

English as a Foreign Language Teachers' Attitudes towards the Use of Performance-based Assessment in the Algerian Middle Schools

اتجاهات أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية نحو مدى فعالية استخدام التقييم القائم على الأداء في المدارس المتوسطة الجزائرية

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- **Abstract:** The practice of the performance Based Assessment (PBA) has recently attracted considerable interest in education literature. This authentic assessment became a legitimate alternative to traditional practices due to its focus on the learner's ability to apply his/her knowledge and skills to real life simulations. Hence, this study seeks, first; to identify the extent to which Algerian EFL teachers of middle schools use the PBA tasks imposed by the ministry of education. Further; to capture their perceptions, practices, and attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the PBA tools as well as to investigate the problems and challenges facing language assessment in the Algerian context.

This study investigated a sample of 75 Algerian EFL middle school teachers' perceptions, practices and attitudes towards the effectiveness of using PBA, using as research tools, a questionnaire. The findings indicate that Algerian EFL middle school teachers lack profound knowledge about assessment in general and PBA specifically. It also revealed that most middle school teachers have some difficulties in implementing PBA tasks.

Therefore; recommendations were offered in light of these findings. It recommends for more interest towards teacher training and preparation in assessment as well as for further consideration towards the effective use of PBA in assessing EFL students' language proficiency.

- **Keywords:** Assessment, Alternative Assessment, Performance Based Assessment, EFL teaching and learning, EFL.

- الملخص: اجتذبت ممارسة التقييم المستند إلى الأداء (PBA) مؤخرًا اهتمامًا كبيرًا في المرجعية الأدبية. وقد أصبح هذا التقييم بديلاً مشروعًا للممارسات التقليدية التقييمية نظرًا لتركيزه على قدرة المتعلم على تطبيق معارفه ومهاراته في محاكاة الحياة الواقعية. ولذلك، تسعى هذه الدراسة أولاً؛ لتحديد مدى استخدام الأساتذة اللغة

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الإنجليزية الجزائريون في التعليم المتوسط نشاطات ومهام التقييم الأدائي (PBA) التي فرضتها وزارة التربية والتعليم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك؛ يسعى استقصاء اتجاهاتهم، وممارساتهم، ومواقفهم تجاه فعالية استخدام أدوات (PBA) وكذلك لكشف والتحقيق حول المشاكل والتحديات التي تواجه تقييم اللغة في السياق الجزائري. استقصت هذه الدراسة عينة من 75 أستاذ صور من الأساتذة الجزائريون للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المرحلة التعليم المتوسط وذلك باستخدام استبيان كأداة بحث. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الأساتذة الجزائريون للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المرحلة التعليم المتوسط يفتقرون إلى المعرفة العميقة حول التقييم بشكل عام والتقييم القائم على الأداء بشكل خاص وأن بعضهم يواجهون بعض الصعوبات في تنفيذ النشاطات الخاصة بالتقييم القائم على الأداء. وبالتالي تم تقديم توصيات في ضوء هذه النتائج والتي تدعو إلى مزيد من النظر نحو الاستخدام الفعال لـ (PBA) في تقييم الكفاءة اللغوية لطلاب الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

- الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم، التقييم البديل، التقييم القائم على الأداء، تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

Introduction:

Recently, researchers and educators have spotted the light on assessment as an integral part in the teaching /learning process. A strong need for significant refinements and changes in assessment practices has led to remarkable shift from traditional standardised assessment into alternative types of assessment in the field of language teaching/learning (Marzano; et al.; 1993). These reforms were a result of the insufficiency of the traditional types of assessment that mostly evaluate the learners' ability to retrieve facts and concepts but rather than using them in authentic situations (Lane, 2010). Accordingly, and with this shift, assessment is no longer that evaluation tool that only measures what learners can do in particular time and in specific knowledge and skill, but rather an authentic, relevant on-going process that goes along with teaching/learning. It aims to open the doors to real-life experiences and problem-solving situations that go beyond the classroom boundaries. According to Dörnyei (2014), assessment should not be limited to paper and-pencil tests. Instead, it should be fair with specified success criteria not showing only learners' level but also their progress, and opportunities for learners to express their opinions.

In the same sense, Hoerr (2000) stated that:

“Assessment is not only a culminating, end-of-unit activity. Instead, students show what they know by monitoring themselves and learning from

their performance as they progress". According to him a good assessment is "relevant, ongoing, and authentic; students learn from their performances on meaningful tasks" (p. 27).

Hence, most of the schools all over the world have been trying to integrate effective assessment practices based on students' abilities to use the target language appropriately and in realistic contexts (McKay, 2006). Among these alternative assessments, and the most common used assessments in middle and secondary schools in numerous countries around the world, are the PB assessments.

In the Algerian middle schools, most of the EFL teachers are still relying on standardised tests and traditional methods of assessment to evaluate learners' learning process. Mainly; they consider the results of the paper pen tests and quizzes as the only source to evaluate the learners' progress, knowledge, and skills. Whereas, the results of the other types of assessment tools such as projects and exhibitions, written/oral situations, portfolios and observation, which were adopted in the Algerian EFL curriculum along with the project-based (PB) learning within the competency-based approach (CBA), are neglected and underestimated.

The PB learning including those evaluation tools, were adopted with the aim of developing students' communicative skills of the target language to meet the standards of language use and making learning more relevant, authentic and realistic (Baghoussi & El Ouchdi, 2019). However, the Algerian EFL middle school teachers seem to lack appropriate understanding of the PBAs nature and how to put them into practice within the EFL classrooms.

Research aims and questions:

The potential aims behind this study are:

- First, to identify the extent to which Algerian EFL teachers of middle schools use the Performance-Based Assessment tasks imposed by the ministry of education.
- Second, to capture their perceptions, practices, and attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the PBA tools.

- Further, to investigate the factors that may hinder the Algerian EFL teachers from using the performance-based assessment.

In accordance with these research objectives, the following research questions are formulated:

RQ1. How do Algerian EFL middle school teachers perceive the PBA tools?

RQ3. What are their attitudes towards the effectiveness of using the PBA as an alternative authentic assessment?

RQ4. What are the factors that may hinder these teachers from using the PBA?

1. Literature Review

1.1. Performance based Assessment (PBA)

Performance based Assessment (PBA) is a type of alternative assessment that has been developed as a reaction to the inadequacy of traditional methods of evaluating learners' achievement. While the traditional standardised assessments are often conducted to test what learners know by answering questions and quizzes correctly, the PBAs are conducted to assess the learners' abilities of how they can use their knowledge and give them a chance to demonstrate their skills in real world situations appropriately, as it was defined by (Rudner & Boston, 1994). These authors added that PBA could form a solid foundation for improving schools and increasing what students know and can do. In other words, the PBA is a set of meaningful, authentic, and engaging tests that aims to assess both the learners' skills and application of knowledge. Additionally, it has a positive impact on both, the instructional practice and the learning process.

The PBAs are often designed based on "authentic" tasks. Therefore, to be authentic, the National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC, 2011 as cited in Griffith & Lim, 2011) notes that assessment tasks have to meet some specific criteria including:

1. Be built around topics or issues of interest to the students;
2. Replicate real-world communication contexts and situations;

3. Involve real problems that require creative use of language rather than simple repetition;
4. Require learners to produce a quality product or performance;
5. Evaluation criteria and standards are known to the students;
6. Involve interaction between assessor (instructor, peers, self) and person assessed;
7. Allow for self-evaluation and self-correction. (Griffith & Lim, 2011, p.3)

As well as the PBA can serve as a tool to diagnose learning and teaching problems, and has as its primary focus the continuous improvement of learning for all students (Bejarano & Gordon, 2009).

1.2. Tasks of the Performance Based Assessment

Literature on language assessment has provided English Language teachers with a variety of PB assessments' tasks. Ellen (2002, as cited in SOTO et al, 2017), suggests a set of performance-based assessment tasks. Among them:

Constructed Response: Justifications, Explanations, Open-ended Statements...

Cooperative—group work: Both group achievements as well as individual works are assessed.

Display, Exhibitions, Class presentation: Different tasks used for class production and presentation using pictures, diagrammes, posters, charts...about a project using verbal explanations.

Problem solving: Using a task with problem situation, followed by a verbal explanation.

Student conference/Interview/ Debate Team: Discussions between a teacher and learners about an activity, their interests, life experiences or different views.

Group investigation: Take on a specific role within a group and prepare projects, research or report to share with the class.

Role-play: Creating their own personal answers.

Furthermore, Rudner et al. (1989) and Hoerr (2000) presented other types of PB assessment techniques. Examples of these are:

Project works:

Projects are comprehensive collaborative tools that help learners to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. To be realised, a learner needs to be creative, as they require a various set of competencies to use them. They can be displayed in a form of a competition between groups or individual learners. Scoring projects need to be standardised and known to all learners at an early time of work (Rudner & Boston, 1994; Wiggins, 1989).

Furthermore, such collaborative tasks help learners not only to show their knowledge and understanding, but also to use both personal and interpersonal skills to make their ideas clear. It provides learners with opportunity to solve problems in real-life context, work in pairs or groups where they learn to communicate effectively and develop a social and emotional intelligence, autonomy, and group responsibility (Hoerr, 2000).

Essays:

Essays, including all descriptive written compositions, analyses, explanations, or summaries, help to reflect how well student use the acquired concepts, knowledge, and facts in coherent structures within a specific context. Additionally, these written compositions can be useful tools to assess learners' composition skills, including sentence/paragraph structures, spelling, grammar and syntax.

Teachers should provide a well-designed, standardised and objective scoring of writing assignments that would be presented to the learners (Rudner & Boston, 1994; Wiggins, 1989).

Portfolios:

Usually, a Portfolio is a folder or a file that contains collections of individual works. It provides a full portrait of individual performance collected over a period. The

learner must assess his/her own work and progress. (Rudner & Boston, 1994; Wiggins, 1989)

The portfolio assessment has been developed with the purpose of reviewing the learners' productive skills using what has been learnt, as well as to evaluate their learning progress over a period. In that sense, Hoerr (2000) stated:

" Keeping a portfolio for each child—a collection of work and artefacts that give a picture of the child's growth—is a way of capturing progress without using paper and pencil measures" (p.27).

1.3. Assessment in Algerian Middle Schools

The Algerian assessment practices are divided into three main types diagnostic, formative, and summative. According to the curriculum (2015), which proposes recommendations for assessment scheme, they "can be done at any time and / or when the teacher and administration decide."

1.3.1. Diagnostic assessment

Diagnostic assessment is usually conducted at the beginning of a period of learning. It is carried out to collect data about the learners' current knowledge, skills, and proficiency levels before initiating the program or the curriculum. Further, it aims to help teacher to identify their learners' strengths and weaknesses in order to plan for effective instruction remedial works.

1.3.2. Formative assessment

Formative assessment is a process that goes along with the teaching/learning process. It can be designed as an oral assessment, written, or both forms. Moreover, learners have to be aware of the assessments criteria as they are responsible for their learning and progress. Therefore, teachers should provide learners with constructive feedback that could help them recognise their weaknesses, enhance their strengths, and achieve their goals. For scoring, verbal comments can be sufficient for the learners.

Additionally, formative assessment plays an important role in helping teachers to identify their learners' sources of errors before designing remedial.

1.3.3. The Formal/summative assessment

The Formal assessment is considered as a summative assessment. It is mostly conducted on schools at the end of a cycle (BEM/BAC). It is programmed to assess the learners' mastery of language knowledge and skills. According to the official guidelines, summative assessment should include tests and examinations at the end of a term or a school year. The results obtained from this assessment are used to make decisions about learners whether they pass or fail.

The Algerian EFL teachers tend to evaluate the learners' results based on summative assessments only. These assessment practices usually come in forms of traditional standardised paper-pen tests, considering them as the only source to make final decisions and judgments. In spite of the fact that the summative assessment plays an important role in assessing learners' learning outcomes in EFL classes, however; it can be insufficient to assess students' multiple skills or modes of communication in such indirect, inauthentic, and single-occasion tests that measure what learners can do at a particular time (Dikli, 2003).

1.3.4. The PBA assessment practice in the Algerian Middle schools

The PBA can be used either in formative or summative assessment on which different tasks can be held on the EFL classrooms or during a written evaluation. Those PB tasks have been adopted by the Algerian Curriculum of English in both formative and summative assessments.

According to the Curriculum of English for Middle School (2015); formative assessment should be conducted through the use of the portfolio, the logbook (or reflective journal), the debate and Conferencing in addition to other tasks such as interviews, role-play, learning situations (problem-solving situations), presentations and project works. These tasks can be presented either through Tutoring (student-teacher), Peer assessment (student- student)/ (student-teacher) or Self-assessment. Summative assessment includes multiple-choice questions (MCQ), gap filling, texts

followed by reading comprehension questions as well as a situation of integration that presents the PBA (p.62).

2. Methodology

Given the nature of this study, we opted for a mixed-methods approach by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in order to explore the perceptions, attitudes, opinions and practices regarding the subject under investigation. The study data were collected using an online questionnaire administrated to 75 Algerian EFL middle school teachers.

2.1. Population and Research Sample

The target population of this study are middle school EFL teachers. A sample of 75 teachers from different middle schools in Algeria was selected, using convenience, non-random sampling technique, to collect this study's data. As for the regions, participants were from different 'Wilayas' in Algeria, including: Ain Defla, Algiers, Boumerdes, Djelfa, Setif, Blida, Bordj Bou Arreridj, Chlef, Ghardaia, Medea, Naama, Skikda, Tbessa, M'sila, Mila, Bouira, Batna, Jijel, and Ourgla. Table 1 is a summary of the description of the participants' gender and years of experience.

Table 01. Participants description in terms of gender and experience

Gender		Years of Experience				
Male	Female	1-5	5-10	10-15	15-20	more than 20
%	%	%	%	%	%	%
48	52	46.6	20	15.3	8	10.6

From table1, it seems that most of the participants are relatively novice since 35 or 46.6% of them have an experience that ranges from one to five years, while 20% are in their mid-careers. Participants who have more than 10 years of experience are 25 respondents.

2.2. The Data Collection Methods

The online PBA perceptions and practices questionnaire was administered to the participants of this study via emails, and social network teachers' groups. The

questionnaire included 15 Items divided into two sections. The first three introductory Items were devoted for the respondents' Personal Background, including, gender, region and the number of years of experience. Part one of the questionnaire consisted of eight questions related to assessment perceptions and practices among middle schools teachers. Part Two consisted of four questions related to the 'Teachers' Knowledge' and the 'Use of the PBA' in middle school, in addition to their attitudes towards it.

3. Analysis and Discussion

The first section of the questionnaire was intended to explore teachers' perceptions of assessment, in general, and its different tools and types, in particular. Data from the first three items of the first section that, were about the use of tests and Examinations, are summarised in table 1 below.

Table2. Teachers' perception about the use of tests and exams.

Items	Responses				Total
	Yes	No	Not sure	May be No	
1. The final score a student gets in the test or the exam represents really his/her real level.	26.4%	31.9%	36.1%	5.6%	100%
2. Assessment is carried out generally by means of tests and exams.	32.5%	36.6%	26.1%	4.8%	100%
3. Tests and examinations provide authentic tasks that simulate real life situations.	35.9%	14.6%	39.7%	9.8%	100%

Data from Item 1, which investigates teachers' perception of "the final score of an examination as a true representation of his/her level", revealed that 26.4% of the respondents agreed, 31.4% disagreed. The remaining 41.7% were not sure if they do represent the real level of their pupils (36.1%) or they do not (5.6%). As for Item 2, it is clear that 36.6% disagree that assessment is usually carried through tests and examinations only, a close number of respondents agree (32.5%) whereas 30.9% of the respondents were not sure.

For 35.9% of the respondents, tests and examinations provide authentic tasks that simulate real life situations, while 14.6% believe that they are not authentic responding with "NO".

However; a remarkable number of respondents (49.5%) are not sure whether it is yes or not. Accordingly, it can be said that not all teachers are aware of the three aspects highlighted in these items, which is reflected in confusion since the majority were hesitant about them.

From Examining the answers obtained from the second part of Item 3, about the other forms of assessment teachers perceive it as being useful in evaluating students' performance, it was found, as indicated in table 3, that most responses suggested more summative assessment forms, including oral and written tests, quizzes and interrogations, oral and written comprehension questions and questionnaires.

Table3 Teachers' perceptions about the different forms of assessment

Category	Freq	%
• Oral and written tests, quizzes and interrogations, comprehension questions, questionnaires.	37	54.66%
• Class-work including: participation in class discussions, lessons preparation and doing homework	25	37.33%
• Oral performance, project work participation	7	
• PBA	5	6.66%
• Self-assessment	1	1.33%

From table 3, 37 % of the respondents suggested: class-work, including participation in class discussions, lessons preparation, and doing homework. It is important to highlight here that these assessment practices are part of the continuous evaluation process that all middle school teachers are obliged to do during the school year and that the score pupils obtain constitute 50% of students' final scores. Thus, it can be considered as a summative assessment.

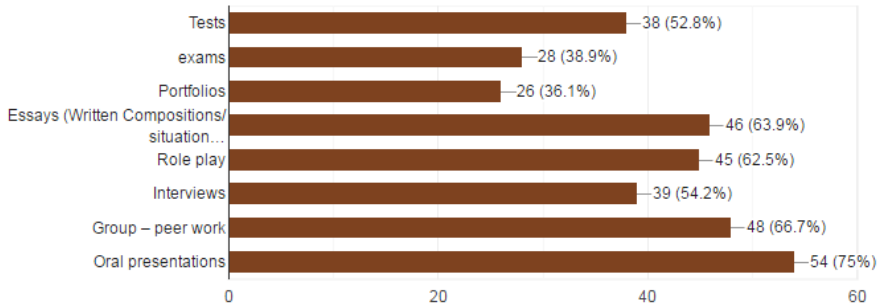
Only few teachers pointed out to project work sided by oral performance. This finding does not really mean that they are aware of the importance of PBA because project work is part of the curriculum. Hence, any teacher may consider it as a part of accustomed pupils' evaluation. Only one teacher suggested self-assessment and five teachers out of 75 indicated directly to PBA practices like the observation of learners' performance in real life situations, and real life activities outside the classroom like, according to the respondents, "Real situation outside, such as; via mailings or chatting with foreigners", "group or peer work, plus role play simulating real situations".

This finding suggests that all teachers focus is directed to summative assessment as it holds a good position in the evaluation routines in the Algerian educational system. Less interest was devoted to performance and authentic assessment.

Items 4, 5 and 6 of in first part of the questionnaire addressed the three types of assessment: diagnostic, formative and summative. The findings from Item 4 revealed that 65.3% of the respondents are aware of the purpose of formative assessment as being a form of assessment that evaluates learners' progress along with the learning process, while 26.4% think that summative assessment is the type of assessment that goes along with the learning process, which is an indication of their misperception. The remaining 8.3% mix between diagnostic and formative assessment. The latter finding, and in spite of the small percentage, may be another indication of teachers unawareness of the different types of assessment that may be explained by the lack of teachers' training dedicated to educational evaluation and assessment and little or the absence of continuous professional development practices.

Item 5 explored teachers' knowledge about tools and methods included in formative assessment. The results are displayed on graph 1.

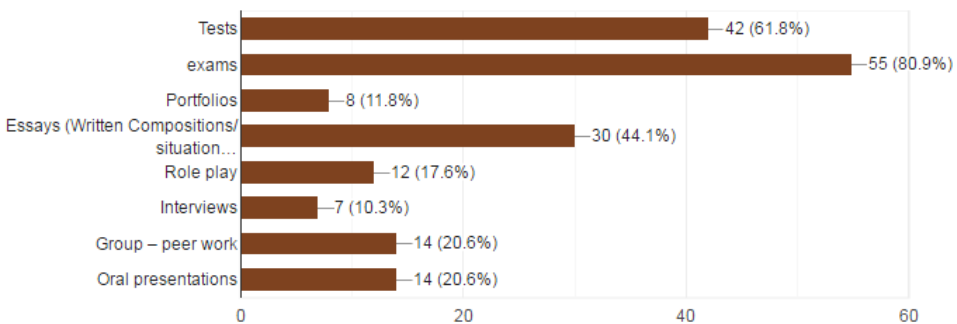
Graph1. Teachers' perception of formative assessment tools.



From Graph 1, it can be noticed that all the suggested assessment tools were selected by the respondents, yet, oral presentations (75%) Group peer work (66.7%), Essays and written compositions (63.9%), role plays (62.5%), tests (52.8%) and then interviews (54.2%) all received high selections among respondents. This means that they perceive them a part of formative assessment. Less attention was given to examinations (38.9%), and portfolio (36.1%). The latter received the lowest frequency of selections compared to all the other types. This implies that the teachers may have a misperception of the role of portfolio being in the heart of formative assessment practice. A similar question was about summative assessment in Item 6.

Graph 2 displays the different assessment tools involved in summative assessment as it has been perceived by the respondents.

Graph2. Teachers' perception of Summative assessment tools.



As expected, it seems from graph 2 that most teachers selected tests (61.8%), examinations (80.9%), essays and written composition activities (44.1%) as being the most used tools in summative assessment, while portfolio (11.8%), role play (17.6%), interviews (10.3%) group and peer work (20.6%) and oral presentations (20.6%) received less frequencies of selection among respondents. This finding reveals that the respondents have a good perception of what is meant by summative assessment and its most known tools compared to their awareness about formative assessment.

Items 7 and 8 were intended to investigate teachers' practices in assessing pupils' oral and written performance and their targeted aspects of evaluation. The answers were classified thematically. First, the responses to Item 7 are showed in table 4 below.

Table 4. Respondents' methods of assessing oral performance

Method	Freq	%
• Oral presentations, project work, role play, peer work	31	41.33%
• Interviewing (conferencing), oral tests and quizzes, oral comprehensions questions, Class discussions.	20	26.66%
• Through games	7	9.33%
• Reading Aloud	6	8.00%
• Real life and problem-solving situations	5	6.66%
• No oral performance assessment	6	8.00%
Total	75	100%

According to the data displayed on table 4 above, a good number of teachers (31) use oral presentations, project work, role-play and peer work to assess their pupils oral performance; 26.66% of the teachers use tests like interviewing pupils or using conferencing method, oral tests and quizzes, oral comprehension tests and class discussions. According to seven respondents, the use of games, such as spelling games can be another tool. One of the methods the teachers use to assess oral performance was reading aloud method (8%). Only five teachers use real life and

problem-solving situational tasks that are in the heart of the PBA practice. Unexpectedly, six respondents claimed that they do not assess oral performance in the curriculum. For them, there is no focus on assessing oral performance since all concern is on grammar and vocabulary. In the second part of Item 7, the teachers were asked about the focus of their assessment of oral performance. The responses are summarised in table 4.

Table 5. Respondents' targeted skills of oral performance assessment

Targeted skills	Freq	%
• Fluency	32	42.66%
• Accuracy	26	34.66%
• Application of acquired knowledge	10	13.33%
• Communication skills	7	9.33%
Total	75	100%

Examining data in Table 5, Fluency received most responses with 42.66% of teachers saying that their focus was on good pronunciation, respect of intonation and flow of words and ideas. On the other hand, the focus on accuracy received 34.66% of the views. For these teachers, the focus is on correct sentences, respect of tenses, and vocabulary selection. Another focus was on the extent to which pupils are able to apply the knowledge they have acquired in lessons. A number of seven teachers that constituted 9.33% of the responses indicated that the focus is on communication skills and the ability to use the language for real life communications. From this finding, it is clear that the most focus is on language skills rather than authentic practice.

Similarly, in Item 8, the respondents were asked to specify the methods they use to assess their pupils writing performance. As indicated in table 5, most respondents used integration situation (28%), paragraph and essay writing activities (32%), and tests and examinations (22.66%). While some of the respondents used other unexpected methods as dictation (10.66%). Few respondents (6.66%)

highlighted the idea of using writing in authentic practice through writing emails, letters, requests and reports.

Table 6. Respondents' methods of assessing oral performance

Method	Freq	%
• Integration situation	21	28.00%
• Authentic practice	5	6.66%
• paragraph and essay writing tasks and activities	24	32.00%
• Dictation	8	10.66%
• Tests and exams	17	22.66%
Total	75	100%

As for the targeted skills, the data obtained from the second part of Item 8 are represented in table 7.

Table 7. Respondents' targeted aspects of oral performance assessment

Targeted skills	Freq	%
• Grammar and mechanics	53	70.66%
• Coherence and cohesion	15	20.00%
• Spelling and vocabulary use	5	6.66%
• Style	2	2.66%
Total	75	100

According to data in table 7, it was found that most of the concern was on the aspects of grammar and mechanics (70.66%). Coherence and cohesion received 20% of the responses. Few teachers pointed to spelling and vocabulary use, and only 2 teachers mentioned the focus on style.

Findings from items 7 and 8 confirm what the first section revealed about teachers' assessment practices, which hold that teachers' targeted skills have no focus on authentic performance since the most focus is on language proficiency. Hence, according to section 1 findings, that PBA isn't part of middle school teachers' assessment practices.

The second section of the questionnaire was devoted to perceptions and attitudes towards PBA. When teachers were asked about PBA directly, in Item 9, that investigates if they have ever heard of it, 53.5% of them indicated that they have no idea about it and 48% (36 teachers) indicated that they heard of it. Through Item10, the 36 respondents who answered yes were asked to define it. Definitions were classified thematically. The resulting themes are summarized in table 8 below.

Table 8. Teachers' definitions to PBA

Definitions focus	freq	%
Tasks and activities performance	19	52.77
Application of acquired knowledge and language skills	11	30.55
Real life and authentic performance (PBA)	6	16.68
Total	36	100

From data displayed on table7, it is clear that 52.77% of the definitions focused on describing PBA as the evaluation of the learners' performance in a given task and activity. In other words; most of the teachers believe that the PBA is the extent to which students performed what is asked from them in specific tasks, such as writing a short paragraph or an essay, completing sentences, making a presentation and so on. This was clearly presented in the following definitions proposed by the respondents: "PBA briefly: teachers observe pupils and makes judgments about their performance and skills in creating a final product, or making projects or oral presentations",

"A way of assessing your pupils through their performance in the classroom depending on the task given" or "Students are supposed to perform to do something like role-play tasks debates not only fill in the gaps or match the correct answer tasks".

As for the second theme that received 30.8% of the responses, the teachers defined PBA as a way to assess if learners apply what they are learning in class, including grammar, vocabulary and skills, as it was highlighted in one of the definitions:

"It is an assessment that is based on students' performance, i.e. we can see if they got the lesson through what they produce" or "a performance-based assessment

measures students' ability to apply the skills and knowledge learned from a unit or units of study including grammar, phonetics, expressions etc.." and many similar definitions like "To evaluate someone's skills by how he performs".

Only six teachers managed to define PBA as, "Different strategies that are used by teachers to help their students in dealing with different tasks and challenges related to real life" or "I am not sure, but according to the title I can guess that is meant to measure the learners' ability to apply what they learnt in real life" another definition is "How can a learner perform a given task which resembles real life situations".

This finding reveals that among the 36 teachers who believed that they know what PBA is, only six hold correct perceptions; while all the rest are between misperceiving it and not knowing about it. Again, the finding from this item confirms the teachers' misperceive what is exactly meant by BPA.

Item 11 was a three-point Likert scale, in which the respondents were asked to answer to 10 sub-items that tackle different perceptions and attitudes towards PBA nature and use.

Table 9. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes about PBA

Items	Agree		I don't know		Disagree	
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
1. I think it is impossible for all learners to participate in PBA tasks.	33	44,0	18	24,0	24	32,0
2. PBA is recommended and mentioned in the curriculum.	20	26,6	37	49,3	18	24,0
3. I think that PBA tasks are time-consuming.	53	70,6	16	21,3	6	8,0
4. I think they are needless because the educational system restricts grades to paper and pen exams and tests.	35	46,6	25	33,3	15	20,0
5. I think that the application of PBA is very difficult.	42	56	24	32,0	9	12,0
6. I think that PBA tasks are difficult to design	41	54,6	22	29,3	6	8,0
8. I think that the PBA is a part of the formative assessment	53	70,6	10	13,3	12	16,0

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9. I think that the PBA is a part of the summative assessment	15	20,0	10	13,3	50	66,6
10. I believe that PBA activities are effective to reflect learners' skills and knowledge	38	50.6	29	38.6	8	10,6

From the data related to the first sub-item, as displayed on table 9, it seems that not all the respondents think that it is possible for all learners to participate in PBA tasks since only 44% of them agree, 24 % have no idea about it and 32% disagree. Interestingly, 49.3% of the respondents does not know whether PBA is recommended in the curriculum or not, while 20 were sure of the opposite, and only 18 thinks that it is not mentioned or recommended. This exposes that the teachers are not aware that the curriculum provides support for teachers about assessment practices and their objectives (Curriculum of English for Middle School Education, p. 62). Further, this finding can be explained by the finding from sub-item four in which only 46.6% of responses agree on the importance of paper pen examinations over PBA which was confirmed in section1 findings.

Additionally; a number of 53 teachers (70.6%) think that PBA activities are time consuming, while the remaining 22 respondents were between uncertainty and disagreement. As for the difficulty, of applying PBA (sub-Item 5) and designing PBA tasks (sub-item 6), more than 40 respondents agreed with the two sub-items. For both items, 32% and 29.3% of the respondents did not know about the difficulty, which may be explained by the lack of knowledge of PBA. This item, also; can be an indication of a negative attitude towards using PBA as most of the respondents think that they are time consuming and difficult.

Concerning whether PBA tasks belong to summative or formative assessment, it is clear from table 8 that 53 respondents think that it is part of formative assessment (sub-item 8), and a closer number 50 disagree with sub-item9 saying that it is part of summative assessment. Noticeably, 10 respondents in both sub-items (8 and 9) did not know whether it belongs to either of the assessment types. This data affirms another misperception about PBA since many

references confirmed that they could be either summative or formative Vander Ark T. (2013), ASCD publications. Another confirmation that PBA can be part of summative assessment is the “integration situation” in official examinations and tests.

Even though 50% of respondents agree on sub-item10, showing positive perception about the effectiveness of using PBA tools to reflect both learners’ skills and knowledge, 38.6% respondents do not know and 10.6% disagree. This can mean that the teachers still think that PBA tools are not as effective as summative assessment practices.

From item 11, the teachers have little knowledge about PBA use, which was clear in items 8 and 9, and its importance, which was clear in items 2 and 4 in their teaching. They also have negative attitudes since they believe PBA is time consuming and difficult. Thus, the findings from this can explain the data from section 1, which revealed middle school misperceptions about PBA and its absent use.

The last item (Item 12) was an open-ended item asking teachers about difficulties when using PBA in their classes. Responses were thematically classified resulting in a list of difficulties grouped in five major themes represented in table 10.

Table 10. Difficulties faced by teachers when applying PBA

Difficulties	Frq	%
• Luck of teachers training	16	21,33
• Time	13	17,33
• Overcrowded classrooms	10	13,33
• Overloaded syllabus	8	10,67
• Less focus in the curriculum	8	10,67
• Lack of pupils motivation	6	9,33
• Pupils low levels	5	8,00
• lack of educational aids	5	6,67
• Lack of teacher’s motivation	4	2,67

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Total	75	100%
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For many teachers; the difficulties, that may face them while using PBA, are due to the lack of teachers' training. Therefore; 21.33% of the respondents agreed on the fact that they received little training about assessment in general and PBA specifically. This was also clear through their responses like:

"I have never heard of PBA, no one told us about it" or "we are not talking about assessment in seminars with the inspector and we have not idea about PBA and its use".

The second source of difficulty is time which received agreement among 17.33% of the respondents who claimed saying that:

"PBA tasks need time and time allotted for sessions and units is limited" or "we don't have time for the syllabus itself how can we have time for extra time-consuming activities we are limited with sessions time".

Overcrowded classroom was, according to 13.33% of the respondents, another difficulty which was clear in one of the responses that claims:

"We teach 49 pupils per class we can't even keep them silent for five minutes, how can we do any PBA tasks".

The syllabus was another difficulty. According to 10.67% of the respondents the current syllabus is overloaded, difficult compared to pupils actual levels, effort and time consuming compared to the hours devoted to English teaching in middle schools. Quoting one of the respondents:

"The program is too complicated and difficult to be taught", "there are so many units, lessons and tasks, both teachers and students find it difficult".

Out of all respondents, another 10.67% attributed the difficulty to the absent focus in the curriculum on PBA which resulted in ignoring it by teachers or not giving it enough attention and concern in their assessment practices because they are obliged to focus on paper-pen exams and tests scores that are key elements for

pupil's success; such as the BEM exam, quoting one respondent "we are kind of teaching for the exam and training students to score high in the exams".

Another respondent pointed to the fact that Pupils' motivation, according to 9.33%, was another reason why it is difficult for them to apply PBA since "most of pupils get bored of learning English because they can't understand the syllabus and the tasks" and "Lack motivation from the part of pupils since there is no PBA in their Brevet Exam". In addition to their motivation, pupils low levels were a difficulty since 8% believe that pupils' level in general is weak and they cannot cope with the requirements of the PBA tasks. Another highlighted obstacle is the lack of educational materials that helps teachers to apply any authentic tasks.

Moreover; a crucial factor that influences the use of PBA is the lack of teachers' motivation. This was confirmed by 4 teachers who highlighted some reasons why teachers are not motivated to use PBA tasks. Among those responses two teachers claimed that:

"Teachers are not motivated because when you know that people care about the high scores in the exams and consider them a proof that you are a good teacher, you will not focus on pupils' performance, and you'll focus instead on preparing students for exams".

"I think that no matter how creative I can be, it means nothing because the pupils and their parents care about the grades, they can get in the final exams not the performance".

Teachers pointed to crucial problems facing them when applying PBA. Most of these challenges are common among many EFL teachers around the world (Ligia F. Espinosa 2015). Kirmizi, O., & Komec, F. (2016).

Conclusion:

From all the findings of this study, it was found that most middle school teachers have misperceptions about some aspects of assessment. Generally, this misperception lies on the real differences between summative and formative

assessment. Also; it can be said that the assessment traditions in the educational system puts focus on summative assessment, over any other forms, to determine and evaluate pupils' success in learning English. Thus, less interest is devoted to authentic assessments including the BPAs.

This study also revealed not just the misperception, but also the lack of awareness and literacy among middle school teachers about PBA since it was a new type of assessment for many respondents. Additionally; it was noticed that, even though PBA is a part of the curriculum (integration situations, the portfolio, dialogues, interviews and so on); however, many teachers do not recognize that they are dealing with it and still believe it is useless. This can be explained by, first, teacher training programs since, according to responses, teachers' training seminars and session with the inspector lack topics related to assessment in general and authentic assessment specifically. Second, teachers' unawareness and lack of assessment literacy can be due to their absent interest in their continuous professional development that is among the most vital accountabilities of teachers.

Besides; results obtained from this study also confirmed that teachers hold negative attitudes towards PBA. By unveiling some perceptions related to the difficulties of applying the PBA, it is clear that teachers demonstrate unwillingness to practice the PBA tasks in their classrooms. As it has already been mentioned; they think it is useless as the concern of the ministry, administration, parents and pupils is in the final exam scores.

Moreover; this study sheds light on a number of challenges facing Algerian middle school EFL teachers when applying PBA. As stated by teachers themselves, and adds to them the most perturbing challenges, which are the unawareness and the negative attitudes held towards it. Hence, it recommends for more interest towards teacher training and preparation in assessment specifically, by devoting more seminars and training sessions for teachers, it also recommends to involve PBA as part of assessing students' success.

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