

Different Assessment: 6th Grade English Teachers' Perspective in Brazil

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Abstract: This work presents an excerpt from a survey answered by 66 English teachers (6th grade) on the need to apply a different assessment to those students from 6th grade. So, we analyzed the answers by samplings from question number 6. The analyses of the teachers' answers took place based on the theoretical constructs of formative assessment (HUERTA-MACÍAS, 1994; BROWN, HUDON, 1998; BROWN, 2000; McKAY, 2008; BLACK, WILLIAM, 2009; SCARAMUCCI, 1999), which we anchor on the view of assessing to promote the learning and the conceptions of a different assessment (HANCOCK, 1994; CHIRIMBU, 2013) as well. In this sense, we ponder the factors of the students' heterogeneity and the focus given to assessment as promotion (LUCKESI, 2013). It is worth considering the aspects of students' transition from 5th to 6th grade and biological, psychological, social, and emotional transformations (BRASIL, 2010, 2017) and age characteristics. Therefore, these students are considered children (BRASIL, 1990). First, we observed the survey participants' ponderings stating that it is necessary to apply a differentiated assessment for 6th-grade students (79%) and exemplified through excerpts from the responses. Next, we studied the negative responses to the survey question, which represented 11% of the total. We noticed that most teachers follow paths to diversify the English language assessment of 6th-grade students. This work did not intend to judge any teachers' position but rather to analyze the conceptions behind the professors' speeches. We support Black and Willian's (1998) idea that alternative assessment is not the solution to all problems in language assessment, nor that traditional assessment has only negative aspects. We converged on the position that English teachers should be aware of all types of assessment (BROWN; HUDSON, 1998) and their positive and negative aspects and use those that best promote learning in different contexts.

Keywords: Different assessment; English teachers' perceptions; 6th grade.

1. Introduction

In Brazil, teaching the English Language is mandatory starting in the sixth grade of Fundamental Teaching (BRASIL, 2017) – named *Ensino Fundamental* in Portuguese and similar to Elementary School. This period of education lasts for nine years. Therefore, according to the official cited document, students will study for five years without the English Language in the curriculum or any other different language from their mother tongue.

Nevertheless, many school systems have been teaching an additional language – English mostly – during the primary level of education (RUBBO, 2016; SECCATO, 2016; TANACA, 2017; AVILA, 2019) for children aged from 6 to 10 years old. Such lack of language policy for teaching additional languages in the early years of elementary school (TONELLI, 2005; TONELLI; CRISTOVÃO, 2010; RINALDI, 2006, 2011; CHAGURI, TONELLI, 2019) generates a diversity of students with different backgrounds when they enter the sixth grade in Brazil. In this scenario, school classes may receive students who never had any formal learning in English as well as those children who come from an educational system that had studied such language in case.

In this context, assessment plays a significant role in promoting English learning. Notwithstanding, according to Luckesi (2013, p. 31-32, our translation), the assessment practice in Brazil has gained a broad space in the teaching process that the school education action turned into an “exam pedagogy¹”. The focus is on promotion. What matters is the score achieved by the student and their approval for the next school year.

The focus attributed to the tests and the promotion of the students by the teachers, parents, teaching systems, and education professionals lead the pedagogical practice away from the teaching/learning pedagogy, according to Luckesi (2013). In this way, teachers put the tests in the center of the teaching and learning process, as Luckesi points out:

¹ In original: pedagogia do exame. (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 32).

Teachers use tests as instruments of threat and prior torture of students, protesting to be a motivating learning element. When the teacher feels their work is not having the expected effect, he announces to his students: "Study!"

Otherwise, you might not do well on the day of the exam. When he observes that the students are undisciplined, it is common to express: "Be quiet! Pay attention! The day of the exam is coming, and you will see what happens." (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 32-33, our translation)²

Corroborating the author, it becomes a sadistic practice that tortures the students during the classes until the day of the test. These teachers' actions link to an environment that values grades and promotion, which is the product of a context that somehow needs to select individuals, as there are no opportunities for everyone. For instance, *vestibulares* (selective exams to enter college) and public contests that select people for public job vacancies with guaranteed stability.

Vasconcellos criticizes the use of assessment as the process for selection and exclusion; he associates that practice to death. In his words:

Rather than being a process to qualify and include, the assessment selects and excludes; instead of being linked to life [...] it is linked to death (fixation, labeling, stigmatization, classification, competition, impotence, hardness, coldness, distance, indifference, disbelief). (VASCONCELLOS, 2003, p. 52, our translation)³

Duboc (2019, p. 131) agrees with Vasconcellos (2003) and claims that assessing does not mean measuring, not even excluding or normalizing. She believes in a formative assessment that promotes democracy and social inclusion, i.e., using assessment to understand, intervene, and transform.

Quevedo-Camargo and Scaramucci (2018) and Quevedo-Camargo (2011) discourse about the little production of knowledge about assessment in Brazil, even though the number of research in the area has increased. In 2020, Quevedo-Camargo researched online sites of Federal Institutions about graduation courses named *Letras Licenciatura em LEM*, which educate people to teach foreign languages in Brazil, and verified the curriculum of undergraduate courses. The research aimed to identify the presence of assessment of Modern Foreign Languages theme and to identify clues concerning Assessment Literacy in the learning process of teachers during their initial and continuous background. The data showed that only 12% of the undergraduate courses offer a subject about assessment of Foreign Languages. That fact worries Quevedo-Camargo because of the specificities of Additional Language teaching and the lack of importance to the theme given by the courses in context. In this way, she highlights the significance of providing teachers with better Assessment Literacy so they may understand assessment rules in the teaching and learning process (QUEVEDO-CARMARGO, 2020).

Given the context, the purpose of this article is to present an excerpt from a survey answered by 66 English teachers (6th grade) on the need to apply a different assessment to students who are studying this school year. We carried out this research through an electronic questionnaire set on the Google Forms platform. This study is part of a Master's dissertation research in the *Mestrado Profissional em Letras Estrangeiras Modernas* course (MEPLEM) at State University of Londrina (UEL), and we will analyze a sample from the answers to question number 6.

The analyses of the teachers' answers will take place based on the theoretical constructs of formative assessment (HUERTA-MACÍAS, 1994; BROWN, HUDON, 1998; BROWN, 2000; McKAY, 2008; BLACK, WILLIAM, 2009; SCARAMUCCI, 1999), which we anchor on the view of assessing to promote the learning and the conceptions of a different assessment (HANCOCK, 1994; CHIRIMBU, 2013) as well. In this sense, we ponder the factors of the students' heterogeneity due to the possible different backgrounds and the focus given to assessment as promotion, characteristic of exam pedagogy (LUCKESI, 2013). It is worth considering the aspects of students' transition from 5th to 6th grade – in terms of biological, psychological, social, emotional

²In original: Os professores utilizam as provas como instrumentos de ameaça e tortura prévia dos alunos, protestando ser um elemento motivador da aprendizagem. Quando o professor sente que seu trabalho não está surtindo o efeito esperado, anuncia aos seus alunos: "Estudem!

Caso contrário, vocês poderão se dar mal no dia da prova". Quando observa que os alunos estão indisciplinados, é comum o uso da expressão: "Fiquem quietos! Prestem atenção! O dia da prova vem aí e vocês verão o que vai acontecer". (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 32-33)

³In original: Ao invés de ser um processo de qualificar e incluir, a avaliação seleciona e exclui; ao invés de estar vinculada à vida [...] vincula-se à morte (fixação, rotulação, estigmatização, classificação, competição, impotência, dureza, frieza, distância, indiferença, descrença). (VASCONCELLOS, 2003, p. 52).

transformations (BRASIL, 2010, 2017), and age characteristics. All in all, these students are considered children according to Law number 8.069, July 13th, 1990.

2. What is different assessment?

Wondering what a different assessment entails requires conceptualizing a traditional assessment. In Brazil, the most frequent tool used to assess students' learning is the paper-and-pencil test. Traditionally, that way of assessment comes from the 16th and 17th centuries, and it is still applied nowadays (LUCKESI, 2013). So, paper-and-pencil tests are the most common type of traditional assessment used in schools and courses. However, this kind of test is not a traditional assessment in itself.

Traditional assessments have some aspects that mold the different instruments so they can be categorized as traditional. In this way, a traditional assessment tool is (mostly) a standardized test: it has controlled time; it is shaped in a multiple-choice format with decontextualized items; the scores are sufficient and norm-referred; the focus is on correct and discrete answers; frequently, traditional assessment is summative and oriented to a product; and, lastly, it measures non-interactive performance and promotes extrinsic motivation. (BROWN, 2010; PHONGSIRIKUL, 2018).

The concept of traditional assessment connects to the formal assessment definition because:

[...] **formal assessments** are exercises or procedures specifically designed to tap into a storehouse of skills and knowledge. They are systematic, planned sampling techniques constructed to give teacher and student an appraisal of student achievement. (BROWN, ABEYWICKRAMA, 2018, p. 7)

Brown (2010) argues that formal assessments happen during certain moments when we apply a prepared instrument for students to measure their language competence. Thus, the aspects presented show us that traditional and formal assessments are close when we analyze their characteristics comparatively.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2018, p. 7) states that: "We can say that all tests are formal assessments, but *not* all formal assessment is testing." So, any procedure or instrument used systematically and in a planned form is a formal assessment, but that does not mean it is a test. As the authors say, a journal or a portfolio may be used as a formal instrument of assessment - depending on the directions given by the teacher.

On the other hand, a different assessment walks to the opposite of what a traditional assessment is. Some authors use the term *alternative* to discourse about assessment procedures that differs from traditional ones (HUERTA-MACÍAS, 2018; BAILEY, 1998; BROWN, 1998, 2010; BROWN, ABEYWICKRAMA, 2018; PHONGSIRIKUL, 2018). According to Huerta-Macías(1995, p. 339):"Alternative assessment has been described as an alternative to standardized testing and all of the problems found with such testing." Therefore, the conception of a different assessment elected to research the English teachers' opinions about the topic of this study is anchored on the diversity of features used to distinguish from the traditional assessment.

In this sense, a comparison between traditional and alternative assessments may help us better understand the definitions and outline the focus of research analysis.

Table 1: traditional assessment vs. alternative assessment

Traditional Assessment	Alternative Assessment
One-shot, standardized exams	Continuous long-term assessment
Timed, multiple-choice format	Untimed, free-response format
Decontextualized test items	Contextualized communicative tasks
Scores suffice for feedback	Formative, interactive feedback
Norm-referenced scores	Criterion-referenced scores
Focus on the "right" answer	Open-ended, creative answers
Summative	Formative
Oriented to product	Oriented to process
Non-interactive performance	Interactive performance
Fosters extrinsic motivation	Fosters intrinsic motivation

Source: Brown e Abeywickrama (2010, p. 17).

Because of all the critics of the traditional ways of assessment, we can see that a negative cloud is over that approach. However, the clear distinction between traditional and alternative might be difficult to establish:

[...] the concepts [...] represent some overgeneralizations and should therefore be considered with caution. It is, in fact, difficult to draw a clear line of distinction between what Armstrong (1994) and Bailey (1998) have called traditional and alternative assessment. Many forms of assessment fall between the two, and some combine the best of both. (BROWN; ABEYWICKRAMA, 2010, p. 16-17)

In this way, we must be careful when we want to classify a type of instrument for assessment as traditional or alternative. Additionally, the negative cloud over traditional resources is generalized and tends us to think that we must abandon these types of tools and use only alternative assessments.

[...] the table shows an obvious bias toward alternative assessment, and one should not be misled into thinking that everything on the left-hand side is tainted whereas the list on the right-hand side offers salvation to the field of language assessment. (BROWN; ABEYWICKRAMA, 2010, p. 17)

So, all types of assessments are helpful for some purpose. Both approaches have positive and negative aspects that teachers must observe when selecting an instrument to assess. Thus, we agree with Brown and Hudson (1998, p. 657) when they claim: “[...] all of the different types of tests are important to keep because all of them have distinct strengths and weaknesses.”

3. Teachers’ regards about different assessment

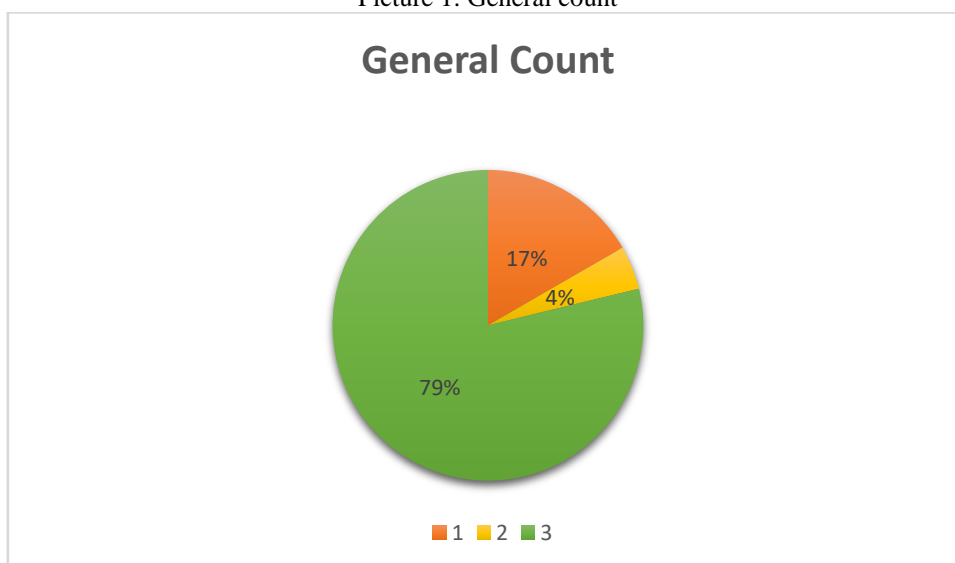
3.1 First look

The English teachers’ answers we are analyzing make part of the research applied through an electronic questionnaire on Google Forms. This research is part of the master’s degree in the MEPEM program at UEL, Paraná state, in Brazil. The questionnaire aims to know the experiences and perspectives of the participating teachers concerning the assessment of 6th-grade students in English. The form with the questions was disseminated through social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, emails, and messages via WhatsApp as well. Therefore, 66 English teachers from various locations in Brazil answered the questions.

In this article, we will carry a quantitative-qualitative study (FLICK, 2004; SOUZA, KERBAUY, 2017) about the answers to question six, that asked if the teachers believed the English assessment for learning of 6th-grade students should be differentiated. As we mentioned before, the notion about different assessments we have adopted draws near to the conceptions concerning alternative assessments.

At first, we did an overall count of the responses from the participating teachers. Thus, we categorized responses into: those who claim that a different assessment is needed for the 6th grade (yes); those who do not think there is a need for differentiation (no); and answers we considered uncertain (uncertain opinion). From the total of 66 answers, 52 teachers believe a different assessment for learning in the 6th grade is necessary. On the other hand, eleven teachers think the opposite and answered “no”. Lastly, three teachers wrote opinions that do not position them accurately. To better visualize, we built a chart with this first data survey.

Picture 1: General count



Source: the author

As we can see in the chart, 79% of the teachers consider a different assessment is needed when teaching students in 6th grade, for 17% that is not necessary, and 4% answered uncertainly.

In the next section, we will analyze teachers' regards who agree to a different assessment.

3.2 Different students and language require different assessment

The teachers' answers to justify their affirmative for the need for a different assessment for learning in English with 6th-grade students varied. We will cast the keywords and ideas most cited. So, the first reason why teachers believe in a different assessment is to **diagnose**. According to Brown and Abeywickrama (2010, p. 10): "The purpose of a **diagnostic test** is to identify aspects of a language that a student needs to develop or that a course should include." Commonly, such type of test is applied at the begging of the school year when teachers want to identify the learner's strengths and weaknesses to guide teaching and learning (McKAY, 2008). In addition, diagnostic assessments are also part of the formative assessment (McKAY, 2008). We bring here two excerpts that quote diagnostic assessment to demonstrate:

<i>Yes. I believe that the first assessment stage of the new cycle should be an assessment with the aim of diagnosing the characteristics of the class's learning.</i>
<i>Yes. I believe that the first assessments are based on diagnostic assessments.</i>

In this way, making use of diagnostic assessment may be the start to look with new eyes at 6th-grade students' assessment but we believe that to use only this type of assessment is not enough to change the practice because "[...] no single strategy of assessment is sufficient as each has its own pros and cons." (NASAB, 2015, p. 168).

Another conception about a different assessment found in the teachers' answers is the idea of **diversification** of instruments for assessment.

<i>Yes. It should be diversified because it is a clientele in transition and adaptation phase with many different agendas.</i>
<i>I think it is important to diversify the assessment instruments, taking the focus away from written tests. Introduction of seminars, debates, paintings, analyses, forums, etc.</i>
<i>When it comes to assessment, I think that the instruments chosen to measure the progression of sixth-year students in terms of English language learning must be diversified, that is, it is not possible to have an overview of a class only with the application of a written test with a scoring from 0 to 10 points, [...].</i>
<i>It should include several assessment instruments, not taking as reference the famous "bimonthly test" (traditional written test, summative, rigid). It is noteworthy that this modality can be part of the process, but it must be permeated by other instruments as well, capable of contemplating diagnostic, formative and also summative verification.</i>

Such responses to the question of the research bring a point to what Huerta-Macías (2018, p. 339) demonstrated to be some of the potentialities of alternative assessment: "[...] (d) provides multiple indices that can be used to gauge student progress; [...]", and "Alternative assessment includes a variety of instruments that can be adapted to varying situations." Thus, as the author claims, alternative assessments offer possibilities for gathering information about students' learning rather than just one single way of assessment.

Furthermore, the first answer in the second frame presents the transition context we have referred to before. In Brazil, a change happens when children conclude their initial years (Primary School) and start the sixth grade – a transition period marked by significant changes in the curricular and pedagogical structure, besides the transformations in children's life (BRASIL, 2010). For instance, students now have several teachers from different curricular components instead of one main teacher who spent most of the classes with them during the first five years. Also, many children must transfer to another school because it is not offered the continuation of school years and they might also change study shift⁴.

That said, we have discoursed the transition period because we believe to be needed that teachers must take into account such aspects when he/she assesses students reinforcing the necessity for the assessment to be differentiated.

Another aspect present in the last three transcripts is dissatisfaction with the traditional written test. The lines "[...] taking the focus away from written tests" and "[...] not taking as reference the famous 'bimonthly test' (traditional written test, summative, rigid)" show how there still is an appreciation for this type of test in

⁴ Most of the schools in Brazil are part-time.

education systems and the teachers' awareness that such instrument is not sufficient to assess English language learning expressed by "[...] it is not possible to have an overview of a class only with the application of a written test with a scoring from 0 to 10 points."

Given the above, we assume those teachers have a perception of the relevance of having multiple sources of information using different types of instruments to assess learners' progression. According to Brown and Hudson (1998, p. 670): "Basing any decision on a single source of information is dangerous and maybe even foolish." So, the problem is not in using traditional written tests but adopting only and mainly this kind of assessment like one of the teachers said: "It is noteworthy that this modality can be part of the process, but it must be permeated by other instruments as well [...]."

Moving forward in the analysis, we found teachers' statements concerning a different assessment in the direction of a **formative** approach which must adopt an **ongoing** process.

<i>Yes. The assessment must be daily. All tasks, exercises should be used to have a true assessment. Taking a test, simply to be "recognized", has no place in my teaching practice.</i>
<i>Yes. As an assessment factor, the knowledge that the student already has of the language must be taken into account, through daily contact with the language, whether through games, music, series...</i>
<i>Another point to assess could be the research. The student's dedication and interest in researching a subject of interest, within the language, and sharing the learning with others.</i>
<i>What would be differentiated? Assessment must be procedural and contemplate cognitive aspects as well. It cannot only focus on a classification character, as it runs the risk of promoting an excluding assessment process.</i>
<i>The assessment should take place in different ways and with different instruments and at different times so that the student can express what are their difficulties and what they managed to absorb and with this the teacher can assess what worked and what needs to be resumed and worked again, maybe in a different way.</i>
<i>I believe in an ongoing assessment as an important incentive tool.</i>
<i>[...] I particularly assess performance in class more than systemic assessment.</i>
<i>[...] and with this the teacher can assess what went right and what needs to be taken up and worked on again, perhaps in a different way.</i>
<i>It's interesting classroom assessments, something continuous.</i>
<i>Yes, it must be following the tasks, activities; [...]</i>
<i>Yes! I believe that a continuous assessment with activities after each topic or content taught would make more sense than one or two assessments per quarter that cover multiple contents in a single instrument.</i>

The definition of **formative assessment** concerns "evaluating students in the process of 'forming' their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. [...] They have as their primary focus the ongoing development of the learner's language." (BROWN; ABEYWICKRAMA, 2010, p. 8). That said, we can recognize that those teachers' conceptions of formative assessment agree with the authors' definition. The use of words "daily," "daily contact," "procedural," "in class," "continuous," and "following the tasks, activities" bring us the teachers' awareness about the importance they attribute to constantly assessing the students. Such teachers' notes on the ongoing nature of the formative assessment are related to the description of alternative assessment as we can see in Hancock (1994), Chirumbu (2013), and Nasab (2015).

It is also noticeable that daily activities are considered by the teachers the basis to promote a different way to assess students: "[...] the same day-to-day activities that a student is engaged in (e.g., writing, role-playing, group discussion) are the basis for alternative assessment" (HUERTA-MACÍAS, 2018, p. 339). So, we can see that teachers do not put away what is developed during the classes to assess the student's progress only using one single type of instrument.

Teachers also do not focus on traditional paper-and-pencil tests and do not matter to the final product at the end of a period. Such attitudes tend to the aspects of the alternative and formative assessment which are connected to the process of learning to reach the results:

[...] it is not only the final product that matters and that can be assessed and graded, but also the very process of reaching the result, which demonstrate the quality and complexity of the learners' process of thinking involved in the formulation of a final answer. (CHIRIMBU, 2013, p. 93)

Teachers' lines that corroborate such perception can be illustrated by: "Taking a test, simply to be 'recognized', has no place in my teaching practice"; "I believe that a continuous assessment with activities after each topic or content taught would make more sense than one or two assessments per quarter that cover

multiple contents in a single instrument”, and “It cannot only focus on a classification character, as it runs the risk of promoting an excluding assessment process”.

The idea brought by this last quote is one of the aims of a different assessment: an inclusive assessment process. As summative assessment often happens at the end of a course or unit of instruction, it tends to lack appropriate feedback for students and does not worry about solving the problems found in the student’s learning. Its main goal is to measure what learners know to classify or promote them to another year or level.

On the contrary, an “[a]lternative assessment is an ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the student’s progress in language using non-conventional strategies.” (HANCOCK, 1994, p. 3). Such judgments are about what needs to be improved or which skills students must develop, and this process should involve the teacher and student. Two teachers demonstrated such perception:

[...] the student can express what are their difficulties and what they managed to absorb and with this the teacher can assess what worked and what needs to be resumed and worked again, maybe in a different way.

[...] the teacher can assess what went right and what needs to be taken up and worked on again, perhaps in a different way.

So, these understandings come together to what alternative assessments – here we have been calling different assessments – elicit: to use pieces of evidence about students’ progress and comprehend them to make decisions about the next actions in the teaching and learning process involving teachers, learners, and even peers (BLACK; WILIAM, 2009).

Moving forward, we could see the presence of playful activities or tasks in teachers’ lines as examples of different assessments.

<i>[...] whether through games, songs, series...</i>
<i>Yes. With lots of playfulness, images... [...]</i>
<i>Yes, more playful.</i>

Games are cited by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) as one of the alternatives to promote an informal assessment because this type of activity involves language production. Such alternatives move so far away from the traditional notion of assessment. However, as the authors ponder,

As assessments, the key is to specify a set of criteria and a reasonably - practical and reliable scoring method. The benefit of such an informal assessment may not be its summative evaluation as much as its formative nature, with washback for the students. (BROWN; ABEYWICKRAMA, 2010, p. 187)

Besides that, playing in children’s learning process is highlighted by Chaguri and Tonelli (2014) as a basis of instruction, and it has been considered an essential parameter for learning. Therefore, to illustrate the importance of play in assessment, we anchor ourselves on what Vygotsky (2002, n.d.) says: “[...] thus, play also creates the zone of proximal development of the child. In play a child is Always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself.”

So far, we have brought to this article some sample teachers’ lines concerning their comprehension of a different assessment. Due to the extension limits, we will not extend bringing excerpts from the teachers’ answers but we believe that what has been presented are the most significant opinions and gives a perspective about the conceptions founded through the questionnaire. Other answers only agree to apply a different assessment for learning with 6th-grade students but do not argue enough with relevant constructs to quote in our view.

Next, we will show the participants’ denials for the need to assess 6th-grade students differently.

3.3 If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!

The belief that assessment does not need to be different when 6th-grade students are being assessed may have some origins. The first assumption is that teachers think that alternating the assessment approach is to make it easier for students to get good scores and demand more effort for teachers to assess and score their students compared to traditional testing techniques. Different assessment demands “[...] higher institutional budgets [...] to administer and score assessments that presuppose more subjective evaluation, more individualization, and more interaction in the process of offering feedback.” (BROWN; ABEYWICKRAMA,

2010, p. 17). Thus, changing an assessment practice that has been applied for a long period demands a certain level of effort by teachers and stakeholders.

no. I usually do it in the same style as the assessments of the following grades, adapting the level.

No. Due to the fact that we have to prepare them for the following years of school life, including preparing them for college. Teaching them to be autonomous students and to have critical thinking for life.

All assessments must be global, regardless of grade.

The second line in the frame shows us a concern about children's future. The educational system in Brazil requires a measurement expressed in numbers and the influence of standardized and large-scale tests contributes to teachers do not release them from traditional instruments for assessment. Additionally, there is an understanding that English is a tool that will facilitate people's future. Martins Magiolo and Tonelli (2020, p. 100) spoke that:

Others understand English as a tool for the job market and for college entrance exams. The results corroborate what was exposed by Rajagopalan (2004) about the marketing directions taken by the teaching of English, that is, language learning is conditioned to issues imposed by globalization and the notably capitalist and neoliberal job market.

Teachers (and often parents) are concerned about their children's future in a context where there are few good opportunities to get a job that makes it possible to have a better life. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that we are teaching children despite the fact that they are going through a transition period and becoming adolescents. Our duty as English teachers should be to offer meaningful learning, promote familiarization, and create positive ties between the student and the new language, especially with the English language, which has distinct syntactic, phonological, and morphological characteristics from the Portuguese language.

Next, we observed two participants' responses who only said "No" to the question, giving no justifications. Another point argued by one of the teachers was to implement a gradual change in English assessment, but it should not be completely different from all the other grades at school:

I think that the change in assessment needs to be gradual in the 6th grade, for better adaptation and learning growth, and not differentiated at all.

The following negative opinion reveals that the teacher may understand a different assessment as the procedure that moves away from what is established in the curricula and syllabus.

No...you should evaluate what is in the curriculum...writing, grammar, orality etc.

In this case, we quote here Huerta-Macías (2018, p. 339) draws attention to important aspects of alternative assessment by asserting that: it "(b) reflects the curriculum that is actually being implemented in the classroom". The author explains that due to an alternative assessment being based on daily classroom activities and consequently reflecting the curriculum, it is the opposite of what traditional assessment promotes: "[...] standardized tests that often test skills incongruent with classroom practices." (2018, p. 339).

To conclude this section, we transcribe the following teacher's line and, next, we will make some considerations.

I believe that we should focus on assessments such as exams and tests only. Sixth graders are very active, but most of the time they have no responsibility for their studies.

The reason this teacher believes his/her students should only be submitted to tests comes from the children's lack of responsibility. Sixth-grade students are generally agitated children, full of energy, proactive, and interested in learning new things. We say again that we still are working/teaching children. They are not mature to take on particular responsibilities.

In childhood, the dependent relationship is the natural and logical situation; the child accepts his relative impotence, the need for others to take on a certain type of egoic functions, and his ego is

enriched through the process of projection and introjection that configures identification.⁵
(ABERASTURY; KNOBEL, 1981, p.82, our translation)

This way, we should not forget the level of maturity and cognitive development in which students are inserted into and the demand from them when they are below what they can deal.

Such an attitude of assessing students just through tests and exams reveals what Luckesi (2013) claims about the **exam pedagogy**, as the authors' discourses, with the attention on tests, scores, and promotion, the consequences are a removal of the function of helping the learning. Our society is structured in classes and thus unequally. The use of assessment as a way to select and exclude collaborates with social selectivity: "[...] the evaluation is much more articulated with the failure than with the approval and hence its contribution to social selectivity [...] the assessment collaborates with the current, adding another 'run of water'"⁶ (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 39, our translation).

All things considered, we do not intend to judge any teacher who does not believe in a different assessment. In Brazil, teachers have a hard-working day in classrooms with many students, especially in public schools. Choosing the known and traditional path becomes a more attractive alternative when assessing, given all the circumstances teachers live in. We think about giving a helping hand and offering other possibilities to assess students, especially concerning language assessment.

Conclusion

In this work, we developed an analysis concerning 6th-grade English teachers' opinions regarding the need to differentiate the assessment for learning with the students. All the participants are from Brazil and come from various regions. Our purpose was to identify reasons for teachers to consider (or not) applying a different assessment. The majority said "yes" representing 79% of the total answers; meanwhile, 11% think not to be necessary to differentiate assessment, and 4% answered uncertainly.

We took into context the heterogenous conjuncture that students come from and join 6th grade. Some students already had their first English formal instructions, while some are studying for the first time. Another circumstance in focus to conduct the survey was the transition period in 6th-grade children's lives. Many of them change schools or shift studies; they find themselves with plenty of new classmates and several different teachers, and yet they will experience what puberty provokes. All these aspects are covered in Brazilian official documents (BRASIL, 2010, 2017).

Supporting our analysis, we briefly mentioned some theoretical assumptions about traditional and alternative assessment. According to Brown and Phongskirul (2010), the traditional assessments have some features that help to identify as traditional instruments: they are standardized, time-controlled, summative, and oriented to a product. In contrast, the alternative assessment presents the opposite features from the traditional: "Alternative assessment is different from traditional testing in that it actually asks students to show what they can do. Students are evaluated on what they integrate and produce rather than on what they are able to recall and reproduce." (HUERTA-MACÍAS, 2018, p. 339). The foundation of alternative assessment is on the students and what they have learned, not on out-of-context tests which does not contemplate students' production and authenticity.

For the samples, from teachers' answers, some of the statements merged because they contained the same idea about the differentiated assessment. We could see that teachers use diagnostic assessments as a different instrument from traditional ones. That is one of the possibilities within the existing ones. Also, we found lines that walk towards diversification of instruments to assess, but teachers wrote a few examples like "seminars, debates, paintings, analyses, forums" and "games, music, series." These last three examples also reference playful activities, which are beneficial for students learning given that they are children.

In addition, the claims for assessment as a formative and ongoing process were present in the research participants' opinions. We believe those teachers are aware of the alternatives to promote a different assessment with 6th-grade English students because alternative assessments usually are formative and ongoing, i.e., it uses students' results to make necessary changes in the teaching and learning process to achieve the established goals.

⁵ In original: Na infância, a relação de dependência é a situação natural e lógica; a criança aceita a sua relativa impotência, a necessidade de que outros se encarreguem de certo tipo de funções egóicas, e o seu ego vai enriquecendo mediante o processo de projeção e introjeção que configura a identificação. (ABERASTURY; KNOBEL, 1981, p.82)

⁶ In original: [...] a avaliação está muito mais articulada com a reprovação do que com a aprovação e daí vem a sua contribuição para a seletividade social [...] a avaliação colabora com a correnteza, acrescentando mais um "fio d'água". (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 39)

On the other hand, we observed teachers' lines that do not agree to promote a different assessment. Their reasons for not having a change are based on preparing for the future, standardizing tests according to other grades, focusing on the curriculum, and the irresponsibility of 6th-grade students. We discourse with perceptions that we believe are the reasons for teachers not wanting to change their assessment approaches, such as the use of English as a tool for work (MARTINS MAGIOLO; TONELLI, 2020); the idea that the change in assessment moves away from the curriculum, with Huerta-Macías (2018) postulating the opposite of this; the fact that 6th-grade students are children and depend on adults is something natural (ABERASTURY; KNOBEL, 1981).

As we mentioned, our intention was not to judge teachers' perceptions of the assessment process. We believe the lack of assessment literacy (QUEVEDO-CAMARGO, 2020) is a problem in Brazilian education. We agree with Black and Willian (1998, p. 82) that: "[...] do not conclude that formative assessment is yet another 'magic bullet' for education." Also, traditional assessment has been criticized for insufficiencies in testing language skills (PHONGSIRIKUL, 2018). In this sense, we assent to Brown and Hudson (1998, p. 671-672) claims: "Teachers and testers might better be served by thinking of all types of language tests as alternatives in assessment rather than viewing some types as being special."

Therefore, English teachers, not only 6th-grade ones, should know and have all types of assessment available to supply the gaps between one procedure and another. As Luckesi (2013, p. 64-65) says: "[...] the transition from habits of examining to habits of evaluating requires constant attention, as the former is deeply ingrained in our history, in our society, and the personal personality of each of us."⁷ So, instead of pointing out failures and criticizing teachers attached to traditional procedures, we must show other possibilities that might help to promote better learning and be something inherent to the process.

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⁷ In original: a transição de hábitos de examinar para os hábitos de avaliar exige atenção constante, pois que os primeiros estão profundamente arraigados em nossa história, em nossa sociedade e na personalidade pessoal de cada um de nós. (LUCKESI, 2013, p. 64-65)

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