

A Desirable but Difficult Goal: Equitable Assessment

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Introduction

Researchers in education have made grade progress supporting all students' learning by providing effective practices. Based on the efforts, teachers' practices of teaching have shifted from teacher-centered instructions to student-centered instructions. However, this shift in teachers' instructional practices is not adequately reflected in teachers' assessment practices. It is well-established that assessment and learning are intertwined. Besides, how is assessment carried out and what is being assessed inform student learning. Therefore, assessment practices are essential to engage students in deep learning and closing the achievement gap between diverse students. Using assessment processes to support student learning rather than just providing grades is conceptualized as formative assessment or assessment for learning in literature.

Researchers have shown that formative assessment has a positive impact on students learning outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2006; Vogelzanga & Admiraal, 2017). Formative assessments require teachers to elicit students' ideas, use these initial ideas to base instruction, and provide effective feedback and instruction to help students achieve the desired learning outcomes (Abell & Siegel, 2011). While the contributions of formative assessment on students learning are evident, it is difficult for teachers to change their traditional perceptions and practices of assessment to aid student learning (Izci, 2016). Researchers indicated that although teachers' perceptions of assessment have mostly changed based on the educational development within the last two decades, teachers' assessment practices resist to change because of various personal and contextual factors (Izci, 2018). Particularly, it is difficult for teachers to use assessment processes to engage all students and provide individualized assessment practices for diverse groups of learners within crowded classrooms.

Individual differences affect learning outcomes, learning speed, amount of learning, and transfer of the learned concepts into real life. Thus, these differences are effective in letting students show what they have learned. Considering individual differences during assessment practices is crucial if our aim is to support all students' learning through classroom assessment. Teachers need to use assessments to elicit, assess and support diverse students' learning (Lyon, 2017; Siegel, 2014). Use of assessment practices in providing equal opportunities for all students to engage in learning and show their

learning is important and known as equitable assessment. Equitable assessment contains using student sensitive assessment tasks and processes to allow all students equally illustrate their thinking and accordingly providing personalized actions including tailored feedback to aid all students' learning (Siegel, 2014; Suskie, 2000). If our aim is to let all students learn key concepts and skills to become informed citizens in real life, equitable assessment is a pivotal instructional practice to respond to the needs of the diverse population of learners in our classrooms. This is also more important nowadays since the diversity of learners in classrooms has increased in all nations because of the migrations within and across national borders.

Increased diversity of students within schools has motivated countries to find ways and prepare teachers to effectively use diversity as a means to respond to the needs of diverse students. Equitable assessment is one of the ways we can utilize diversity as an opportunity to support diverse students' learning needs. Some countries, such as Turkey, started to require teacher preparation in using equitable assessment practices to promote students learning. For example, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) of Turkey determined equitable assessment practices as a prerequisite for teachers and published "The General Qualifications of Teaching Profession" standards (MoNE, 2017). These standards, for instruction, require teachers to, first, "develop a flexible instructional plan to respond to individual differences and sociocultural characteristics of students" and, second, to "design a learning environment by considering individual differences and needs of learners." (MoNE, 2017, p. 14) Specific to equitable assessment practices of teachers, these standards require teachers to "prepare and use diverse assessment tools and methods suitable to students characteristics" and "Carrying out an objective and fair assessment." (MoNE, 2017, p. 22)

Based on the critical role of equitable assessment explained above, in order to inform researchers and practitioners, the chapter aims to provide conceptions of equitable assessment, explain the individual differences need to be considered during equitable assessment and suggest research-informed principles for successful equitable assessment practices.

Conceptions of Equitable Assessment

Based on the developmental movements in human rights and civilization areas, concepts like diversity, equity and social justice have increasingly been discussed among researchers in the educational community. However, many researchers use these terms inattentively rather than explaining what these terms are and how they address these terms in their studies (Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). It is important for stakeholders of educational communities to more clearly define their philosophical and theoretical views of diversity, equity and social justice in order to provide a clear picture of their

works. Since there are contradictory views regarding diversity, equity and social justice in the literature, it is also essential for assessment researchers to explicitly define these constructs and explain how they support or address these concepts within assessment practices and processes.

In particular, for classroom assessments, the results of a systemic literature review conducted by Rodriguez and Morrison (2019) showed that most of the reviewed studies used different terminologies while addressing fairness in assessment. In addition, the analysis of the same studies by Rasooli, Zandi and DeLuca (2019) indicated that only 8 of 50 studies provided a clear definition of fairness for classroom assessment. Furthermore, it was shown that researchers use different terminologies such as equity, justice, equality, ethics, equitable, and nondiscriminatory to indicate fairness of assessment in their studies. The use of different terminologies interchangeably makes it difficult for readers to understand what constitutes a fair assessment and how to interpret the results of studies conducted about fairness of assessment. As Rasooli et al. (2019) explained, it is important for researchers to provide more detailed definitions of these terms used for fairness because fairness of assessment is a multifaceted and fuzzy concept. For example, as Rasooli et al. (2019) indicated several researchers use equitable assessment as to provide equal opportunities for learners to engage in learning and assessment while other researchers use it as a way of providing equal assessment opportunities for all learners to illustrate their learning regardless of individual differences. Thus, it is essential for researchers to clearly provide their approaches to equitable assessment and consistently use the same approaches to interpret and discuss the results of their study.

On the other hand, because of the nature of fairness, it is difficult to clearly define and come to a consensus on a definition for fairness of assessment (Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). One of the dilemmas among researchers for fair assessment is the binomial of equality-equity. As Nisbet and Shaw (2019) stated, researchers mainly consider the conception of equity or equality to base their understanding of fairness. The researchers using the notion of equality to address fairness of assessment highlight the equality of conditions, such as time, resources and materials when applying an assessment to students (Tierney, 2014). Equality perspective mostly focuses on objectivity and requires teachers to be objective when applying, scoring and interpreting an assessment activity.

Contrary to the equality notion, some authors (e.g., Siegel, 2014; Suskie, 2002) argue that the mere ensurance of objectivity cannot support fairness of assessment since all students do not have the same opportunities to access education and assessment. In order to support fairness of assessment and principles of equity, the uses of different forms, accommodations and adaptations of assessments need to be employed to address students' needs and characteristics during assessment practices. Similarly, McArthur (2018) states that equity is an important requirement to develop a fair assessment and

it is necessary for teachers to use multiple forms of assessment to address diversity of students during assessment practices.

Reflections on equality-equity notions of assessment in the related literature show that researchers point out different reasons and prioritize different constructs to address fairness of assessment. Particularly, researchers considering the role of assessment in comparing students achievement more likely to support the equality notion since achieving equality of assessment makes the comparison more meaningful and reliable (Zieky, 2016). On the other hand, achieving equity of assessment is vital to limiting bias and engage all students' in learning and assessment processes; however, it makes difficult to compare students and placement of students. Thus, it is important to identify which conceptions of assessment fairness are valuable for us and, accordingly, design, conduct, and interpret our endeavors for assessment fairness. Furthermore, conceptions of fairness also depend on the function of assessment such as high-stake assessment or classroom assessment because the comparison of students and grades are important in high-stake assessments than they are in classroom assessment. It is also evident that students encounter classroom based assessments more frequently than high-stake assessment on a daily basis. Therefore, it is meaningful for us to consider classroom based assessment to approach fairness of assessment by highlighting the equity notion, conceptualized as equitable assessment, to support student engagement and learning.

Mpofu and Ortiz (2009) indicated four essential conditions in classifying equitable assessment. These perspectives include;

- 1) from the application of measures with cross-population transportability;
- 2) use of items that are equivalent in measuring the construct of interest;
- 3) knowledge of the manner in which certain variables (culture and language) affect test performance; and
- 4) application of a systematic approach designed to evaluate the influence of cultural and linguistic difference on the validity of obtained results (Mpofu & Ortiz, 2009, p. 42).

As Mpofu and Ortiz (2009) noted that the first two conditions are related to the technical requirement of assessment and mostly necessary for high-stake assessments. The last two conditions are related to the context in which the assessment is used, the personal characteristic of assessment users, and the outcomes and interpretations of the assessment results. Thus, the last two conditions are more important to classroom-based assessment applications and needed to be considered by teachers and researchers in providing effective and equitable assessment practices to their students. In this chapter,

we interpret that classroom assessment is a process collects and uses student-related data to inform instruction and support learning. As teachers have more opportunities to collect first hand data via different form of assessments about diverse learners to make instructional decisions in their classrooms, classroom based assessments are more influential in informing and aiding students' learning. Thus, teachers' understanding and practices of equitable assessment are vital in order to ensure effective learning for all students.

Based on the Mpofu and Ortiz's (2009) classifications of equitable assessment, it is important for teachers to know which factors affect students engagement and practices of assessment and how these factors can be addressed to reduce bias and provide equitable opportunities for students to engage in the assessment process to show their learning. Thus, we next aim to provide the factors that influence learning and assessment of learning.

The Individual Differences that Need to be Considered During Equitable Assessment

Equitable assessment aims to support all students' learning through providing differentiated assessment opportunities for diverse groups of learners to let them engage and illustrate their learning without any direct or implicit bias for any group of students. Thus, it is important for administrators of classroom assessment to be well-informed about the differences diverse groups of learners bring to their classrooms, how these differences influence students' learning process and how to provide tailored assessment practices to meet the needs of diverse students. In order to provide some background knowledge of individual differences for teachers, this section addresses the differences students bring to classrooms and explain how these differences influence learning and engagement to assessment practices.

Intelligence

A number of terms, such as bright, fast-paced, used by teachers for some of their students are generally associated with intelligence (Gardner, 2017). Intelligence is the most important factor affecting student performance, and it affects school learning by 25 percent alone (Borich, 2017, p. 43). There are many definitions of intelligence. By explaining intelligence based on evolution, Piaget stressed adaptation and reaching to a state of balance in the biological sense (Piaget, 2016 p.14). On the other hand, Gardner explained intelligence with abilities shown in different fields. According to Gardner, completely different achievements cannot be explained by a single type of intelligence, so he expressed intelligence as different cognitive abilities managed by different parts of the brain (Gardner, 2017, p.125). Intelligence, according to Gardner, is not simply a skill that can be measured with paper and pencil. Thus, as intelligence influences learning,

it also influences how students illustrate their learning. Teachers need to use diverse assessments that address the differences in students' cognitive abilities and afford these students to engage in different assessment practices to learn and show their learning based on their cognitive abilities.

Culture

Students from different cultures can react differently to the teacher's behavior in the classroom. Various stimuli, such as proximity control, eye contact, and classroom order are perceived differently by different cultures. Consciously or not, because of the cultural differences, students feel close to some of their classmates and want to be in a group with them while they ran away for some of their classmates and do not feel comfortable with them (Borich, 2017 p.48). Culture affects people's way of thinking and influences information processing, interpretation and problem solving methods. Therefore, culture affects both one's learning process and the classroom assessment to be employed (Lee & Penfield, 2010). Researchers indicate that teachers need to consider cultural differences of learners when designing and applying assessment tasks and providing feedback to their students (Solano-Flores & Nelson-Barber, 2001). Students' cultures both influence how they interpret assessment items and the ways they response to the items because culture shape students' mind. Culture forms students' living environment and this environment influences students' developments and characteristics. Based on the sociocultural perspective, students socialize within the surrounded culture and the culture influence how they think, interpret and act on learning tasks. According to Flores and Nelson-Barber (2001), there are five areas that assessment developers and users, including teachers, should consider when developing and administrating assessment to address cultural diversity of students within classroom assessment. They are (a) student epistemology, (b) student language proficiency, (c) cultural world views, (d) cultural communication and socialization styles, and (e) student life context and values. As knowledge is a socially constructed concept, the areas Flores and Nelson-Barber (2001) indicate influence students' learning and also illustration of learning via classroom assessments.

Socioeconomic Status

When socioeconomic status is considered, not only the family's financial purchasing abilities but also all family-based factors that may affect the education life of the school-age child should be taken into account. Among these factors, the structure of the family, the place of the child in the family, access to technology and communication tools, health and nutrition conditions, and the relocation cyclin family can be counted. Considering that the child starts learning before school age, language and speaking skills are affected by the experiences that the family provides to the individual. The reading and speaking

skills of an individual who can access social networks, books, magazines, and cultural activities develops more easily and faster than an individual with limited access to them. What is striking here is that although the racial origin of the student does not have a strong effect on learning, the socioeconomic status does have a significant effect (Borich, 2017). Here, the structure of the family is also worth noting. Buldu and Olga (2018) examined some variables with the development of science literacy skills of 15-year-old students from Turkey based on the PISA results. The results of their study showed that there is a significant relationship between the education level of the family and student achievement. In this study, students' pre-school education was also examined. It was shown that starting pre-school education at the age of 2, 3, and 4 had a high positive effect on students' science literacy skills (Bulur & Olgan, 2018). Thus, we can say that the family's socioeconomic status a student lives in influences the student's achievement and accordingly influences student's interpretations and responses to assessment practices.

Language

Students ability to transfer their life outside of school which contributes to their academic development depends on the use of language. When a language is used in different ways at school and at home, a disconnection begins between home and school in student life (Borich, 2017). For this reason, the rate of similarity between the language used in the classroom and the language used at home also affects academic achievement (Oral & McGivney, 2014). Carson (2019) conducted a study using data from students whose native language is English and those who are not. Based on the results of the study, the difference in success between the two groups is undeniable and the achievement of English Language Learners (ELL) are lower than those of native speakers. Students who have to learn a language simultaneously with academic knowledge are struggling with difficulties that can be reflected in their education life due to traumas such as poverty, lack of parental support, lack of opportunities and migration. Similarly, Heaton and Afitska (2019), conducted a study with elementary level students whose native language is not English, and found that students had trouble using scientific terms and interpreting arguments correctly, and using visual elements. They especially suggested that scientific terms should be taught starting from the first grade. The language use in assessment tasks is also important and influences students' interpretations and ultimately responses to assessments. Therefore, it is suggested that the language used in the assessments needs to reflect the language used in the classroom. Also, teachers need to use clear, understandable and simple language in assessment tasks to support ELLs engagement in assessment processes to illustrate their learning (Lyon, 2013; Siegel, 2007).

Learning Style

Students have different learning styles, compatible with their personalities, which they

use to learn and show their learning. These learning styles vary among students in the same class (Özgen, Ay, Kılıç, Özsoy, & Alpay, 2017). Students may be susceptible to different learning styles due to their demographic background or even their gender alone. Female students prefer to use concrete life examples and male students prefer abstract conceptualization generally. Learning styles affect academic success in the classroom depending on the instructional strategies, contexts and activities that teachers make available for students (Kazu & Koç-Akran, 2018). It is important for teachers to consider variations of learning styles of their students when designing and practicing assessment tasks to evaluate and support their students' learning. The use of more diverse assessment methods can help teachers to address the needs of students with different learning styles. Teachers also need to handle different ways to provide individualized feedback to their students based on their learning styles.

Readiness and Prior Knowledge

Individuals try to make sense of the world and to structure new information thanks to their prior knowledge. The story of a small fish and a frog is told in the children story *Fish Is Fish*, published by Lionni in 1970. According to the story, the frog experiences the outside world for a while and when he returns a few days later, provides descriptions of the people, birds and other beings he saw to other fish. When the frog explains the traits of the different living beings, the fish always compares what the frog tells to the walking, winged or speckled fish using his prior knowledge and experience (Lionni, 1970). This story is very revealing in showing how important the prior knowledge and experiences of the fish play in understanding what the frog is telling, with its role corresponding to the teacher. According to the constructivist learning theory, students build new knowledge on the knowledge they already possess. Pre-existing knowledge may have been acquired at school and in everyday life via socialization. As long as the preliminary knowledge is compatible with new knowledge, it makes learning easier. In cases where it is incompatible, learning becomes difficult (Köseoğlu & Tümay, 2015). Since no student live the same life with their peers, a student cannot be equal with another in the classroom environment. Therefore, when using assessment for diagnostic purposes, teachers need to consider students' prior experiences to structure assessment items to elicit students' learning. Otherwise, students cannot provide usable knowledge that teachers use to base their instructional planning and practices.

Gender

Social roles prevent girls and boys from being equal in the classroom (Banks, 2010). Individuals form an understanding, a way of thinking and a lifestyle pattern that is centered on their gender from birth (Vatandaş, 2011). The study of Aslan (2017), conducted based on national exams results of Turkey, showed that females are more successful than males.

According to the author, this is due to the anxiety that unsuccessful female students will be forced to end their school life. There are also studies reporting that gender has no effect in the teaching environment (Horzum, Alper, 2006; Maden, Durukan, Akbaş, 2013). However, although it does not affect success, it was stated in these studies that gender affects teaching preferences and perceptions. Thus, gender is thought as a factor that influences people preference of assessment tasks. For example, as females like to talk more and feel comfortable when talking about concepts, they are more comfortable with oral exams than males. Therefore, teachers need to provide different assessment formats to offer students ways to engage and show their learning through assessment.

Special Needs

Although intellectual disability is generally the first thing comes to mind, there are also students with visual, hearing, orthopedic and types of disabilities in schools. These students are referred to as students with special needs. Students may not be able to participate in visual, auditory or physical learning and assessment activities depending on the type of special needs. They can learn more slowly. They may be restricted in some behaviors such as writing, reading, navigating the classroom, and speaking. These situations affect their participation in the learning environment, their learning rate, and their demonstration of what they have learned. Thus, countries have laws and regulations for the education and assessment of students with special needs. For example, these students are prepared for the type of instructional plans organized according to their needs and their assessments are also applied according to this plan. However, the system is not without problems. Accordingly, students with special needs cannot communicate effectively with their peers with an average development level, and schools are insufficient to encourage students in this direction. It is also stated that inclusive education, which aims to educate students with special needs with their peers without special needs, is not effectively implemented in schools (Demir & Kale, 2019).

Assessment activities should also be included in the regulation of educational environments for students with special needs. Evaluating all students with the same assessment tools in national exams creates some drawbacks. Although supporting visually and physically disabled students by providing transcripts and/or reader support in national exams eliminates some disadvantages, it does not solve the problems arising from the content of the question items. Particularly, using visual images and abstract concepts can cause bias in the assessment of students for some disability groups (Yılmaz, 2019). Student diversities have been the source of the development of different teaching strategies. Differentiated education that focuses on advancing the student from where they are located; inclusive education that envisages the education of students with special needs in the same class with their peers according to programs specially prepared for them; multicultural education that advocates that students from different cultures find

traces of their own culture in their school are examples of teaching approaches based on individual differences. In the same line, equitable assessment, sensitive assessment and fair assessment terms are used by researchers to address students of special needs in order to provide them effective assessment practices.

Research-Informed Principles for Successful Equitable Assessment Practices

Especially in multilingual countries, students whose mother language is different from the language of instruction consistently get lower grades than others (Hockings, 2008). Students' achievement is affected by the difference between the language spoken at home and the language spoken in the classroom (Oral & McGivney, 2014; Carson, 2019). Apart from language, there are also differences among students in many areas as mentioned above. These differences do not make it possible to achieve an active teaching or an effective assessment with a single method. At this point, the egalitarian assessment approach, which advocates for the ability of students to demonstrate what they have learned with the most appropriate method based on individual differences, emerged. Even though equitable assessment emerged due to difficulties arising from native language differences among students, this approach was adopted to encompass all individual differences that affect learning.

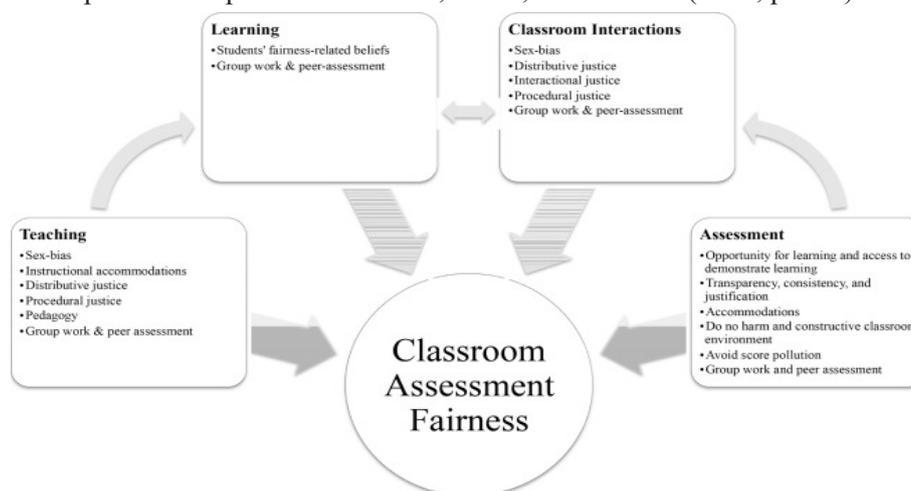
The equitable assessment approach is based on the principles of taking into account individual differences, assuring transparency, providing opportunities for every student to show what they have learned during assessment processes (Tierney, 2016). Standardized tests, particularly tests prepared with a single method, create advantages for some students and disadvantages for others, which prevents the provision of justice. Therefore, diversified assessment tools should be used to let all students show their learning (Barrance, 2019).

As the source of differences between students changed, researchers developed different definitions for equitable assessment. For example, Montenegro, Natasha and Jankowski (2020) reviewed the literature for equitable assessment and provided three different terms, including culturally sensitive assessment, socially fair assessment and critical assessment by focusing on different dimensions of equitable assessment. Culturally sensitive assessment refers to the inclusion of students in the assessment process by recognizing their cultural background. Socially fair assessment refers to assessment without biases that support students' learning, and critical assessment refers to an assessment approach that combines both cults. On the other hand, some researchers define equitable assessment based on two different points as justice and access. In the focus of justice, some assessments are compatible with the individual differences that students bring to the classroom. For example, a teacher who takes into account the difference in the native language, which is an individual difference, carries out the

learning process with an understandable language, uses a plain language suitable with the language of instruction in the assessment tools, and designs and uses different and enriched assessment tools. In the focus of access, it is important that all students have equal learning opportunities. For this purpose, targeted concepts can be explained and discussed in different ways, thus creating opportunities for learning and expression for each student (Lyon, 2013).

Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2018) found 6 different themes for equitable assessment based on the findings of the publications they examined meta-ethnographically in the focus of equitable/fair assessment. According to the authors, these themes or principles are important to provide equitable/fair assessment practices to learners. These themes are; a) allowing everyone to learn and show what they have learned, b) transparency, consistency and accountability in assessment, c) adapting educational activities or assessment activities that do not deviate from the target gains, d) not harming the student and their family in assessment and being constructive in the classroom, e) avoiding extracurricular evaluations and grading; and f) group work and peer reviews. In the aforementioned study, the authors argued that assessment should also be considered together with learning, teaching, and classroom interaction. More attention should be paid to the literacy of teachers. According to the relevant study findings, the authors proposed a model consisting of four elements for equitable/fair assessment. According to this model, in order to achieve equitable/fair assessment, learning, teaching, classroom interaction and assessment elements should be taken as a basis. When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the themes given above are interrelated. An understanding of justice that dominates the whole process is reflected for a fair payment, thus the learning-teaching process is intertwined with assessment.

Figure 1. Classroom assessment fairness in the intersection of four elements of classroom practice adapted from Rasooli, Zandi, and DeLuca (2018, p. 177).



Educators should take into account the individual differences of their students in assessment administration since the basis of the equitable assessment is based on this.

In this context, especially teachers, who are the guide of education, have more work. Teachers who believe that the differences between students can affect the learning process tailor their instruction according to their students' needs, while teachers who think that the differences between students will not affect success may plan their lessons without considering these differences (Lee, Luykx, Buxton, & Shaver, 2007). Thus, it is important for a successful equitable assessment practices to motivate teachers to change their conceptions of assessment to meet the needs of diverse students. However, this is not enough since teachers have difficulty equitably assessing their students' learning (Lyon, 2013). Teachers need guidelines, materials and examples of equitable assessment practices in order to change their traditional practices of assessment. In this context, Siegel, Wissehr ve Halverson (2008) provide a useful framework, *McCes-Sounds Like Success*, that includes some guiding principles to develop culturally and linguistically sensitive assessment tasks to assess student learning equitably. According to the authors, classroom assessments should be challenging but also inclusive and helpful for diverse learners. The authors provided five principles for teachers to develop and use such assessments to aid all their students' learning. They are; a) match the learning goals and the language of instruction, b) be comprehensible for English learners, both linguistically and culturally, c) challenge students to think about difficult ideas, d) elicit student understanding, e) scaffold the use of language and support student learning (Siegel et al., 2008, p.44). The authors also provided some recommendations such as using simplified language, providing extra time, reading questions aloud, using scaffolding, and allowing use of the dictionary to reduce language challenge for English learners without lowering content.

Similar suggestions are also provided by Lyon (2013) and Yang (2019) to support English learners' engagement in and illustration of learning. Yang (2019) indicates that language minorities have difficulties illustrating their understanding of content knowledge because of language barrier. Thus, assessment accommodations are emerged as a way for linguistically and culturally diverse learners to be assessed fairly. Assessment accommodation is known as the use of different alterations of an assessment task or assessment process without lowering content. Researchers indicated that assessment accommodations help language minorities more accurately reflect their content knowledge and increase their scores (Lopez, Guzman-Orth, & Turkan, 2019; Pennock-Roman & Rivera, 2011). Yang (2019) provided four principles for deciding what types of accommodations to use for language minorities. First, the accommodations should meet the needs of students. Thus, when deciding to choose an assessment accommodation, learners' language proficiency, cultures, native language, grade and age levels, and language of content areas need to be taken into account to provide the most appropriate accommodations. Second, collaborations of experts such as language teachers, classroom teachers and/or special education teachers are also important to make decision about the

proper assessment accommodations for language minorities. Third, use of some online programs can help teachers to decide how to provide changes to their assessments for their language minority students. STELLA (the selection taxonomy for English language learner accommodations) is an example of such online programs that help teachers find most suitable types of assessment accommodations for their students (Koran & Kopriva, 2017). Lastly, teachers also use some types of rubrics that researchers developed to guide their selection of accommodations for their students. These types of rubrics usually provide detailed criteria that guide teachers to analyze the planned accommodations to decide if the accommodations meet the needs of students. The Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) developed by Abedi and Ewers (2013) can be an example of such guidelines.

American Association for Higher Education also provides some guiding principles for educators to follow in order to fairly assess their student learning regardless of their differences. According to Suski (2000), director of the evaluation department of AAHE (American Association for Higher Education) in the USA, teachers need to follow seven steps in order to be fair in classroom assessments. The first step requires teachers to clearly state learning outcomes to share with students to inform them what they expected to learn. Second, match your assessments to what you teach because what knowledge and skills are focused on instruction also need to be assessed by assessment tasks. Third, use diverse assessment methods and assessment items to fit the needs of different learners. Fourth, helping students to learn how to complete the assessment task since some students may new to the types of provided tasks or they do not know how good responses to the assessment tasks look like. Fifth, engage and encourage your students since the relationship between students and teachers affects student performance. Therefore, teachers need to create an inclusive learning environment to make students feel comfortable, engage them, and show their learning. Sixth, interpret assessment results appropriately since assessing students is done for different purposes. For example, when choosing students for a chess tournament, it would be appropriate to select the best ones by ranking, or when finishing a training module, it should be evaluated whether they have gained the necessary competencies for the next module. If teaching is aimed at developing the student, it is necessary to see the student's progress according to the starting point. Finally, evaluate the validity of your assessments since assessment tools that are not clear enough or ambiguous to students may be assessing another trait that was not intended.

Conclusion

It is unfair for teachers to treat all students equally because not all students are equal. Students' learning styles, socio-economic standards, predominant intelligence areas, prior knowledge, and cultural structures that directly affect their perception of events and

concepts are different. Since the knowledge is structured in individuals' mind individual understanding can be expected to be different even after exposure to the same topic. Instead of trying to consider the students equal, the main goal should be to make students go further than where they are. Considering individual differences in terms of disability will also misguide teachers to disregard other individual differences of students. For these reasons, disability should be considered only one of the dimensions of individual difference among others in order to fairly assess and aid all students' learning.

Assessment in teaching should also be student-centered, aligning with the student-centered teaching approach. Just as shoes bought from a store will not fit every foot, not every assessment tool will fit every student. For this reason, assessment methods should be diversified based on student needs. Teachers need to avoid using only paper and pencil tests, and assess the students' performances and progress from the beginner levels (Yabaş & Altun, 2009; Suskie, 2000). Time can be saved by determining the commonalities across students and developing assessment tools according to these common points. Furthermore, assessments that requires students to work in groups will be fairer than assessments applied equally to all students (Lee & Penfield, 2010, Siegel, Roberts, Freyermuth, Witzig & Izci, 2015).

Changing teachers' traditional practices of classroom assessment is not an easy task. Firstly, we need to support teachers to comprehend aims, contents and ways in which equitably assessing student learning. Second, it is important for teachers to believe that equitable assessment is a useful and doable endeavor. Third, researchers need to support teachers by providing guiding rules, materials and examples of equitable assessments to facilitate teachers' practices. Lastly, teachers should constantly strive to find ways to develop sensitive assessments to meet diverse students' needs.

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