

Classroom-Based Language Assessment and L2 Learning

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, there has been a call for an interface between assessment practices and second language (L2) learning, and this call has come from both testing specialists (e.g., Purpura, 2011) and second language acquisition researchers (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2003). One area where a crossing point seems to have occurred is in classroom-based language assessment and, in specific, formative assessment. Rea-Dickins (2008) writes that a greater alignment of research in the areas of formative assessment and second language acquisition may give theorists, researchers, and practitioners a clearer understanding of language development in the classroom. Phrases such as *learning-oriented language assessment* (Purpura, 2004), *assessment for learning* (Black *et al.*, 2003), and *assessment as learning* (Rea-Dickins, 2008) have been coined to emphasize the formative purposes, and highlight the learning aspect, of these classroom-based assessment practices.

Taking note of this call, various studies have surveyed techniques, strategies, and teacher-student perceptions and roles as they relate to classroom-based assessment and L2 learning (e.g., Cheng and Wang, 2007), explored the multiple purposes and definitions of diagnostic assessment (e.g., Huhta, 2007), investigated issues surrounding assessment episodes in the context of young L2 learners (e.g., Rea-Dickins, 2000), looked into the relationship among discourse, assessment, and L2 learning (e.g., Leung and Mohan, 2004), and examined interaction and L2 development in the context of classroom-based assessment using a Sociocultural Theory approach (Poehner, 2007). Throughout, it has been argued that classroom-based language assessment is used by teachers not only to obtain information about students' L2 attainment and progress but also to contribute to their students' L2 learning.

With a considerable body of literature now established, the editors of *Teachers College, Columbia University Working Papers in TESOL & Applied Linguistics* decided to ask seven contributors to review and discuss, from various perspectives, a few aspects of or issues related to the "formative" potential of classroom-based language assessment. This has led to this forum and to the seven commentaries that follow.

In the first two contributions, the important role of feedback and the role of the teacher in classroom-based language assessment practices are discussed. In the first, Elizabeth Böttcher, drawing from both general and language education, provides definitions of formative and learning-oriented assessments and considers the efficacy of feedback types used in such assessment practices. In the second, Yoonah Seong reflects on teacher cognition and competence as they relate to and inform classroom-based assessment practices. In the third contribution, Nesrine Basheer looks at classroom-based language assessment in an Arabic as a Foreign Language (AFL) context and considers theoretical and practical issues. Next, Saerhim Oh considers the special characteristics of young L2 learners and discusses how these characteristics necessitate a special approach to L2 learning and classroom-based assessments. Then, Ian Blood probematizes the practice of diagnostic assessment in the L2 classroom by asking a series of

questions about its usefulness. Finally, the last two discussions focus on two very different approaches to formative assessment: Christos Theodoropoulos examines formative assessment and L2 learning from a cognitive processing perspective while Payman Vafaei, taking a sociocultural view of L2 learning, presents and outlines the basic tenets of *Dynamic Assessment*.

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COMMENTARIES

[Assessment For Learning: The Role of Feedback](#)

by Elizabeth Böttcher

[The Teacher's Role in Classroom-based Language Assessment](#)

by Yoonah Seong

[Classroom-based Language Assessment: The Case of TAFL](#)

by Nesrine Basheer

[Classroom-based Language Assessment for Young Language Learners](#)

by Saerhim Oh

[Diagnostic Second Language Assessment in the Classroom](#)

by Ian Blood

[Formative Assessment: A Cognitive Perspective](#)

by Christos Theodoropoulos

[Dynamic Assessment: A Dialectical Integration of Assessment and Instruction](#)

by Payman Vafae