

## **Reflections on TCCRISLS 2014: Roundtable on Learning-Oriented Assessment in Language Classrooms and Large-Scale Assessment Contexts**

**Heidi Han-Ting Liu**

*Teachers College, Columbia University*

Teachers College, Columbia University in the City of New York hosted the 3rd Roundtable in Second Language Studies featuring learning-oriented assessment (LOA) in October, 2014. The three-day conference oversaw a total of 19 presentations, including six theoretical papers on LOA in applied linguistics, three theoretical papers on LOA in mainstream education, three application papers on LOA, and seven empirical papers of LOA, as well as two discussant sessions. The theme, learning-oriented assessment (LOA), addresses the recent shift of focus in assessments from teacher-centered to learner-centered, proposing how assessment can, and probably should, facilitate learning. A well-embraced definition of LOA is suggested by Turner and Purpura (2015):

An LOA approach highlights learning goals, performance evaluation and feedback, and the role they play in developing individual learning progressions. In fact, an assessment cannot really be considered “learning-oriented” until evidence is available to demonstrate that feedback or other assistance related to a learning goal has led in some way to L2 system change (section 3, para. 1).

While the presentations discussed LOA from various perspectives, they all evolved around the framework of LOA proposed by Purpura and Turner (2013, 2014; Turner & Purpura, 2015): the contextual dimension, the elicitation dimension, the L2 proficiency dimension, the learning dimension, the instructional dimension, the interactional dimension, and the affective dimension. Each of the seven related, yet individual dimensions of LOA attempts to explore the nature of LOA from a different angle that is essential to teaching, learning, and assessment. For example, the elicitation dimension in particular looks at the roles of planned language elicitation activities (e.g., textbook exercises, unit achievement tests) and unplanned language elicitation activities (e.g., spontaneous teacher-student interactions) in the classroom, and how these elicitation activities may affect learner progressions in the long run. It should be noted that the framework of LOA is not restricted to classroom settings. As demonstrated in some of the presentations at TCCRISLS 2014, in recent years, large-scale standardized assessment traditionally used for collecting summative information, have also been investigated for its use in providing formative information to assist learning.

In this forum, we invited seven contributors to reflect upon the trend of LOA as portrayed in TCCRISLS 2014. Lauren Wyner overviews the nature of learning-oriented assessment from a historical perspective. Melissa Renee Smith discusses the importance of the contextual dimension in the LOA framework, and how it was addressed at the Roundtable. Catherine Heil touches upon the proficiency dimension through the lens of learner KSAs (i.e., knowledge, skills, and abilities). Jorge Beltrán examines the learning dimension in LOA by looking at the interrelationships between learning, teaching, and assessment. Anna Ciriani Dean discusses the role of the interactional dimension and illustrates how interaction exists both within and beyond

the classroom settings. Michelle Stabler-Havener takes on one of the least discussed and yet the most fundamental– the affective dimension– and talks about how affect influences not only the learning process, but also teaching as well as test administration. Last but not least, Siân Morgan adopts an integrated approach by examining how several dimensions of LOA can be found in large-scale testing, in particular the Cambridge English Language Assessment.

## REFERENCES

- Purpura, J. E., & Turner, C. E. (2013). *Learning-oriented assessment in classrooms: A place where SLA, interaction, and language assessment interface*. ILTA/AAAL Joint Symposium on “LOA in classrooms.”
- Purpura, J. E., & Turner, C. E. (2014, October). *A learning-oriented assessment approach to understanding the complexities of classroom-based language assessment*. Presentation at the Roundtable on Learning-Oriented Assessment in Language Classrooms and Large-Scale Contexts, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.
- Turner, C. E., & Purpura, J. E. (2015). Learning-oriented assessment in the classroom. In D. Tsagari & J. Banerjee (Eds.). *Handbook of second language assessment*. Berlin, Germany/Boston, MA: DeGruyter Mouton.

## COMMENTARIES

1. Learning-oriented assessment: An introduction  
Lauren Wyner
2. Learning-oriented assessment: The contextual dimension  
Melissa Renee Smith
3. Learning-oriented assessment: The proficiency dimension  
Catherine Heil
4. Learning-oriented assessment: The learning dimension  
Jorge Beltrán
5. The interactional dimension of LOA: Within and Beyond the classroom  
Anna Ciriani Dean
6. Learning-oriented assessment: The affective dimension  
Michelle Stabler-Havener
7. Learning-oriented assessment in large-scale testing  
Siân Morgan