

Traditional and Alternative Assessments in ELT: Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

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The study aimed to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions towards traditional and alternative types of assessment within a classroom context of an English course provided for English-majoring students at tertiary level. A combination of traditional and alternative assessment tools was implemented in the study. The researcher developed iPortfolio, WeCreate Activity, and iLearn & Teach Project as alternative assessment tools, while paper-and-pencil quizzes and exams were used as traditional assessment tools. The questionnaires were used to gather the information concerning students' and teachers' perceptions towards the overall features of the assessment tools and their effectiveness. The participants consisted of 103 students and 5 teachers. The findings showed that both teachers and students generally place a higher value on traditional assessment tools especially in terms of their validity and reliability. However, they expressed ideas indicating the possibility of using alternative assessment tools as assessment tools and catalysts for learning motivation in other English skill courses.

Keywords *traditional assessment, alternative assessment, grammar assessment, students and teachers' perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

Teachers are mostly required to assess their students' progress and achievement as part of an educational system and that is why assessment is also a part of a teacher's job. Assessment is also important for students. Even though the idea of having a test generally scares some students (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010), most of them also like to be assessed. They might want to know how much progress they have made during their learning process and how advanced they are at the end of the course compared to their other classmates. Formal assessment and informal assessment both help motivate students in their learning. Assessment can therefore be considered as an indispensable part and a motivating factor in English language teaching.

To use assessment most effectively, assessment should also be an element that can motivate students to learn. Assessment tools should not only be used for assessment or evaluation of students' achievement, but also for enhancing the quality of language learning and teaching. To enhance learning and teaching quality, assessment tools are expected to help encourage learners to learn actively and critically, not simply studying for an exam. Taking this issues into account, traditional types of assessment such as pencil-and-paper tests alone might not be able to stimulate students' motivation to learn, or to truly assess their language ability during their learning process. In addition, some teachers might encounter a situation in which students can do well in pencil-and-paper tests on grammar and sentence structure, but make mistakes when actually using the language in oral interaction or writing work (NCLRC, 2004). Teachers



need to ensure that their choice of assessment can accurately demonstrate reflections of authentic language use.

Hence, alternative types of assessment come into play with the purpose of filling up a space where traditional types of assessment leave it empty. Alternative types of assessment such as journals, logs, portfolios, self-assessment, and peer-assessment help reveal what students can do with language. Most of them are considered performance-based types of assessment. The general features of alternative assessment include requiring students to perform, create, and produce something (Herman, Aschbacher and Winters, 1992), using real-world contexts or simulations, focusing on processes as well as products (Aschbacher, 1991), and providing information about both the strengths and the weaknesses of students (Huerta-Macias, 1995). It is important that teachers make appropriate choices among the various assessment options in order to facilitate students' learning and to make an accurate judgment on the extent to which students have achieved their learning objectives.

In this study an English grammar course was chosen for an experimental classroom. The first reason is that most types of assessment in a grammar course are mainly pencil-and-paper types because they are widely accepted in terms of their objectivity. These kinds of tests are used for summative assessment and are taken by students at the end of a unit or a course. However, the researcher was interested in the possibility of incorporating alternative assessments into an English grammar course. Also, grammar learning is considered an indispensable aspect of a learner's path toward mastering the language; however, there is a mistaken belief that the more grammatical features students remember, the better they can master the language. From the new perspective on English used as a lingua franca in the 21st century there is a question as to whether knowledge of discrete grammatical points can really represent students' grammatical ability. Accordingly, alternative types of assessment should be integrated into English courses in conjunction with traditional types of assessment in order to assess students' grammatical ability. Finally, grammatical ability is not just the extent of students' grammatical knowledge, because as Rothstein and Rothstein state, "the job of language teachers is to think of how we can make grammar fun to learn and memorable and meaningful" (as cited in Tutunis, 2012). Therefore a set of alternative assessment methods should be implemented to motivate students to be more involved in their learning.

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions towards both traditional and alternative types of assessment as used in an English course named *Introduction of English Grammar and Structure*, which was a compulsory course for first-year-English-majoring students at a university in Bangkok, Thailand. The traditional assessments used in this study were pencil-and-paper quizzes and exams, including multiple-choice questions, cloze passages, error detection, and sentence completion. The alternative assessments include iPortfolio (individual work), WeCreate Activity (pair assignment), and iLearn & Teach Project (group work). All of these alternative tools focus on encouraging students to change what they know about grammatical structure to what they can do with this grammatical knowledge. In addition, these types of assessment were expected to yield a positive washback by helping students enhance their learning process and motivating them to learn and apply their grammatical knowledge to real-world communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional and alternative assessments

There might not be a very clear cut explanation as to which assessments are traditional or alternative. Actually, both can serve different purposes of assessment. However, there are some features that can be used to identify traditional assessment tools. First, a traditional assessment tool is likely to be considered a standardized test with decontextualized test items. Second, the focus is on discrete answers. Third, it tends to be a summative test which is oriented towards the product. Finally, it evaluates non-interactive performance, so it fosters extrinsic motivation (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 18). Examples of traditional assessment types are true-false, matching, and multiple-choice formats.

Alternative assessment can be continuous long-term assessment with contextualized communicative tasks. In addition, it encourages open-ended, creative answers. It is considered a formative assessment which is oriented towards the process. Finally, it involves inter-active performance, so it fosters intrinsic motivation.

Alternative types of assessment can present new ways of motivating and inspiring students to learn as well as evaluating students' language ability on a basis of authenticity in their use of language. Reeves (2000, as cited in Nasab, 2015) proposed two approaches in alternative assessments which are performance assessment and portfolio assessment. These categories are similar to the types of assessment mentioned by Brown & Hudson, 1998. The two important features of performance assessments are performance and authenticity. The concept of authenticity encourages students to carry out tasks based on what they have actually encountered in their daily lives and that is one reason why alternative assessment produces meaningful classroom activities.

Brown & Hudson (1998) summarize twelve characteristics of alternative assessments as follows:

1. Require students to perform, create, produce, or do something;
2. Use real-world contexts or stimulations;
3. Are nonintrusive in that they extend the day-to-day classroom activities;
4. Allow students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day;
5. Use tasks that represent meaningful instructional activities;
6. Focus on processes as well as products;
7. Tap into higher level thinking and problem-solving skills.
8. Provide information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students;
9. Are multi-culturally sensitive when properly administered;
10. Ensure that people, not machines, do the scoring, using human judgment;
11. Encourage open disclosure of standards and rating criteria; and
12. Call upon teachers to perform new instructional and assessment roles.

(pp. 654-655)



Related research concerning traditional and alternative assessment tools

Teachers have been trying to find better ways to assess their students' English language ability with a belief that traditional assessment alone cannot fully assess what should be assessed. Alternative types of assessment are therefore more widely implemented in English language teaching and learning to serve this purpose. Consequently, a number of studies need to be conducted in order to investigate the effectiveness of the alternative assessment tools when they are used to replace traditional tools or are used as additional tools to the traditional ones. Some examples of alternative assessment tools are portfolio, self-assessment, peer assessment, project-based assessment, and classroom presentation.

The portfolio has been widely used as an alternative assessment and many studies have investigated its effect on students' language ability and perceptions. Most results of the studies showed positive effect of the use of portfolio. Tabataabaei and Assefi (2012) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment technique as a teaching, learning and assessment tool on students' writing performance. They had an experiment group of 20 students using portfolio assessment and a control group of 20 students using the traditional approach of writing assignments. The result showed students in their experimental group outperformed those in the control group in their writing performance. Demirel and Duman (2015) have also discovered the same result that portfolio can improve students' language ability. In an experimental group, they used a portfolio as an additional part to existing activities of the teacher handbook and in control group there is no use of a portfolio. Then a questionnaire concerning students' attitudes towards English was used. Although the results showed that the use of portfolio had no effect on students' attitudes towards English, it had positive effect on students' achievement concerning grammar and vocabulary. In addition students in their studies showed positive attitudes towards portfolio activities in the interview. Even in an online English course, the use of portfolio has also influenced students' learning process. Baturay, (n.d.) investigated online English language learners' perceptions of portfolio assessment and discovered that learners had positive feelings towards portfolio use in the course because it helped them to see how they were using the target language. Furthermore, it helped them reflect on what they learned, promote their responsibility of their learning, and enhance the motivation towards the online English course.

The pair work like WeCreate Activity in this study and the group work like iLearn & Teach Project have been also implemented and investigated whether they had any effect on students' language performance or students' perceptions towards learning English. These assessment tools have been increasingly implemented in English language classroom. Storch (1999) used a pair work to investigate the effects of student negotiations over grammatical choices in order to complete grammar-focused exercises. The results of the comparison of exercises completed individually with those completed in pairs suggested that collaboration had a positive effect on overall grammatical accuracy. Working in group can be an assessment tool as it requires students to be more engaged not only intellectually but emotionally as well.

A number of studies focused on teachers' and students' perceptions towards the use of alternative assessment. One of the studies was conducted by Nasri et al (2010). A questionnaire

was used to collect the data concerning teachers' perceptions on alternative assessment tools and the results showed that teachers had positive perceptions on alternative assessment. However, they voiced that alternative assessment had significant impact on the increase in paperwork and demands of their time. Forutan (2014) conducted a study to evaluate students' performance and also survey their attitudes regarding assessment procedures which consisted of the teacher and peer comments and feedback for their writing performance. The results demonstrated that in this alternative assessment there was students' improvement in terms of content, organization and style in comparison to traditional assessment and students also expressed positive attitudes towards teacher and peer comments.

Washback

Messick (1996) defines washback as 'the extent to which the introduction and use of a test influences language teachers and learners to do things they would not otherwise do that promote or inhibit language learning' (p.241). Some educational scholars link washback effects and a test's validity. If a test has validity, it should provide positive washback. However, others pay more attention to the elimination of irrelevant representation of a test than to the extent to which a test can provide positive or negative washback. Some scholars mention this test effect using the term "backwash" to refer to the fact that testing can affect not only the curriculum, but also teaching methods and students' approaches to learning. Washback can be recognized as either positive or negative and positive washback is said to result when a testing procedure encourages 'good' teaching practice (Taylor, 2005).

Due to the differences in their features, alternative and traditional assessments produce different consequent washback. Traditional types of assessment, especially multiple-choice questions, have been criticized for limitations in testing language ability, hence the construct validity of the tests. Alternative types of assessment, despite being praised for their representations of authentic features, have also been criticized on the inevitable inclusion of irrelevant content and the doubt whether they are really simulation of real-world processes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research questions

This study aimed to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions toward traditional and alternative types of assessment used in an English course offered to English-majoring students named *Introduction to English Grammar and Structure*.

The research questions were:

1. What are **students'** and **teachers' perceptions** on traditional and alternative types of assessment used in the *Introduction to English Grammar and Structure* course?
2. What are the **similarities and differences** between students' and teachers' perceptions on traditional and alternative types of assessment used in the *Introduction to English Grammar and Structure* course?



Research context

The participants in this study were 103 first-year students majoring in English and five teachers in a university in Bangkok, Thailand. Students took the course Introduction to English Grammar and Structure as a compulsory course of 45 hours. It is the first English course of the curriculum. Its course objectives mainly focus on brushing up students' grammatical knowledge and encouraging students to demonstrate their grammatical ability by putting their knowledge into practice.

Course assessment tools

The original course had two traditional assessment tools: quizzes and exams (Midterm exam and Final exam). The adjusted assessment system for this study was incorporated with three newly-designed tools of alternative types (iPortfolio, WeCreate Activity, and iLearn & Teach Project) so there were five assessment tools in all. The details of each assessment tool used in this research are described as follows:

1. **Quizzes** can be considered one of the formative assessments which aim to inform teachers and students of what progress students have made during their learning process. In this course, there were two quizzes. One was given before the midterm examination and the other before the final examination. They included various types of question items such as multiple-choice questions, error detection, gap filling with appropriate forms of words, and sentence completion with students' own words.
2. **Exams** were parts of the summative assessments which aim to inform teachers of how much knowledge students have acquired and to what extent they have gained from course in relation to the course's learning objectives. In this course, there were two exams: the Midterm exam and the Final exam. The types of question items are similar to those in the quizzes such as multiple-choice questions, error detection, gap filling with appropriate forms of words, and sentence completion with students' own words. In addition to those questions which are similar to the quizzes, there are cloze passages which can be considered as alternative types in the Midterm and Final exams.
3. **iPortfolio**, an individual project, aimed to promote students' self-directed process and their ability in relating grammar lessons to reading and writing skills. In this course, each student had to collect at least ten assignments through the whole semester. As a matter of fact, this project might be considered as a combination of portfolio and journal. Students completed three tasks. First, they wrote a summary and a reflection of what they had learned in class on a weekly basis. Second, they collected assignments they had done which were related to using grammatical knowledge to analyze authentic materials, such as an analysis of grammatical features and language use in newspaper or magazine articles, product labels, or notices or warning signs. Finally, they wrote sentences or short texts to demonstrate their understanding of the grammatical structures learnt from the class. The criteria were based on the completion, quality, and creativity of the assignments.

4. **WeCreate Activity**, a pair-work activity, aimed to encourage students to put their knowledge into practice and make grammar lessons useful and fun. It was expected the pair-work activity would encourage students to apply grammatical rules to produce useful materials for the learning and teaching of English. In this course students had their own choice to make of any kind of work concerning the grammatical points studied in class. Examples of their work are an analysis of interesting topics, a short film, a drama play, a video presentation, and a poster, etc. Then students presented their project in the classroom to demonstrate how their work was useful for other students in learning English grammar. Their final piece of work would be placed in the Self-Access Learning Center of the Humanities Faculty and available for other students to use. The criteria were based on their creativity as well as the accuracy of their work.
5. **iLearn & Teach Project**, a group-work project, was based on the notion of Roman philosopher, Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC- AD 65), *"While we teach, we learn"* (as cited in Paul, 2011). In this project, students collaborated with one another in a group of 4-6 students and demonstrated how they understood the assigned topics by teaching other classmates. In their teaching sessions, students presented an overview of the topic, created class activities, produced task sheets or exercises, and used PowerPoint in their class instruction. They had to ensure that their classmates understood the topics taught. Each group had about 60-90 minutes depending on their lesson plan. Their performance was graded based on the degree of their understanding of the topics, the grammatical ability demonstrated to convey meanings, the organization of their lesson planning and team working skills. Each group of students had to present twice in this course: the first time as a practice and the second time as part of the course assessment.

Research instruments

The questionnaires were used to obtain information about students' (Appendix 1) and teachers' perceptions (Appendix 2). According to Dornyei (2003), questionnaires are suitable for obtaining the factual, behavioral, and attitudinal types of data about the respondent. In addition, the questionnaire is considered one of the useful instruments for providing structured and objective data which is straightforward to analyze (Cohen et al., 2007). The opinion questionnaires were used to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions toward the different types of assessments used in this study.

RESULTS

Research Question # 1 is to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions on traditional and alternative types of assessment used in the Introduction to English Grammar and Structure course. The perceptions towards overall features are presented in Table 1, their effectiveness in Table 2 and the possible use in other subjects in Tables 3 and 4.



Table 1
Features of assessments tools with the highest mean score

	Students		Teachers	
iPortfolio	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
* iPortfolio promotes learner autonomy	3.99	.70	-	-
* IPortfolio facilitates practice and revision.	-	-	3.80	1.09
WeCreate Activity				
* WeCreate encourages students to perform, create, and produce something related to what they have learnt.	4.07	.98	3.80	1.64
iLearn & Teach Project				
* iLearn & Teach promotes students' thinking and problem-solving skills.	3.70	.88	3.80	1.30
* iLearn & Teach motivates students to learn.	-	-	3.80	1.30
Quizzes				
* Quizzes inform students and teachers of what students have learnt and what aspects need improvement.	4.23	.80	3.60	1.51
* Quizzes offer students opportunities to assess their learning progress.	-	-	3.60	1.51
Exams				
Exams indicate how well students have accomplished the course objectives.	4.19	.89	3.60	1.51

From Table 1, the students believed that **iPortfolio** performs its best function for promoting learner autonomy (3.99) while the teachers believed that it is best for facilitating practice and the revision process (3.80). As for **WeCreate Activity**, it obtained the highest acceptance for encouraging students to perform, create, and produce something from both students (4.07) and teachers (3.80). **iLearn & Teach Project** was considered a good tool for promoting students' thinking and problem-solving skills by the students (3.70) and by the teachers (3.80). In addition, the teachers thought that iLearn& Teach Project was also best in motivating students to learn (3.80). As for traditional assessment tools, **Quizzes** were considered best for informing students and teachers of what the students had learnt and what aspects needed improvement for both students (4.23) and teachers (3.60). Teachers also thought that quizzes best offer students opportunities to assess their learning progress (3.60). **Exams** were best used for indicating how well students had accomplished the course objectives in students' opinion (4.19) and teachers' opinion (3.60).

Table 2
Effectiveness of assessment tools for different purposes

Purpose	iportfolio		WeCreate Activity		iLearn& teach		Quizzes		Exams	
	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs	STs
1. To assess students' grammatical knowledge	3.55	3.20	3.24	3.00	3.59	3.40	4.14	4.00	4.25	4.20
2. To assess students' grammatical ability	3.55	3.60	3.30	3.80	3.62	3.80	4.13	3.80	4.17	3.80
3. To produce positive washback	3.49	3.80	3.37	3.50	3.50	4.00	3.88	4.00	3.88	4.00
4. To offer a reliable score that can tell how well students have achieved the course objectives	3.47	2.80	3.20	3.00	3.46	3.00	4.04	4.20	4.11	4.20
5. To be used as an effective assessment tool for a grammar course.	3.62	3.00	3.34	2.80	3.58	3.60	4.08	4.60	4.10	4.40

Note: STs = students, Ts = teachers

From Table 2, the effectiveness of each assessment tool is considered for the five purposes. For (1) To assess students' grammatical knowledge, **exams** are ranked the best from both the students' and teachers' points of view. For (2) To assess students' grammatical ability, **exams** are best in the students' opinions while teachers think that every tool except iPortfolio can assess grammatical ability. For (3) To produce positive washback, both students and teachers think that **quizzes** and **exams** are the most effective tools. In addition, teachers also believe that **iLearn & teach project** can produce positive washback. For (4) To provide reliable scores that can tell how well students have achieved the course objectives and (5) To be used as an effective tool for a grammar course, **Exams** are ranked the most effective assessment tool. In conclusion, Exams are an assessment tool which were rated the highest for all the purposes of assessment.

This part aimed to investigate the participants' perceptions toward the possibilities of each assessment tool for use in other English courses. The participants were asked to identify the level of effectiveness of each type of assessment tool, for example, if it can be used in reading, writing, listening/speaking, translation, or an ESP course. The courses, which obtain 3.50 and above (a range of 'moderately effective' to 'most effective'), are shown in Tables 3-4.

Table 3
Students' perceptions of possibilities of use for other English courses

Types of assessment	Reading	Writing	Listening/ Speaking	Translation	ESP course
Quizzes	4.06	3.94	-	3.55	-
Exams	4.28	4.22	-	3.83	-
iPortfolio	3.57	3.93	-	3.50	-
WeCreate Activity	-	-	-	-	-
iLearn & Teach Project	3.54	-	3.84	-	-

Note: 3.50 and above (a range of 'moderately effective' to 'most effective'),



From Table 3, the participants were asked to identify the level of effectiveness of each type of assessment tool, for example, if it can be used in reading, writing, listening/speaking, translation, or an ESP course. Table 3 shows the ones which obtain 3.50 and above (a range of 'moderately effective' to 'most effective'). Traditional types of **quizzes** and **exams** are well accepted in English courses such as reading, writing, and translation. Likewise, they also think that the **iPortfolio** can also be used for those three courses. **iLearn & Teach Project** might be used for reading and listening/speaking courses while **WeCreate Activity** is not recommended for any course.

Table 4
Teachers' perceptions on possibilities of use for other English courses

Types of assessment	Reading	Writing	Listening/ Speaking	Translation	ESP course
Quizzes	4.20	4.00	3.60	4.00	4.20
Exams	4.00	3.80	-	4.00	4.00
iPortfolio	-	4.00	-	-	3.60
WeCreate Activity	-	-	-	-	3.60
iLearn & Teach Project	-	-	-	-	-

Note: 3.50 and above (a range of 'moderately effective' to 'most effective'),

From Table 4, the results of teachers' perceptions from Table 4 show that traditional types of **quizzes** and **exams** are recommended for every kind of English course. The **iPortfolio** can be used for writing and ESP courses. **WeCreate Activity** is recommended only for an ESP course while **iLearn & Teach Project** was not recommended for any course in the teachers' opinions.

Research question # 2 is to compare the perceptions of students and teachers on the four main issues: their preferences of assessment tools, the level of difficulty, the effectiveness, and the reliability of the assessment tools. The data was collected from the questionnaire part which consisted of 10 questions. The participants had to choose only one tool they thought best responded to the questions posed and made overall comments for each tool. Table 5 shows how similar and different their perceptions towards each assessment tool are and Tables 6-7 presented their justification.

Table 5
Comparison of all assessment tools

The assessment tool that...	Students		Teachers	
1. students and teachers like most of all	WeCreate	(29.1%)	Quizzes	(40%)
2. students and teachers dislike most of all	Exams/ iLearn & Teach	(31.1%)	iPortfolio	(40%)
3...is the most difficult form of assessment	Exams	(69.9%)	Exams/ iLearn & Teach	(40%)
4....is the easiest form of assessment	iPortfolio	(38.3%)	WeCreate	(40%)
5....most effectively assesses grammatical knowledge	Exams	(43.7%)	Exams	(80%)
6....least effectively assesses grammatical knowledge	WeCreate	(63.1%)	Wecreate/ iPortfolio	(40%)
7....most effectively assesses students' grammatical ability	Exams	(38.8%)	iPortfolio	(40%)
8.... least effectively assesses students' grammatical ability	WeCreate	(46.6%)	-	
9...is the most reliable tool	Exams	(48.5%)	WeCreate	(60%)
10...is the least reliable tool	WeCreate	(43.7%)	Wecreate/ Quizzes	(40%)

From Table 5, the results show that, for both teachers and students, traditional types of assessment are more acceptable than alternative types. Students and teachers share the same viewpoint in that Exams is the tool considered the most difficult form (#3) and the most effective tool to assess grammatical knowledge (#5). They also agree upon the idea that WeCreate Activity was the lease effective tool to assess grammatical knowledge (# 6).

Table 6
Comments on traditional assessment tools

Tools	Students	Teachers
Quizzes and Exams	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They cover all the topics I have learned. - It gives us a grade that clearly represents our level of knowledge. - It can really assess my understanding of the grammar lessons. <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are more difficult than the exercises in the course book. - Exams are difficult and scare me. 	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can assess individual students' knowledge - It is best to assess for individual ability and fairness - It is the most reliable tool. <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In some parts it tests existing knowledge rather than knowledge obtained from the course

Table 7
Comments on alternative assessment tools

Tools	Students	Teachers
iPortfolio	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have opportunities to revise lessons and summarize them. - I can write the stories about myself. 	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's useful for their daily life. - It's free production/ self-reinforcement. - It helps support students' autonomy.



	<p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's just a collection of my work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students cannot create their own Portfolio. <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They copied rather than summarized lessons of their own. - It was time-consuming.
WeCreate Activity	<p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It encourages students to use Grammatical knowledge to create ideas and produce useful learning tools. - I can do anything that I like and work with a friend. - it's not boring, a lot of fun and there's no pressure. <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The focus is on creativity and presentation skills rather than assessment of grammatical knowledge. 	<p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students can use all important skills. <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it's difficult to assess (no exact criteria) - Students don't demonstrate their grammatical knowledge, just their creativity - Requires only some part of students' knowledge so cannot asses holistic ability
iLearn & Teach Project	<p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 	<p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It encourages self-study best - Students must prepare thoroughly to teach classmates well - It is a way to transfer knowledge rather than to apply knowledge <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students teach wrong concepts

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of students and teachers toward traditional assessments (pencil-and-paper quizzes and exams) and alternative assessments (iPortfolio, WeCreate Activity, and iLearn & Teach Project) especially designed for the English course, *Introduction to English Grammar and Structure*. The original course included only the two traditional assessment tools and the objective of the integration of the three alternative ones in this study was to try new ways of assessing students' language ability in an English grammar course and to intentionally create positive washback including active learning, learner-centered features, and self-autonomous learning in an English language classroom. The questionnaires were used to answer the research questions concerning the teachers' and students' perceptions towards these two types of assessment and a comparison of students' and teachers' perceptions.

The results show that both groups of participants, students and teachers, showed greater preference for traditional types of **pencil-and-paper quizzes** and **exams**. In addition, they stated that these assessment tools were more valid and reliable, especially when compared to alternative tools including **WeCreate Activity** and **iLearn & Teach Project**. One of the reasons to explain this incident might be the fact that grammatical points are the main

contents of the course in this study and they have long been generally believed to be appropriately tested with a more objective type of assessment. Furthermore, the ideas of testing the amount of discrete grammatical points might still greatly influence the assessment system in a grammatical course. Hence traditional assessment tools are more preferred due to their high reliability and validity. Nevertheless, if the focus had been placed on students' grammatical ability which Purpura (2004) defined as "an individual's capacity to utilize mental representation of language knowledge built up through practice or experience in order to form meaning" (as cited in Jones, 2012) rather than just students' grammatical knowledge of discrete points, alternative types of assessment might have been more accepted in this study.

Another reason that traditional tools were more preferred than alternative ones in this study might be the fact that when the assessments have involved a high stake decision like assigning students grades, they are expected to be as objective as possible in teachers' opinion. Teachers seemed to prefer traditional types which could help them assess students' language ability objectively. The subjectivity of some alternative assessment tools could not offer them a precise decision in differentiating good students from weaker students. Accordingly, traditional types are better options in this circumstance. The other interesting point was the fact that when it comes to alternative assessment tools students seem to have higher degree of preferences and agreement than those of teachers. A surprising finding was that teachers were the one who implemented the alternative assessment tools; however, they seemed to express their lower trust in these tools. It would be recommended to find out whether the teacher would accept alternative assessment tools if these tools were designed and practiced in a less subjective way. This finding would be more challenging aspects for further studies.

Portfolio, despite being widely accepted as one of the effective assessment tools such as in the research studies such as those conducted by Tabataabaei and Assefi (2012) and Demirel and Duman (2015), was not that well accepted in this study. **iPortfolio** was considered less effective in this study than **pencil-and-paper quizzes** and **exams**. However, students rated it as the second most liked tool and stated that it was a useful method for their learning process, to review their lessons, and prepare themselves for the exams throughout the semester. This might be confirmed by the notion noted by Aurbach (2005) that a portfolio is as much a process as a product.

WeCreate Activity was a pair-work activity aiming to encourage students to put knowledge into practice and to provide students with grammar lessons which were useful and fun to learn. It was also originally designed to create a positive washback. Although some students stated that they liked the objectives of the project which allowed them to apply their grammatical knowledge and to create self-access learning materials, they did not think that it was a valid tool to assess their grammatical knowledge. Teachers also voiced their concerns about validity by stating that it assessed students' creativity rather than their grammatical ability. This problem can be illustrated by what Messick (1996) mentioned, namely, the important thing is to design tests or select assessment tools to reduce construct under-representation, not just to create a positive washback effect of assessment.

WeCreate Activity might not be appropriate for use in a grammar course; however, they might



be more suitable for other English skill courses, such as listening and speaking courses which require students to demonstrate their language skills and proficiency in the forms of speaking or giving a presentation. In addition, a task-based project like WeCreate, if carefully designed and tailor-made, can be a useful tool for in the students' learning process and it might be a valid tool when it is related to the learning objectives of course.

iLearn & Teach Project was a group-work project where students prepared a grammar lesson in advance and taught their classmates. Some students and the teachers stated that they disliked this assessment type. The reason might be that this assessment tool required more of students' teaching and presentation skills which they thought were not related to grammatical ability. As for the teachers, although they thought this project was a good tool to foster the self-study process, they did not encourage using this learning by teaching strategies in any English course. The reason for not supporting this project might involve teachers' disbelief in students' ability to teach and to transfer knowledge to other classmates. Therefore teachers did not trust in students' talking time and thought that students would not learn much by teaching their classmates. Likewise their classmates would not learn anything from them, so it was considered a waste of class time. This perception definitely goes against the view presented by Vygotsky' Social Developmental Theory which emphasizes that "the one who does the talking does the learning" (as cited in Tyrer, 2013).

Although the teachers seemed not to like iLearn & Teach project, some students stated that they felt excited to demonstrate what they had studied to their classmates and they gained a lot more understanding while preparing a lesson. As a researcher and teacher, I totally agree with this approach as I have experienced this myself by gradually gaining more knowledge while preparing lessons, teaching and dealing with students' questions. I also believe in lessening teacher talking time and increasing students talking time in the classroom. Accordingly in the **iLearn & Teach** project, the teacher's role as an authoritative figure would be changed while the students' passive roles becomes active and more efficient.

In conclusion, the results concerning alternative assessments might not have yielded many positive effects in this study, but it is worth attempting to develop and improve them so that there might be more optional ways than quizzes and exams for the assessment of students' grammatical ability. In addition teachers could start using alternative assessments which might involve the low stake decision so that they would feel more stressful in the assessment process and they might feel more familiar with the tools and gain more trust in implementing them further. Most importantly, if these alternative assessments were to be implemented in other English skill courses, the construct validity as well as reliability should be taken into account and the focus should not only be on creating positive washback, which is a concern raised by Messick (1996). Finally, alternative assessments should not be considered as a replacement of traditional assessments or vice versa, but they should be in line with the recommendation of Coombe et al. (2012):

Alternative assessment should not be used as an alternative to traditional language assessment, but it should be used in conjunction with it. It should also be held to the same standards in terms of validity and reliability as traditional types of testing. (p.153)

Accordingly, a combination of traditional and alternative types of assessment would be the most effective method for teachers who wish to balance their teaching and assessment as well as to create a learning atmosphere which will enhance students' learning in class. Most importantly teachers are obligatory to select any assessment tool with careful consideration to ensure the appropriateness of each assessment tool for the learning objectives.

THE AUTHOR

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APPENDIX 1 Students' questionnaire

Survey of students' opinions toward different types of assessment in the course of 01355116

Part 1: Special characteristics of each type of assessment

Identify how much you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning all types of assessment.

Choose 1 to 5 by putting a check mark.

1 = I strongly disagree 2 = I disagree 3 = I neither agree nor disagree 4 = I agree 5 = I strongly agree		I strongly disagree.	I disagree.	I neither agree nor disagree.	I agree.	I strongly agree.
iPortfolio (# 1-4)		1	2	3	4	5
1	iPortfolio promotes learner autonomy (students' taking responsibility to plan, to evaluate, and to monitor one's own learning).					
2	iPortfolio helps students self- reflect and self- assess their learning progress.					
3	iPortfolio facilitates practice and revision process.					
4	iPortfolio provides students and the teacher with meaningful and useful information.					
WeCreate (# 5-8)		1	2	3	4	5
5	WeCreate encourages students to perform, create, and produce something related to what they have learnt.					
6	WeCreate gives students opportunities to use grammar in real life contexts.					
7	WeCreate stimulates analytical and critical thinking skills.					
8	WeCreate focuses on processes as well as products.					
iLearn&Teach (# 9-12)		1	2	3	4	5
9	iLearn & Teach motivates students to learn.					
10	iLearn & Teach promotes students' thinking and problem-solving skills.					
11	iLearn & Teach helps students understand lessons better while teaching and understand lessons better through dealing classmate's questions.					
12	iLearn & Teach allows students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day.					
Quizzes (# 13-16)		1	2	3	4	5
13	Quizzes offer students opportunities to assess their learning progress.					
14	Quizzes inform students and teachers of what students have learnt and what aspects need improvement.					
15	Quizzes facilitate practice and revision process.					
16	Quizzes provide students feedback on their language learning.					
Midterm and Final Exams (Pencil-and-Paper exams) (#17-20)		1	2	3	4	5
17	Exams inform teachers of what students have learnt.					
18	Exams indicate how well students have accomplished course objectives.					
19	Exams measure students'ability to remember grammatical forms and meanings.					
20	Exams involves evaluation and give students feedback in the form of grades.					



Part 2: Common features of all assessment tools

Identify *how effective* you think each assessment type is for the following purposes:

	Choose one of the following: 1 = Least effective 2 = Slightly effective 3 = Moderately effective 4 = Quite effective 5 = Most effective					
		Least effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Quite effective	Most effective
1	To assess student's grammatical knowledge *	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
2	To assess student's grammatical ability **	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes (formative assessment)					
	Midterm / Final Exams (summative assessment)					
3	To produce positive washback ***	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
4	To offer the reliable score that can tell how well students have achieved the course objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
5	To be used as an effective assessment tool for a Grammar course.	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					

* Grammatical knowledge is knowledge of grammatical forms (e.g. discrete grammatical points) and grammatical meanings of those forms.

** Grammatical ability is an individual ability to utilize mental representation of language knowledge built up through practice or experience.

*** Washback is a type of impact, which relates to the effects of the tests on classroom practices-particularly teaching and learning. If a test has **positive washback**, 'there is no difference between teaching the curriculum and teaching to the test' (Weigle & Jensen, 1997, p.205).

Part 3: Comparison of all assessment types

Check only one assessment tool for each of the following questions.

Which assessment tool.....?	Portfolio	WeCreate	Learn & Teach	Quizzes	Exams	Why? (Please provide reasons in English or Thai.)	Should it still be used in this course?
							Yes No
1 do you like most of all ?							
2 do you dislike most of all?							
3 do you think is the hardest form of assessment?							
4 do you think is the easiest form of assessment?							
5 can most effectively assess students' grammatical knowledge * ?							
6 can least effectively assess students' grammatical knowledge ?							
7 can most effectively assess students' grammatical ability ** ?							
8 can least effectively assess students' grammatical ability ?							
9 is the most reliable type to assess students' overall language ability?							
10 is the least reliable type to assess students' overall language ability?							

* **Grammatical knowledge** is knowledge of grammatical forms (e.g. discrete grammatical points) and grammatical meanings of those forms.

** **Grammatical ability** is an individual ability to utilize mental representation of language knowledge built up through practice or experience.

Please write your name if you are willing to give more information in an interview: _____

Mobile _____

Thank you very much for your contribution and good luck in this semester.



Part 4: Assessment types used in different types of English courses

In your opinion, if the following types were used in other English courses, do you think

how effective would they be?

Write # 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

- 1 = Least effective
- 2 = Slightly effective
- 3 = Moderately effective
- 4 = Quite effective
- 5 = Most effective

Types of assessment	Reading	Writing	Listening/Speaking	Translation	ESP course *
iPortfolio					
WeCreate					
iLearn & Teach					
Quizzes					
Midterm / Final Exams					

* ESP courses = English for specific purposes e.g. English for Hotel staff, English for flight attendants

Please write your name if you are willing to give more information in an interview.

Name: _____ Nickname: _____ Mobile: _____

Thank you very much for your contribution and good luck in this semester.

APPENDIX 2 Teachers' questionnaire

Survey of teachers' opinions toward different types of assessment in 01355116 course

Part 1: Characteristics of each type of assessment

Identify how much you agree or disagree with the following statements concerning all types of assessment.

Choose 1 to 5 by putting a check mark.

1 = I strongly disagree 2 = I disagree 3 = I neither agree nor disagree 4 = I agree 5 = I strongly agree		I strongly disagree.	I disagree.	I neither agree nor disagree.	I agree.	I strongly agree.
iPortfolio (# 1-4)		1	2	3	4	5
1	<i>iPortfolio</i> promotes learner autonomy (students' taking responsibility to plan, to evaluate, and to monitor one's own learning).					
2	<i>iPortfolio</i> helps students self- reflect and self- assess their learning progress.					
3	<i>iPortfolio</i> facilitates practice and revision process.					
4	<i>iPortfolio</i> provides students and the teacher with meaningful and useful information.					
WeCreate (# 5-8)		1	2	3	4	5
5	<i>WeCreate</i> encourages students to perform, create, and produce something related to what they have learnt.					
6	<i>WeCreate</i> gives students opportunities to use grammar in real life contexts.					
7	<i>WeCreate</i> stimulates analytical and critical thinking skills.					
8	<i>WeCreate</i> focuses on processes as well as products.					
iLearn&Teach (# 9-12)		1	2	3	4	5
9	<i>iLearn & Teach</i> motivates students to learn.					
10	<i>iLearn & Teach</i> promotes students' thinking and problem-solving skills.					
11	<i>iLearn & Teach</i> helps students understand lessons better while teaching and understand lessons better through dealing classmate's questions.					
12	<i>iLearn & Teach</i> allows students to be assessed on what they normally do in class every day.					
Quizzes (# 13-16)		1	2	3	4	5
13	<i>Quizzes</i> offer students opportunities to assess their learning progress.					
14	<i>Quizzes</i> inform students and teachers of what students have learnt and what aspects need improvement.					
15	<i>Quizzes</i> facilitate practice and revision process.					
16	<i>Quizzes</i> provide students feedback on their language learning.					
Midterm and Final Exams (Pencil-and-Paper exams) (#17-20)		1	2	3	4	5
17	<i>Exams</i> inform teachers of what students have learnt.					
18	<i>Exams</i> indicate how well students have accomplished course objectives.					
19	<i>Exams</i> measure students'ability to remember grammatical forms and meanings.					
20	<i>Exams</i> involves evaluation and give students feedback in the form of grades.					



Part 2: Common features of all assessment tools

Identify *how effective* you think each assessment type is for the following purposes:

Choose one of the following s: 1 = Least effective 2 = Slightly effective 3 = Moderately effective 4 = Quite effective 5 = Most effective		Least effective	Slightly effective	Moderately effective	Quite effective	Most effective
1	To assess student's grammatical knowledge *	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
2	To assess student's grammatical ability **	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes (formative assessment)					
	Midterm / Final Exams (summative assessment)					
3	To produce positive washback ***	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
4	To offer the reliable score that can tell how well students have achieved the course objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					
5	To be used as an effective assessment tool for a Grammar course	1	2	3	4	5
	iPortfolio					
	WeCreate					
	iLearn & Teach					
	Quizzes					
	Midterm / Final Exams					

* **Grammatical knowledge** is knowledge of grammatical forms (e.g. discrete grammatical points) and grammatical meanings of those forms.

** **Grammatical ability** is an individual ability to utilize mental representation of language knowledge built up through practice or experience.

*** **Washback** is a type of impact, which relates to the effects of the tests on classroom practices—particularly teaching and learning.

If a test has **positive washback**, 'there is no difference between teaching the curriculum and teaching to the test' (Weigle & Jensen, 1997, p.205).

Part 3: Comparison of all assessment types

Check only one assessment tool for each of the following questions.

Which assessment tool.....?	Portfolio	WeCreate	iLearn & Teach	Quizzes	Exams	Why? (Please provide reasons in English or Thai.)	Should it still be used in this course?	
							Yes	No
1 do you like most of all as a teacher?								
2 do you dislike most of all as a teacher?								
3 do you think is the hardest form of assessment for students?								
4 do you think is the easiest form of assessment for students?								
5 can most effectively assess students' grammatical knowledge * ?								
6 can least effectively assess students' grammatical knowledge ?								
7 can most effectively assess students' grammatical ability ** ?								
8 can least effectively assess students' grammatical ability ?								
9 is the most reliable type to assess students' overall language ability?								
10 is the least reliable type to assess students' overall language ability?								

* **Grammatical knowledge** is knowledge of grammatical forms (e.g. discrete grammatical points) and grammatical meanings of those forms.

** **Grammatical ability** is an individual ability to utilize mental representation of language knowledge built up through practice or experience.



Part 4: Assessment types used in different types of English courses

In your opinion, if the following types were used in other English courses, do you think how effective would they be?

Write # 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

- 1 = Least effective
- 2 = Slightly effective
- 3 = Moderately effective
- 4 = Quite effective
- 5 = Most effective

Types of assessment	Reading	Writing	Listening/Speaking	Translation	ESP course *
iPortfolio					
WeCreate					
iLearn & Teach					
Quizzes					
Midterm / Final Exams					

* ESP courses = English for specific purposes e.g. English for Hotel staff, English for flight attendants

Part 5: Other comments and suggestions

Thank you very much for your contribution.