

## Constructing Sustainability or Let Them Do It: Alternative Social Assessment in Adult EFL Context

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### Abstract

*This research shares the view of a learner's subjective and self-reflective role in the assessment process. Breaking the passive role-playing ground of attempting a test, a test taker as a conscious social independent identity can make a decisive contribution to the existing evaluation process. Through active participation, and presentation as a positive social impact maker in dealing with various social issues outside the classroom under the umbrella of social assessment, a learner can assess himself or herself. This facilitates one to assess his or her roles in the existing practices of different modes of formal classroom assessments to make a fresh start to meet the current discontents in the graduates' employment scenario. The unemployment rate among university graduates is higher than other times (FE 2020; Bangladesh Employment and Labor Market Watch 2018). Apart from pandemic effects and other reasons, this fall alarmingly points to the quality of higher education, to the most extent at the validity and reliability of the assessment process these graduates have already undergone in their higher studies. Added with this, the preference of employability skills valued by the employment stakeholders, from hard to soft and social skills (57%) has given the unemployment problem a new dimension. It gives the impression that the purpose of higher education is not just to produce only but also to create graduates with portable skills and knowledge for successful future employability. A number of studies have addressed quality issues in higher education but not many in the country's graduate attributes and assessment practices and policies. Therefore, this area needs thoughtful attention to review the existing studies and the strong emphasis on such gaps. Along with formative/summative classroom assessments, sets of rubrics, and issues of test reliability, it is very important to address the test taker (learner) in the social context to address the current employment standards for acquiring both the soft and hard skills. In this regard, social assessment within the context of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) teaching and learning can allow one to gather data on '21st century skills' of the learner, including intra/self-management and interpersonal/people skills. This paper recommends the incorporation of the graduates' attributes and involvement along with the teachers' in the learning and assessment process. Also, this claims for a paradigm shift in the current assessment practices at the higher studies in Bangladesh by incorporating sustainable social assessment principles.*

**Key Words:** Social Assessment; Informal/Social Learning; Self-Reflection, Non/Cognitive Skills; Process-Folio.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Context and background

Is a test just an opportunity or having to recall facts, numbers, events, characters, and have a combination of some alphabetical-numerical grade- points for a language learner, or something other than that? A number of researches on the social context where language tests take place have put forward significant changes in how a test is treated in a language education program. This would give one a scope to take a test taker, not as an individual with cognitive attributes capable of instant use of those in any situation of demand. Rather it emphasizes that he or she should be taken as a social being with a subjective self whose subjective position in the social world 'is realized in the test itself'. As an important technology for assessing subjectivity of an individual learner a test recognizes the test taker and the test itself as a reliable and valid-criterion of assessment process of a program.

A test certainly constructs identities for the test taker and all involved in this process as different stakeholders, i.e. teachers, parents, employers, textbooks, institutions and other tangible and intangible resources (McNamara & Roever, 2006). Going beyond the existing theories of validity, progressive researchers (Foucault, 1975/1977; Messick, 1989; Kane, 1992, 2001; Bachman, 1990) seek to investigate 'the social meaning of tests and their social impact' on the test takers. A real social function that a test plays for the learner requires him or her to involve in implementing language policy and the curriculum for mass success in employment. In modern employment measures, success does not necessarily mean just learning facts. Instead, it refers to more human and social skills like empathy, self-regulation, critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, consciousness, and skills that can give one capacity to build a successful and happy life (Hilton, 2015; Taher, 2021).

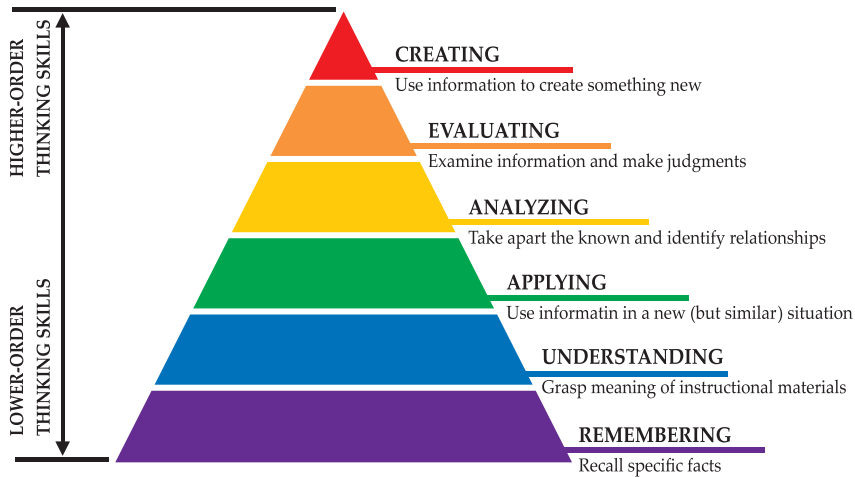
On this note, Foucault (1977) in his seminal book *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* argues that assessment as the best disciplinary tool needs to be reformed in a society. By criticizing the fundamental epistemological and ontological assumptions he argues that the changes and the shifts in systems (done every time to continue the process of domination) need to be done on humanitarian social ground for re/discovering the power of the self, name and identity. Taking tests as a powerful measuring tool for locating an individual's

place in society, Foucault argues on the *power* and *control* game in the assessment process focusing on the dominant role of a teacher as the subject/self and the learner as the dominated object/other.

What's more, a study on the role of the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) within academic systems has challenged it in the domain of intellectual and academic scenario. As the most important provider of the constructs on language assessment, some researchers criticize its inadequacy by terming it as 'irrelevant' for its 'overriding role as reporting framework within the educational systems' (McNamara, 2006). There is an impatience growing with student assessment that mainly likes to address facts and basic skills of the learners keeping aside unexploited thoughtfulness, imagination and the pursuit of knowledge. It does not allow one to take knowledge as a process, a pursuit rather than as a product or destination. To counter this, educators are trying to experiment with alternative assessment tools and methods that can document an assessment of thinking and learning rather than that of merely possessing information. Thinking forces one to sustain an arc of work to rehearse, criticize, revise, reflect and arrange new attempts to present learning not in a straightforward but in the most sensible subjective way that holds the information as well as beliefs of the learner/test taker.

Equally important here is Malcom Knowles' (1913–1997) design of andragogy that talks about five principles for adult learning where he opines on the psycho-social interventions of the learners. These include self-concept, experiential learning, participation in the design and assessment of learning, orientation and motivation for the learning. In the process of standardization and learner-supportive steps, many of the modern developments –performance, portfolios, and 'authentic' assessments have added feathers with different approaches and outcomes in the assessment process. These have shifted the focus toward a broader assessment where assessment enhances learning for the individual. Engagement and involvement of the teachers and learners in the assessment process with greater flexibility is highlighted. This change is termed by many as the paradigm shift in assessment. This step started in the late 1950s when Bloom's taxonomy was published and revised in 2001 by Anderson and Krathwohl. In the original framework, Bloom kept evaluation as the topmost one what in course of time was revised by the researchers to address the shifting demands of time and the assessment criteria. In the latest one creativity is shown (Figure 1) as the topmost academic achievement for an individual learner.

### BLOOM'S TAXONOMY – COGNITIVE DOMAIN (2001)



**Figure 1:** The Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

It defines learning as moving forward from basic/ lower forms of recognition and imitation to higher activities such as analysis, synthesis and creativity. Understanding of knowledge to the application of it is another phase of this form that facilitates a learner to evaluate him or herself as the conscious cognitive and social being.

However this post-modern time and this shift of assessment are socially constructed, subjectively attached in contrast to the objective, detached view of the previous modern time. "We are social beings who construe the world according to our values and perceptions: thus, our biographies are central to what we see and interpret it" (Gipps, 1999). Learning is taken now in relation to an organic process of self-rearrangement and recreation, a broader process of knowledge construction. Learners learn full-heartedly by making sense of new knowledge and making meaning from it by accommodating it in the existing knowledge map or schema. In this regard, psycho-social intervention is emphasized in learning. For achieving academic and life outcomes psychosocial skills—thinking, behaviour and self-control should make the basis for social assessment as meaningful, measurable and malleable skills (McKown, 2017). Social assessment (SA), popularly taken as a tool/ methodology in the formative assessment process, questions the traditional aspects of assessment:

Social assessment (SA) is a policy tool developed to assist decision makers in making appropriate decisions that take account of the interests and views of specific communities, groups and individuals of interest. Burdge and Vanclay (1995) make clear that SA is not a decision algorithm but a process.

Public involvement is integral to any SA and should contribute to all parts of the process, including the more technical components.... In choosing to participate in a SA, people need to understand the decision-making processes that will occur and the extent of their influence and responsibility in them. It is also critically important that information is collected in a manner that is locally understood and that stake holders and communities are empowered to contribute to the decision-making (Coakes & Fenton, 1999).

Through participation, interaction among the key elements and actors of the society a learner can broaden the horizon of knowledge and understanding. In the same line, a learner can get the scopes to play a positive role in the wider social context. Different activities extending from inside to outside classroom --project work on social issues, rediscovering and complementing as a part of the presence of some historical/cultural facts, critically analyzing some existing social policies vulnerable for a particular group of society, searching ways for preventing death of some local dialects, rediscovering the peers in the social world of the classroom, addressing some human/animal-life threatening ecological issues, reflecting on the previous study life in primary and secondary levels, industrial tours and reports, impacts of celebrating culturally/nationally important days, issues of disability both physical and mental in a society—a lot these social issues and their minute study, their positive and negative impacts on the community and other related stake holders can make social assessment a thriving way of assessment for both the learners and the teachers. A learner team can select a social issue, research and present that as a teamwork. At the same time the peer group can assess and evaluate others' presentation inside classroom. These take into consideration a number of initiatives by enhancing quite a number of soft skills—team spirit, critical thinking, arrangement and presentation of the topic in front of an audience, leadership spirit and motivational output. As a part of a formal assessment, a very short but minute presentation of this under SA can enlighten the peer group as well as the whole community about the ecology of an institution.

This interdisciplinary case study is an overview of an attempt to incorporate social assessment (SA) within the English language learning and teaching

paradigm. As an integration of the formative assessment this methodology/tool has supported the researcher to identify the learners' changes and development as self-assessors in the process of assessment at the tertiary level. As a part of assessment in two courses, learners have chosen topics related to social issues, debates, and values to study outside the classroom, made dialogues between the key personalities and elements, and reported and presented that inside classroom. These have raised their involvement and awareness about several social issues, their positions regarding those, and evaluated their self-participation-performance-analysis and that of the peers' in the assessment process. The study has helped learners extend their classroom learning to the social world and thus supported a lot to boost their academic and social skills development. Some of them have participated in this research as the focus group (FG) and reflected on their roles and learning in that assessment process. From FGD what comes out that naturally points at the gaps existing in the traditional assessment process. This research highlights some steps that deserve attention from different stakeholders to address alternative social assessment (SA) as an important evaluation technique in academia. Also, it discusses and recommends for minimizing the gaps and welcomes further studies on the possibilities and the barriers to the successful integration of social assessment and social issues in the curriculum and language policy.

## **1.2. Research gap**

Learners' roles, choices, voices, scopes, challenges and possibilities as the individual social actor, an important stakeholder in the assessment process have been rarely attended in previous studies so far while other stake holders' opinions and suggestions have always been considered and appreciated. Learners' lackings or weaknesses are often highlighted under needs analysis (NA) to prepare lessons and testing systems. This lack of attention, the gaps and the misalliances have widened the gulf and kept the key factors apart from each other. Along with this is added the shift from the existing to the outcome-based education (OBE). The new curriculum and the assessment process keep room for re-examining and re-defining the viable outcomes in rapports with competence and graduate performance in the changed novel setting. The general outcomes here targeted for learners are 'being knowledgeable, being ethical, proficient thinking, capability, a thirst for knowledge and a capacity to learn, leadership, public mindedness and relation of... identity amidst globalization' (Christison & Murray, 2022). Learners need direction to these changes and here social assessment (SA) can play a vital role to reach the

outcome target of the new changes and modifications. This can help attain learner empowerment or learner autonomy what has been or is still a less explored area in the context of Bangladesh.

### 1.3. Implications of the study

This study tries to address the alarming mismatch between the demands of the job market and the output of the graduates as the incompetent school leavers. Also, an increased number of young unemployed graduates have given the impression that 'education had departed from the "real world" of work, and the result has been to recouple education with the economy' (Naeve, 1988; Gipps, 1999) and society to develop both cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Assessing learners through the traditional examination and psychometric model, which overlooks the use of external tools, "reduces its usefulness and ecological validity". Following Vygotsky's track, we should develop assessment that allows the use of secondary tools for getting best performance than the typical one. This can be a dynamic assessment what involves interactional investigation of a learner's learning strategies, and thinking process that gives a learner scopes to learn and a teacher suggestions to teach (Lunt, 1994, p. 152). In this process, the assessor and the pupil produce the best performance in collaboration, which is withheld in traditional tests just to produce typical performance. Dynamic/interactive assessment reduces anxiety, beneficial for both majority and minority groups of learners and their 'independent ability' as a group in a heterogeneous classroom. The target of SA is to make learners independent reflector on his or her performance and thus to contribute as a conscious and subjective one in the assessment process to generate self-learning out of that process. This supports one take lesson from the assessment process that in turn makes one accept the process as a meaning making one instead of just a passing a ladder to move to the next.

Social intervention of learning and the individual's involvement, participation and interaction transport 'a socially shared vehicle of thought'. Even inside the social world of the classroom, a learner's understanding of a teacher's instruction needs social interventions by the peer group. Teachers, parents, or any skilled tutor can scaffold an individual's performance, but a team studying together can facilitate proper interest and enthusiasm for learning. Here SA works as an important catalyst to raise dialogue between the collective and the individual learning. To create a proper self-conception, self-identity and self-

empowerment SA helps a learner participate and play role in the assessment process as an important stakeholder in the community.

#### **1.4. Rationale/ objective of the study**

Previous researches on assessment did not take into account the matter of learner's inclusion in the assessment process, the issue did not strike for any consideration in any policy-making/curriculum development process. Accordingly, two issues are addressed here—social assessment and the learners' participatory roles in the process of assessment. The objective of this study is to develop a learner's self-awareness as an active participator under the mode of SA to boost the classroom practices of assessment. As a part of pedagogical practices and assessment process, the teacher as the facilitator can facilitate the learner-participants create awareness about social assessment and its benefits. The learners can be self-evaluative through evaluating themselves and the peers during the presentation of any social issue inside classroom. As an integral part SA can energize and synchronize the learning and assessment process in a language classroom. Keeping these issues in mind, the research questions ensued:

1. What active and participatory role can a learner play in the assessment process to develop his or her both soft and hard skills?
2. How does the transition from the assessor to the to be assessed facilitate one to realize one's self-perception of his/her improvement and sustain the process of knowledge generation?

#### **1.5. Literature Review**

Paulo Freire (1972/2000) in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* raises the issues of addressing learners' voices and involvement as the most important social actor in education. He criticizes the typical banking model of education of the modern time and urges to come out from that by emphasizing the need of empowering the individuals. According to him, powerless, disenfranchised people (learners, ethnic group and disabled) need to take control over their own learning and develop a deeper understanding of one's own locus within a community through active involvement and participation. To come out from the vicious circle of disempowerment, Freire emphasizes both on formal and nonformal learning. In his writing, he shows that empowerment is an energizing motivational construct that can be achieved through experience as is



used to develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1997), a less visible than a felt one. It can start from the private, familial, local to the broader aspects of engagement of a learner.

On the same note John Dewey (1859-1952) in his philosophy of education discusses that learning is socially constructed and the learner should be kept at the center of curriculum and institutions. His emphasis on the experiential, social and constructivist approach for inquiry based learning and self autonomy leads a learner to have command on himself or herself that helps him or her recognize education 'as the process of living not as a preparation for future living'. He criticizes the focuses of testing in traditional classroom as one that prepares learners to pass 'standardized exams and state assessments'. Addressing schools as a social institution, Dewey emphasizes:

... on the importance and relevance of building community, building strong relationships, developing higher level thinking skills for real-life application, and following student interests when planning for instruction. Students who are participating in academic programs ... will likely be critical thinkers and significant, positive contributors to their local communities and to society as they mature into adult citizens. (Williams, 2017)

By using his strategies and learning theories such as progressive education, constructivism, learner-centered theory, and experiential knowledge (Dewey, 1938; Schiro, 2012, as cited in Williams, 2017) experts have shown that his philosophy of education have influenced a number of innovation in pedagogy and classroom practices. He comments that effective education comes through social interaction. For that schools and classrooms should represent real life situation that allows learners to participate in learning activities in various social settings (Dewey, 1938; Gutek, 2014).

In contrast to traditional set-ups of classroom, Dewey comments that inside the social competitive world of classroom, a learner's self -image, self -perception, values are affected by the achievement s/he and others make. Sometimes it gets biased in different social situations regarding 'gender, ethnicity, and social class—and thus unfair.' Again, sometime success of one learner makes others hateful and envious of each other inside the classroom. There someone's success is others' failure and instead of developing constructive criticism, learners develop competitive and controlling nature among themselves, especially the toppers. Through competition and the development of hostility,

the tradition of appreciation of human talent is declining and classrooms are becoming depressing places. And the harmony of togetherness gets lost and the talent is wasted.

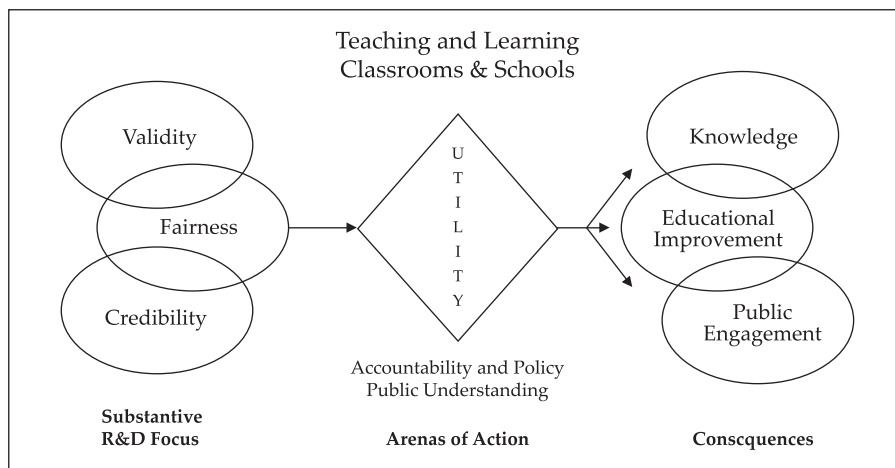
In this line, Ken Robinson (2012) opines that, human talents need a new appreciation mode and the “future of the school is not in standardizing but in customizing; not in promoting groupthink and “de-individuation” but in cultivating the real depth and dynamism of human abilities of every sort”. Robinson opines that the curriculum needs to be more personalized than it is now. “Learning happens in the minds and souls, not in the databases of multiple-choice tests.” He asks why it is necessary to fix the age groups. A 10-year-old can learn with their younger and older peers. Robinson agitates and comments that teachers/parents everybody put too high a premium on knowing and ticking the “single right answer.” But he says he does not oppose standardizing tests. “Used in the right way, they can provide essential data to support and improve education. The problem comes when these tests become more than simply a tool of education and turn into the focus of it.” In a TED radio hour, this author and advisor on education talks:

We have to recognize that human flourishing is not a mechanical process; it's an organic process. And you cannot predict the outcome of human development. All you can do is - like a farmer - is create the conditions under which they will begin to flourish. So when we look at reforming education and transforming it, it isn't like cloning a system. It's about customizing to your circumstances, and personalizing education for the people that you're actually teaching. ...And doing that, I think, is the answer to the future - because it's not about scaling a new solution. It's about creating a movement in education, in which people develop their own solutions but with external support based on a personalized curriculum (2012).

To customize and personalize education to one’s needs, circumstances and contexts, a learner needs to extend knowledge from classroom to beyond that. In outside classroom, informal, social learning (SL) and involvement, here it is not very important that one is helping another to learn, rather, the effort falls on the ‘collective agency’ as SA inspires teamwork. Very significantly, collective knowledge gathering gives more opportunity, understanding, and skill to face different environment or cultures. A football team or a business organization, for example, works in synchronization among the individuals; working alone is not possible here. It acts with internal tacit assumptions and procedures and

progresses the performance of the organization/team. Whether a team works good or bad depends on its tackling critical conditions and on, efficiently solving problems and on new creations of designs with the support of direction, inspiration, mirroring and feedback (Brown & Pelincsar, 1989; Perkins, 1991; Slavin, 1994). Going beyond the individual 'metamemory' social learning leads one to participate in and capitalize on the social milieu' (Pressley & Brainerd, 1985; Salomon & Perkins, 1998). Social factors serve one with learning social content that includes how to survive with others, maintain not aggressiveness but boldness, take collaborative-collective decisions and take collective action for the sole completeness of the self as a social entity. It is not necessary to introduce any new learning system for that, but those discussed so far operate as social content (Salomon & Perkins, 1998).

A shifting conception of assessment is being carried out by CRESST (the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing) at the University of California, Los Angeles. This model explains 'Based in cognitive theory,...focus on core types of learning that recur across the curriculum: conceptual understanding, knowledge representation, problem-solving, communication and teamwork' (Land, 1997).



**Figure 2:** CRESST Conceptual Model (Gipps, 1999, p. 369)

Stemming from a modified philosophy of assessment this model in a broader design interprets a different notion of assessment and requires a different enterprise. The model illustrates new issues like learner's involvement, fairness and mass understanding added to the existing practices of the assessment process integrated by social assessment (Coakes & Fenton, 1999).

Lampert, Lepper and his colleagues (1990, 1997) emphasize the theme of active construction of learning through social mediation and guidance. They analyse the striking “progress in mathematics with remedial, failure-prone and math-phobic students within a single session”. Many of the landscapes that characterize:

are social facilitation of individuals’ learning in general: intensive interaction, rapid feedback, highly personalized and situationally contingent guidance, encouragement, and the elicitation of responses from the student in the form of explanations, suggestions, reflections and considerations rather than the provision of ready-made information, directions, error corrections, or answers (Laper et al., 1990, 1997).

This point clears that social learning encompasses the critical conditions for an effective learning system supported by peers or tutors. These state of affairs are socially based and can not easily take place without the supporting social context, i.e. informative response, challenges, leadership and motivation. They just have altered the role and responsibilities of the teacher and the students within classroom discourse. Without commenting on students’ answers, they held back themselves for sometimes, so the students developed discussion centering on the problem and the tasks. They have made the hypotheses to solve problems and have taken risks in the way a mathematical community does and the teacher, standing back, has declined to be the absolute intellectual support as is done in an ordinary situation. This approach to learning brings about a different view of assessment of pupil achievement. In this team ‘learning situation assessment may be focused as much on the team as on the individuals’.

By socially assessing these issues, as a process of SA, this can facilitate a learner to assess themselves and make sure of their social and global (any social issue is a global one) position in the changing vibes of knowledge, meaning making and self-assurance. Thus assessment becomes a way of learning and a knowledge generation mechanism going a bit out of the four walls of a formal classroom. This can ensure leadership qualities among learners what is the ultimate target of andragogy that evokes to teach adult learners to lead. Two examples below from two different settings can clarify the situation:

The results of the field project are promisingly different. To begin, the student learns the facts concerning the history of earlier approaches to forest fires to

understand the larger question of the shifting nature of ecological theory building. He also learns about sustaining works over time--zigzagging from an original notion of fire as damage to a revised conception of fire as a necessity in a healthy ecosystem. He acquires skills in provoking information from diverse sources, including books, interviews and on-site observation. In this way he learns about the social construction of knowledge: His formulations emerge from talks with the ranger, reading, and sharing early drafts with his family and teacher.

Not incidentally, he confronts the diversity of opinions about fire damage that emerge across time and among different commentators. If only implicitly, he realizes that human knowledge has kinds and varieties rather than solitary correct answers. ...a useful assessment of this student's performance would have to be multi-dimensional; it ought to capture his craft (his control of relevant information and his skills such as interviewing, researching and writing) as it is exercised in the context of his larger undertaking. It should be longitudinal enough to enquire into the processes through which he developed his understanding. ...Moreover, it ought to be keen enough to index the student's depth of understanding: whether he acts only as a correct summarizer or whether he develops a point of view—with all the risk of having to meld values and experience with information and data (Wolf et al.,1991).

Here the role of a learner as a self-assessor and the role of a teacher as his/her assessor on the premise of knowledge extension and construction is hinted at. This learner's learning should supplement and support the classroom practices to let learners in the district, state or national assessment system to reflect on the features and values of his or her own work. By providing the assessment criteria or rubrics and commenting with the positive constructive remark, teachers and learners can openly join the discussion on the standards and delivery for good work. Keeping spaces and scopes for further development SA can open the floodgate of life- long learning and enthusiasm for further cognitive and meta-cognitive development for a learner.

Another aspect of assessment is prepared for the teachers by observing a learner's use of the available social resources in the classroom— 'Do they know how and when to use the texts, peers or documents?' The arrangement of the national assessment center (CITO) in the Netherlands offers an extraordinary display of this kind of assessment. During the fall of each year, teachers design yearly and school departure exams and declare the organizing theme or major problems for the national year-ending examinations. In art history, a particular theme is selected as a:

unifying theme for the examinations such as “the supernatural” or “revolution” as exemplified in the art of a diverse periods and cultures. To support the best possible performances by students, the government funds the development and distribution of packets of background materials (readings, slides, study questions, and lists of Dutch museums where relevant works can be found) (Sizer, 1984, as cited in Wolf et.al., 1991).

Teachers are motivated to work intensely with the students to use these resources on the nominated theme, forming the process of visiting works, debating them and developing a self-perception. Here an occasion of assessment is used purposefully to help students combine and extend their existing knowledge through simulations, tête-à-têtes/dialogues and demonstration of how to exploit cultural resources. This strategy assumes that one works ‘in concert with other minds and the tools their culture makes available’ (Baron, 1990). At the heart of the SA practices, there should be reflection, findings, and debate, in addition to credibility and quantification.

## **2. Theoretical underpinning**

Most of the ground-breaking thinking around assessment at the level of teacher and learner initiates from the work of socio-cultural theories of Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), and Bandura’s (1989) resituating the individual in mutual associations with the social environment, the idea of “learning as a constructive, and socially-culturally situated process” (Salomon and Perkins, 1998 ; Gipps, 1999; Devris, 1997; Lorenzo & Machado, 1996). Individual learning has come to be rooted in socio-cultural settings and interactions. These have two types of learning—individual learning stressing the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skill as transportable commodities. And the other have socio-cultural notion of learning as a collective collaborative knowledge construction stressing the learner's context, participation and situatedness ( Cole & Engestrom, 1993; Anderson, Reder & Simon, 1996).

The constructivist (Piaget) standpoint focuses on the what and how a child learns and processes the knowledge. The socio-cultural viewpoint stresses the conditions for the joint venture construction of knowledge and learning. These two streams commonly share the crucial role of participatory and interactive learning with acquisition and perceptual changes. It is important to use and accommodate changes that literacy does in a person’s life rather than to be used as a tool in the process of literacy (Olson, Torrance & Hildyard,1985).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Methods, tools, participants and setting**

This study uses qualitative approach for data elicitation and the tools used here are—participatory observation and focus group discussion (FGD). For analyzing data content analysis (Weber, 1990; Krippendorp, 2004) is used. This type of analysis focuses on texts that communicate through the data provided from the participants. At the same time this analysis keeps space for subjective, location and context-specific understanding of the addressed issue in a research.

24 participants selected here are the passed out and the existing undergraduate level learners-- mostly from sixth and seventh semesters. They have had and are having courses--Second Language Acquisition (SLA in 7th) and Fundamentals of Linguistics (FL in 6th) under the supervision of the researcher as the course instructor. The location of the study is a private university at Chattogram, Bangladesh.

#### **3.2. Data and analysis**

In the Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course learners get in a guided situation chance to explore the roles of social interventions to learn and achieve a target level of competence and performance in this field. As a part of the SA, learners try to select social issues that help them/ help one facilitate their understanding, develop their point of view and thus help empower themselves on certain social issues. Moreover working on it actively covers a part of the formal assessment and of course marks, learners like to be involved in the assessment process to assess themselves and their peers in the classroom. With the development of community awareness, this psycho-social intervention challenges one with a lot of hard work, arrangement of thoughts, control of the situations and narrations, cross examining the stakeholders' roles and views, helps one to be aware of the global issues as well.

In the focus group discussion with another team under the course—Fundamentals of Linguistics, another batch pursuing it before SLA with the same instructor, the participants have shared their opinion about the traditional assessment processes. These helped the researcher in data triangulation that supported the research with a valid and reliable ground. This is suggested as superior to single data source or instrument (Cohen et al., 2018).

## Sampling

Here probability sampling strategy is used (Cohen et al., 2018). Every participant has equally participated in the discussion. The data and the analysis arranged according to the discussion topics based on the research question are given below starting with the junior batch (1-10) to the senior ones (11–24) and where same data came out, the researcher has summarized them altogether. Participants have given opinion mostly in L2, and here these are given as they have shared. The researcher has noted down while discussing the issue with the participants inside and outside classroom. Also they have provided observation during performing on their chosen topics and scoring each peer/team inside classroom. The researcher has provided a little orientation to the participants about SA as they had not been sure about their role in that assessment process. Participants in no way have been influenced by the researcher to forward and reflect their opinion on the use of SA that helped them ensure their participatory roles in the process of assessment in tertiary level. While discussing issues addressed and forwarded by the participants are given below. Issues of discussion highlighted and addressed the following questions:

1. Reflect on the latest score and performance in your test.
2. How can tests and examinations be more interesting and stress-free?
3. If you get less marks, does it affect you any way? If so how you would like to evaluate your position.
4. Do you like to improve yourself from the previous position to a new one?
5. How do you feel to give marks to your classmates when they perform any social issue?
6. Does this help you understand how your teachers assess you on the basis of the rubrics and your performance?

In response to these issues discussed among the participants, the views and perceptions are highlighted here. This was done in an informal way, just like a casual talk so that the ideas shared here came out in the most straight forward way. Some tried to talk in Bangla (L1). The researcher has allowed them, thus translated and transcribed here (11, 12, 22, 24). Some participants (18, 20, 21) wanted to write instead of talking. Responses are translated and transcribed by the researcher:



**Participant 1:** *In the beginning of the year we get a syllabus book. We have to maintain that syllabus book. We have to give exams based on the syllabus book and classes also take place on those. But if practical things are added in our educational system like if beside every subject if there is a presentation, project work, documentary work then the subject will be getting more interesting for the student.*

**Participant 8:** *our education systems are very specific now a days. Students are less interested in these systems like tests, writing short/broad answers in the mids and finals. We are doing this from our beginning of school life. First, we should consider the main purpose of learning and our education system. Most of our education system is based on the exam system instead of creating skilled learners or humans.*

*My opinion is learning system or process should be more enjoyable and more skillful also where they can learn things practically, where they know about themselves more and more, where they can apply their knowledge in their life, where they can judge their own test papers and sharing own ideas in front of public on any seminar like activity. Learning should be more practical than giving book-based exam.*

**Participant 9, 13, 14, 15:** *Personally, I think our teaching system is good enough...In this "new normal" where technology has improved so much, we can use them.*

*Forgetting the matter of memorization we can take exams as an interesting and happy experience. Besides, examination is very painful. But the examination system should be changed. It can be changing pattern. It can be more about practical knowledge. Giving presentations in front of everyone, making teamwork more and more, this kind of activity will help us to be more easy-going, social and active. And this will help us "extra strength" to get a good job. Because in the job sector this kind of activity is more important than only having theoretical knowledge. We need presentations, cultural activities, learning and speaking chance, interesting assignments on some interesting topics unrelated to class topics to search and understand knowledge outside.*

**Participant 18, 20, 21:** *Nervous, fear, anxiety and hesitation —all the things that we feel when our examination knock at the door.*

*We live in modern age, but our education system is traditional. Students life become—go institution, study or not and then come back. Student life should be practical and free. Institution should help the student to show their talent, create their identity. Students can get extra marks from their extracurricular activities in foreign countries. We have no such things in our country.*

*Education is for all, so the testing system will be like proper judgments for everyone. On any interesting topic, we can read, summarize and analyse understanding, and present, that can benefit in three ways—*

- a) Read and understand properly*
- b) Oral speaking skill development*
- c) For writing the topic he or she can develop writing skills.*

*And in the end, those students understand their presentation and speech properly and can easily understand.*

*One question paper, and one or two hours will not judge a student.*

**Participants 9, 12, 22, 24:** *Of course getting bad or low marks affects us very much. You know as a daughter in the family I have to attend my sick mom (participant 9) and some times for that my attendance and scores get hampered. None but I am responsible for that. To improve the score I need to do everything. Again the strategy of evaluating my classmate helps me understand how and where to improve. Now we understand that judging one points the finger to judging us, ourselves. Rubrics are important but working with it in real field, with real challenges is really eye-opening.*

All these perceptions are self-explanatory highlighting the issues, self and subjective involvement of the learners in the process of assessment. The learner/student participants are not passive observer or the test-takers. They have shared that regarding this—their involvement in the process of assessment, has been a new experience for them. They have thought that assessment is always a teacher's job, not the peers'. Also they have remarked that they all their preparation and study were always centered round the tests. But their participation in the research process helped them understand that not the test, actually they are at the center of any testing system. Now they feel for studying for their improvement along with the improvement of their scores.

They additionally remarked that for the traditional testing system, they only concentrated on the scores of the test, not on learning and articulating the topics of attention in the course books. As a result they used to forget what they learned and were taught in the previous semesters.

The above quoted learners' remarks and suggestions about changes and their active participation prove their awareness in the assessment process. Initiating discussion, and recognizing-solving-giving suggestions to problems help one actively and academically functioning individual (Susan, 2012). By working in a group together these learners get positive academic and social outcomes. The degree of this association suggests that learners can add multiple intelligences in their thinking, organizing and performances in an assessment process. Both cognitive and developmental psychologists offer the distribution of thoughtfulness and mindfulness as important human qualities that support one construct knowledge 'because inference, observation, rule generation and theory building are open to all' (Gradner, 1989).

#### **4. Findings and teacher's reflection**

The best first finding of the influence of SA is having learners' breaking the ice of shyness, uninvolved tendency to open participation and initiation of speaking, opening, discussing, sharing, their perspectives in the assessment process. Learners who are poor in academic tasks can identify and 'resolve problems where the situation is motivating, the materials concrete and the stakes high and clear'. Human intelligence can do more than one thinks and expects of it, it can not be fixed in one particular space and is a constantly evolving process. Learners' arguments show that their ability to process and understand is the outcome of the interaction of 'multiple intelligences' like having an understanding of the spatial, verbal or kinesthetic information or various kinds of capacities such as 'street smarts', creativity or the capacity for improving academic excellence and capacity (Gardner, 1982; Sternberg & Wagner, 1985, as cited in Wolf et al., 1991).

Knowing and maintaining organizational behaviour is the best behavioural skill that is associated with academic and other important outcomes and the most important employability skills. One can learn that through SA interventions by making them prosocially skilled, less reliant on others' support, managing and resolving interpersonal conflicts by applying

constructive approaches (reported by passed out the previous batch of students). The quality and quantity of thinking skills evolve as time passes but the socially acquired skill and disinterestedness never do that in a person's cognitive world. This can take a reverse turn through SA mediation and the construct of positive complex social behaviour as the time changes to enhance academic and life skills for the sustainability of the individual in the broader social context (McKown, 2017).

SA encourages to open and keep tests to be addressed in multi-modal way that can make it more inclusive and heterogeneous. And educators who embrace the idea of "increasing autonomy and individuality of thought" through thinking and participation in/out side the domain of the social and cultural world of the classroom and beyond can use SA an important resource tool in the process of evaluating learners. Standard achievement tests search for only answers as "end products", there is no scope to project the doubting/ questioning, exploration, data-collection or reflection essential for a work well performed. Additionally, these tests are timetabled collections of first-draft responses that promote a learner knowledge of him or herself about the speedy and efficient attempt on the facts over the contemplation and exactness over the risk (Callahan, 1962; Collins, 1988; Frederickson, 1990, as cited in Wolf et al., 1991).

## **5. Discussion and recommendations**

In Jhumapa Lahiri's (2003) award-winning novel *The Namesake* her major character Ashima opines on her son's field trip from school to a graveyard:

At home, his mother is horrified. What type of field trip was this? It was enough that they applied lipstick to their corpses and buried them in silk-lined boxes. Only in America (a phrase she has begun to resort to often these days), only in America are children taken to cemeteries in the name of art. What's next, she demands to know, a trip to the morgue? In Calcutta the burning ghats are the most forbidden of places, she tells Gogol, and though she tries her best not to, though she was here, not there, both times it happened, she sees her parents' bodies, swallowed by flames. "Death is not a pastime," she says, her voice rising unsteadily, "not a place to make paintings."

But Gogol is attached to them. For reasons he cannot explain or necessarily understand, these ancient Puritan spirits, these very first immigrants to America, these bearers of unthinkable, obsolete names, have spoken to him, so much so that despite his mother's disgust he refuses to throw the rubbings away. He rolls them

up, takes them upstairs, and puts them in his room, behind his chest of drawers, where he knows his mother will never bother to look, and where they will remain, ignored but protected, gathering dust for years to come (Chapter 3, p. 62–63).

This might be the most common perception of stakeholders as parents, community and others associated with an educational program and institutional ecology in a developing country, like Bangladesh. As most of them take it the way that knowledge is available in the books only, not in other sources or surrounding social world of the learners. The above quote seems like a criticism of an Indian mother to the Western education system. But her son takes it in the most positive way what encourages him to gather knowledge from multiple set-ups of his surroundings apart from formal, classroom environment. The field trips have given him scopes and insights to explore the first immigrants to America and thus helped him develop a particular feelings for them. This can be a strong artifact, more than a by-product from an assessment process.

Field trips or project works for the purpose of knowledge generation done in a group help a learner develop soft skills. This supports one by providing aspirations for the better development and management of hard skills as well. Because team works help one learn to maintain team spirit which is one of the most important soft skills needed for this changed landscapes of education. To address the research questions, the researcher wants to highlight on the issues of assessment of a learner in higher education level. Through engaging a learner in the process of assessment, a teacher as the facilitator in a classroom can ensure a learner's development as a self-assessor. At the same time, through this the teacher paves the way of maintaining a learner's role in the assessment process as a knowledge generator not as a passive test passing agent.

SA can help project students' comprehension of social contents by exhibiting those (Sizer, 1984, as cited in Wolf et.al., 1991), including 'entry into athletic competitions, graduation recital at a performing art conservatory, and science fair displays'. They share many of the attributes of the performance assessments but can be extended under SA by an additional representation. For arranging an exhibition one needs to have extensive attention to the socio-cultural nature of understanding of the contents of the arrangements. The planners of International Baccalaureate examination in a foreign language

investigate students' reading, listening and writing skills in an L2, ask them to read a or series of book in the TL to prepare a twenty-minute talk to be delivered by using only the note cards. After the talk the presenter is asked questions by the panel of examiners and fellow students. The student is evaluated based on not only giving the delivery of the prepared part of the talk but also on his or her flexibility of attitude to response to the panels' enquiries. These alternative issues, topics and contents help a learner evaluate him/herself and make the malleable ground to be assessed by the teachers and the employers.

In the available culture of evaluation, the formal testing and the scores go unnoticed after the exam fever is over. But the letters, journals and notebooks of dynamic and creative individuals give one occasion to understand that these individuals use scopes of both the internal and external assessment to reflect on their own cognitive and non-cognitive tracks. 'These reflections are a way of deriving lessons and possibilities for future work' (John-Steiner, 1987; Perkins, 1982). Assessment then turns out to be an occasion of learning.

The outcome of keeping portfolios is that teachers and learners can easily access to a constantly working map of a learner's work to recognize acquisitions, interests and style. As an assessment tool port-folio has been pursued for quite a long time. This traditional assessment conception is getting evolved in the name of *process folios*. In an assessment project (Wolf et al., 1991) in arts and humanities researchers, teachers and students have been trying to develop this with a more varied perspective than the portfolios. In tallying the finished products, this collection contains sample 'biographies of work'—documentation of the different stages of a project. Collected at diverse stages, these life histories/stories allow one to look at the learners' long time involvement and control at the changing scenarios of the work to give it a final shape. Students often cling to maintaining journals and writing reflections about their work; finally, it becomes an archive. Learners often go to the previous works to revise and compare the previous and the present work. From there, at the end of the year during assessment time, learners select the best biographies, reflections, final pieces that can work as the basis for a course grade or a part of the lasting record of their improvement.

### **5.1. Challenges, solutions and utilities of SA in Bangladesh perspective**

The scopes of SA can ensure the integration of the learners to contribute in the

adult English language assessment process and teaching trajectory. Moreover the possibility of this new stream of assessment can enhance the target of taking the assessment as a way of new learning and knowledge construction for the teachers, learners and the policy makers. The most important challenges in the context of Bangladesh for the implementation of this are—

- large class size
- lack of trained teachers
- lack of orientation and motivation among learners and teachers
- fear of criticism by others
- pressure/ constraints in finishing the target syllabus in a particular time frame
- different views among the stakeholders about the external/informal assessment and so on.

Inclusion of learners and teachers in the assessment process is beneficial, and constructive both for learners and teachers as it concentrates on the process, not on the end product of learning. Focusing on learning and assessment as a supporting agent to each other SA is an attempt for the assessment of the collaborative as well as individual's elaborate performance. This is a very novel approach to assessment, so it requires more research to engage teachers and learners in the process. Therefore, if self assessment needs to work to empower learners, substantial research development is required for the teachers and for the preparation of the learners. Too much awareness, to some, about social issues, might make one critical, cynic to the society and culture—there is a risk.

## 6. Conclusion

Every society is full of events, issues and social perceptions are reflections of the changes in both local and global perspectives. Asking their roles as learners in the previous learning set up (the team that took the present and their time primary SLA) criticizes themselves as inactive learners in their primary schools. Other areas i.e. non-linguistic social influences to learn an L2, differences between urban-rural setups in the acquisition of L2, visiting the ethnic group to see how they learn English as L3, female learner's perspectives on learning and using L2, the disparity on the dichotomies between the English and Bengali medium students, print and digital technology-mediated L2 learning and on many others-- learner's internalization, participation, observation, presentation and making a critical perception of his/her own role and contribution to L2 learning supported the group members to open a new horizon of learning and assessment.

At the end it can be said that social and cultural issues are just as important in assessment at the classroom level, as they are in external assessment at the system or societal ground. New approaches allow a teacher, or educator to get support for the huge bulk of assessment tasks and at the same time those offer him or her scopes to enhance the learning process and set the task on the social context of the learner. These turns in assessment process redefine the traditional teacher-learner relationship in order to give attention to learner's perspective and give the learners scopes to understand the assessment process and evaluation principles. However, expanding the assessment process/ dimension will give students privileges to demonstrate performance if they are disadvantaged by any particular assessment form. Multiple indicators are necessary to sort out dis/advantaged students to make the assessment process unbiased and democratic. It requires openness to design, construct and score a test that will offer the best scopes to discuss the social and cultural influences and open up the relationship between the teacher and the learner as the assessor and the assessed.

SA and the position of the learner in this process (overlooking the role of a learner in the assessment process as a social subject) can be best understood through Figure 3:



**Figure 3:** Dimensions and use of social assessment in the broader assessment process



Keeping learner at the center of the assessment process gives him or her opportunity to learn how to pose an interesting and important problem, to learn to comment on other's works and to revise his or her own works. Through this a learner can make the best use of criticism and reflection to improve his or her skills and understandings (Brewer, 1990, as cited in Wolf et al., 1991). By becoming included in the assessment process, a learner can benefit him/herself as competent assessor of his or her own work to deserve 'sustained opportunities to internalize standards and ways of questioning...to think about traditional approaches to scoring and reliability'.

In the essay, *A Systematic Process for Assessing Assessment* Eman Elturki (2020) opines that an effective test is anticipated to produce valid and score-based explanations about what the examinees know and are able to do in response to an expected target area. In language testing model of Bachman and Palmer (1996, as cited in Elturki) usefulness of a test depends on yielding the best evidence of a student's language abilities that can be "generalized beyond the test" to use those in a natural environment. Emphasizing the communicative abilities of the language learner, this test usefulness concept is later modified as test effectiveness one (Priyanti 2017; Schmidgal, Getman, and Zu 2018; Thu, 2019, as cited in Elturki 2020). Earlier to those contributions, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990/1970) commented in the notion of making 'cultural capital' the role of testing as the reproduction of the acquired knowledge of a learner in his or her socio-cultural context. For that a learner has to be involved in the process of assessment avoiding the power and control relationship between learners and teachers. In order to identify their position and role in their social and cultural setting both in/outside classroom and to develop their self assessment practices in the broader assessment scenario SA with more uses can enhance the learning process as a lifelong issue for them.

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