interaction between teacher and student that constitutes one of the major advantages of formative evaluation.

Principle 6

Formative evaluation allows students to be progressively and systematically involved in the evaluation process

Our instruments are designed to help students participate more fully in the evaluation process. We have ensured that there are opportunities for students to stand back and reflect on their communication practices so that they can evaluate them, make choices and look for ways to improve them by giving new directions to their learning. In so doing, students will gradually become equipped to be fully responsible for their learning.

The self-reflection section found on some instruments allows students to practice self-evaluation. It can be effective if certain guidelines are respected:

- ask students to make specific, constructive comments on their performance;
- encourage them to emphasize their strengths, weaknesses and their own learning goals;
- provide them with models of the kind of comments expected;
- give them time to reflect on their performance and progress.

Principle 7

Formative evaluation is ideal for developing a strategic awareness

Our tasks involve strategic awareness. Like Oxford (1990:8), we define strategies as "procedures used by learners to improve their learning". In order to organize specific strategies that students should acquire to improve their learning of a second language, we have drawn upon the classification proposed by O'Malley and Chamot (Cyr 1996: 39). The strategies are divided into three general types:

Metacognitive strategies

- Arriving prepared for class;
- Concentrating on learning tasks;
- Ensuring the assigned tasks are understood and completed; and
- Evaluating oneself.

Cognitive strategies

- Listening attentively;
- Repeating words and expressions;

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- Carrying out instructions;
- Doing mechanical exercises;
- Re-using words and expressions that have been taught by putting them in sentences;
- Inventing words, creating with language;
- Answering questions;
- Using resources to understand or produce messages;
- Drawing inferences as to the meaning of new words or the overall meaning of an oral or written passage; and
- Taking advantage of opportunities to speak in English.

Socioaffective strategies

- Cooperating with peers;
- Asking for help when needed;
- Asking for clarification; and
- Managing the stress related to second-language learning (risk-taking).

As for the communicative strategies, we have defined them as procedures used by learners to facilitate communication or to resolve communication problems that result from a lack of linguistic knowledge (Cyr 1996: 60). Our consensus is that the following procedures are the most useful:

- Maintaining effective eye contact;
- Speaking loudly enough to be understood;
- Appropriate turn taking;
- Using visual aids; and
- Using compensatory strategies (paraphrasing; miming or making gestures; using L1).

Principle 8

Formative evaluation is diversified

Language proficiency involves combinations of skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes. Clearly, a single instrument, or achievement on a single task, is not sufficient to assess the complex learning process. We therefore encourage the use of several forms of evaluation to provide a broader and more comprehensive picture of the student's English as a second language competencies.

Principle 9

Formative evaluation is preferably done in English

We strongly recommend that formative evaluation be done in the second language, English. To this end, we have tried to develop instruments that take into account the students' language level. We encourage teachers to modify the language items if necessary, according to the actual language level of their students. We also suggest that the vocabulary used for evaluation be taught gradually.

Task Set-Up

Each task follows the same format.

The title states the **Activity** and **Language Skill** being evaluated. The subtitles give the **Topic** and **Instructional Levels**, whether beginner, intermediate, advanced or all levels.

The **Task Summary** specifies the goal of the task and what students are expected to do.

The **Learning Outcomes** clarify the skills, knowledge and strategies that students will be expected to demonstrate and that will be evaluated.

The **Task Description** contains instructions that the teacher can give to students. If the task is specifically targeted to the intermediate level, teachers will find suggestions on how to modify the task for beginner or advanced levels. This section has three components:

- **Warm-up:** This component includes suggestions for preparing the students to do the task.
- **Setting up the task:** This component has specific instructions outlining how to do the task. It may also include necessary vocabulary or grammar items the students will need to know.
- **Follow-up:** This component suggests homework assignments or ways to expand on the assessment.

The **Assessment Tools** list the types of different evaluation instruments and contains these suggestions:

- Who gets the instrument — an individual student, a pair of students, a group of students, or the teacher;
- What to do with the various instruments; and
- A suggested marking scheme.

In the process of doing a formative evaluation, the teacher discovers the strengths and the weaknesses in the students' communicative skills. The section called **Teacher's Self-Reflection** is designed to help teachers think about modifying their teaching in view of the students' performance.

The following icons on the top right hand corner of each instrument mean:



The instrument is designed to be used by students individually.



The instrument is designed to be used by students in pairs.



The instrument is designed to be used by students in small groups.

No hands

The instrument is designed to be used by the teacher.

Formative Evaluation Instruments

In second-language teaching, a variety of formative evaluation instruments are available. Data can be collected using either measurement or observation instruments. In general, measurement instruments are used to evaluate learning that cannot be directly observed, such as reading comprehension. On the other hand, observation instruments are used to evaluate learning that can be demonstrated through performance.

Instruments Designed for Observation: Performance Assessments

When we ask students to carry out a task such as creating a role play, doing an oral presentation, writing a composition, etc., we can use various observation instruments to determine if the necessary competencies for completing the task are in place.

Here are the types of observation instruments you will find in this document. The instruments can be task-specific (designed for a specific task) or generic (designed for a type of performance).

Observation Chart

<p>Definition</p> <p>This instrument simply lists a set of observable behaviours, enabling the teacher to quickly and efficiently check off observed behaviours at various times with different students.</p>
<p>Use</p> <p>The observation is done while the students are doing a task. As a general rule, one should observe only a small number of students at a time and a limited number of behaviours. The observations are recorded with a check (✓) or an X, depending on whether the behaviour is present or absent; a plus (+) or minus (-) sign, depending on the ease with which the student demonstrates the behaviour; and a question mark (?) if the behaviour has to be verified at another time. The teacher then decides what needs to be done for those behaviours that were not attained. Finally, the teacher has discussions with students on a regular basis about the components of their behaviours that were observed; the goal is to help students improve them.</p>
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It helps the teacher to get to know each student individually and follow his or her progress.• Accumulating information about process is made possible.• Evaluating components, such as participation and effort, is made more objective, since the components are transformed into observable behaviours – repeating words and expressions, for example, or asking questions and completing the assignments.• It enables the teacher to record the behaviours signaling the mastery of strategies that contribute to learning a second language.• It helps the teacher to draw inferences about the progress, or absence of progress, in the development of skills or strategies.

Anecdotal Notes Grid

Definition

An instrument in the form of a chart with several boxes for brief written notes. The aim of these comments is to describe the specific behaviours or skills under observation. Notes are closely tied to instruction.

Use

Students' names are written at the top in the appropriate rectangles on the grid. The teacher notes his or her observations during different tasks and the dates observations were made. The outcome being assessed is written at the top of the grid. It is important to plan specific times for taking anecdotal notes.

Advantages

- It enables teachers to note relevant information quickly and concisely.
- It can help teachers fine-tune their instruction.
- Teachers can do a more rigorous evaluation since they not have to rely solely on their memory to make judgments.

Direction Card

Definition

A planning instrument in the form of a chart that lists the characteristics of the product students are required to create or the steps students are asked to follow on a multi-step task.

Use

Students record their progress on a task by checking off each requirement as they meet it.

Students are asked to use the form if the teacher judges that they need it. The teacher can also establish the necessary steps to accomplish a task with the students. This active participation on the part of the students contributes to developing an important learning strategy: planning. Eventually, the students themselves are able to formulate the steps required to perform a task successfully.

Advantages

- It clarifies expectations.
- It guides students' performance by breaking the task into parts, and delineating the sequence in which various parts are to be completed.
- It enables students to verify and correct their performance while doing the task, thereby coaching them towards effective performance.
- It helps develop a strategy for planning.

Assessment Checklist

<p>Definition An instrument that specifies criteria that must be present in a performance.</p>
<p>Use The teacher checks off the presence or absence of the criteria listed. After considering the presence or absence of the criteria, he or she then judges if the proposed task caused a problem or not. The teacher next discusses with students the traits assessed to help the students improve on them.</p>
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recording information on performance is made possible, quick and easy.• Teachers can concentrate on the criteria they judge critical for a quality production.• It can be used for peer evaluation on the condition that the list consists of criteria that the students themselves are able to observe.

Rating Scale

<p>Definition An instrument that gives a set of scoring guidelines for evaluating students' performance. Analytical rating scales include several scales, one for each of the dimensions or traits being assessed and descriptions for each level of performance. They are mostly used as a way to evaluate lengthy, substantive tasks. Holistic rating scales are more helpful when evaluating shorter tasks. One scale only is present, with one general description for each level of performance.</p>
<p>Use It is important that the students know the criteria in advance that will be used to evaluate their performance. There are criteria for each independent dimension of the performance: communicative aspects (clarity of the intent of the communication, relevance of the message's content); linguistic aspects (vocabulary, pronunciation); cultural aspects (the use of culturally suitable vocabulary and idioms); and strategies (the use of reference works such as word lists or dictionaries to correct texts; the use of visuals to help make oneself understood).</p> <p>The rating scale is similar to a checklist, but the teacher must qualify his or her assessment of its criteria by referring to a graduated scale comprising detailed descriptions for each level of performance stipulated. Our scales usually include four levels of performance: excellent, good, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory.</p>
<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It helps teachers and student clarify the purpose of a task.• It keeps evaluation specific and measurable.• Its analytical nature permits a better determination of a student's competencies.• It provides guidelines for self-assessment.

Self-Assessment Form

Definition

An instrument that enables students to examine and reflect upon their learning, accomplishments, progress, and development.

Use

Students can be asked to carry out such an assessment after any learning experience. It should reflect at least one of the three following goals:

- allow students to determine their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the reason for gaps;
- encourage them to question which learning strategies work for them;
- help them to come up with an action plan to improve their learning.

Self-evaluation and peer evaluation are learning strategies whose development requires modeling, practice and discussion.

Advantages

- These forms enable the students to be involved in the evaluation process.
- They motivate the students by making them responsible for their own learning.
- They help the students become more autonomous learners.

Instruments Designed for Measurement: Selected Response Assessments

This category of instruments includes forms of evaluation that are more traditional in nature. Evaluation is more reliable, but preparing these measurement tasks requires time. This category includes questions with a choice of response, which are particularly useful to verify reading or listening comprehension.

• ***True / False items***

They consist of statements, and students are asked to indicate whether they are true or false. This type of question is more useful when the teacher can go over the responses with the students afterwards.

• ***Multiple choices***

They consist of a question followed by possible answers and students indicate the correct one.

In second-language teaching, teachers can use questions that call for short answers. Correction is objective because there is usually only one correct answer. Three types of short answer questions stand out in particular:

• ***Fill in the blanks***

Students fill in the correct word in a sentence. It is used in particular to assess specific linguistic knowledge.

• ***Chart completion***

Students fill in information they find when reading or listening to a document, or during a speaking activity where the goal is to find missing information.

• ***Short answers***

These involve a single sentence, which is written by the students following a question or description of a situation.

Finally, there are certain number of tasks where the student must manipulate given information. For example:

- ***Rearrangements***

These items require rearrangement of a sequence. For example, the teacher could ask students to place sentences in a coherent order or reorganize words to compose a sentence that is grammatical and comprehensible.

Other Formative Assessment Instruments: Personal Communications as Assessment

These instruments do not take into account the more informal procedures for verifying learning during formative evaluation. Feedback may take the form of **notes**, which the teacher writes on the student's work, or **comments** given following an oral activity. Whether achieved by formal or informal procedures, formative evaluation must provide feedback to the student. From this perspective, one could conceive of formative evaluation as an exchange between a teacher and student concerning the latter's learning.

However, this exchange is not always individual, because the teacher may sometimes want to use the performance of the class as a whole to adjust his or her teaching. In this case, the teacher may conduct a **survey**. A survey measures the individual and collective progress of students, especially with respect to attitudes and behaviours. The survey asks each student to indicate whether the task was difficult, if the explanations were clear, if the activity was interesting, etc. In this case, the overall response will guide the teacher in deciding on the action to be taken.

More formal evaluation procedures result in evaluation records, which can be kept to be referred to later. Using the techniques we have just described not only leads to improved quality of evaluation, but also facilitates the communication of final results to students or, if need be, to parents. The results obtained through measurement or observation instruments may become a starting point for a **student conference**. During such a conference, the teacher meets with a student to inform him or her of the teacher's assessment of the work that has been done, to obtain additional information and to give advice. Conferences can also take place between students. For example, two students may have a discussion about each other's texts, referring to the criteria on a checklist. Finally, in approaches based on **portfolio** evaluation, judgments made during formative evaluation are important factors in justifying which documents will be placed in the portfolio.

An ESL Portfolio

Definition

The ESL portfolio is a tool for organizing a meaningful collection of the work carried out by the student over a given period of time and allows the teacher to assess student achievement (Genesee and Upshur, 1996) and progress. It will contain what Allal (1983 in Simon et Forgette-Giroux, 1994) calls "concrete evidence of student work" with a view to an improved monitoring of his or her learning (formative evaluation) and an eventual appraisal of final achievement (summative evaluation).

Use

The portfolio intends to present concrete evidence of the student's progress. It should capture the richness, depth, and breadth of his or her learning within the context of the instruction and the learning that takes place in the classroom. It should include examples of all aspects of language learning. The following inventory lists the possible content of an ESL portfolio:

- 4 speaking tasks (4 different kinds: role playing, drama, oral presentation, interview, etc.),
- 2 written tasks (2 different kinds): one of these written performances should include the different steps in its production: from research phase, to draft, to final production,
- 3 examples of listening tasks (2 different kinds of texts),
- 2 examples of reading tasks (2 different kinds of documents),
- Comments from the teacher on the process and the outcome of the student's learning,
- The student's reflections on his or her progress and on what has been learned (in journal form, for example), and
- One structured self-evaluation report.

Students should manage their own portfolio. To this end, teachers should explain how to collect and organize samples of work in the portfolio that demonstrate what has been learned. Students should be encouraged to collect samples regularly and systematically, and class time should be allotted to keep the portfolio up to date. Portfolios should be kept in the classroom and be accessible to both the student and the teacher. A file folder makes a good portfolio.

Advantages

- The portfolio lends importance to activities done in a second language class.
- It involves students in assessment.
- The portfolio is an excellent way to show parents, administrators, and future teachers what the student has done during the semester or year. There is excitement about learning.
- Because it can be used for teacher-parent interviews, teacher-counsellor or teacher-student interviews, it encourages interaction.
- Finally, by providing a tangible, continuous and cumulative record of language development, it is an excellent means for students to see how they have progressed during the term, year or cycle.

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Assessment Tasks