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Research summary of assessment for learning





Introduction

The following reports on the research and literature on formative assessment/assessment for learning (the two terms are used synonymously below). It is divided into three main sections.

The first reviews the generic research, which is applicable to all subject areas of teaching. That begins with the comprehensive survey by Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam, which summarized the literature from 1988 to 1997, and ends with a 2015 article by Paul Black that assesses some current research, and uses it as a starting point for a reflection on the state of the field today. The second section reviews research on assessment for learning in language teaching. The final section, 'Further Resources', makes suggestions for further reading and research. The report ends with some brief concluding comments.

General research

Article title:

Assessment and classroom learning

Authors: Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam

Affiliation: King's College London, School of Education¹

Precis:

A seminal and exhaustive literature review on classroom formative assessment, written at a time when the term 'formative assessment' did not have 'a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning'. It looks at formative assessment by teachers in their school or college classrooms and defines it broadly as 'encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged'. It surveys 250 publications mostly from 1988 to 1997 and includes evidence based on work in classrooms by teachers as well as work outside of normal classroom conditions.

The article is divided into seven sections. In the first, 'Examples in evidence', eight selected pieces of research about the effectiveness of formative assessment are described. The ages of students in the studies ranged from five-year-olds in kindergarten to college students, in countries including Portugal, the USA, and Israel, and in subjects including mathematics and science (where a specific subject area is stated). With provisos the authors conclude that 'the consistent feature across the variety of these examples is that they all show that attention to formative assessment can lead to significant learning gains'. They found no reports of negative effects.

The remaining sections are analytical: 'Assessment by teachers' gives an account of evidence regarding the current state of formative assessment practice among teachers at that time; 'Students and formative assessment' focuses on the student perspective and role; 'Strategies and tactics for teachers' focuses on the teachers' role; 'Systems' discusses teaching systems in which formative assessment has a role, for example mastery learning and curriculum-based assessment; 'Feedback' assesses the nature of feedback, the quality of which is identified as crucial to the success of formative assessment; the final section, 'Prospects for the theory and practice of formative assessment', points the way forward for researchers.

Source: *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 1198: 7–74, Carfax Publishing Ltd. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0969595980050102>

Link: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0969595980050102>

¹ All affiliations given were those at the time of the work's original publication.

Article title:

Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom assessment

Authors: Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam

Affiliation: King's College London, School of Education

Precis:

The Assessment Reform Group (ARG) was active from 1989 to 2010. It comprised a team of voluntary researchers funded by the Nuffield Foundation with the aim of making sure that assessment policy and practice were based on relevant research evidence. This article is by two members of the ARG and focuses on formative assessment.

In this very accessible report, the authors theorize the classroom as a black box: inputs from outside, such as pupils, teachers, tests, are fed in; outputs follow. The report looks inside the box, focusing on one aspect that is crucial for effective teaching – formative assessment.

The article sets out to answer three key questions, which also form its structure of three main sections:

Is there evidence that improving formative assessment raises standards?

Is there evidence that there is room for improvement?

Is there evidence about how to improve formative assessment?

The first article reviewed above, 'Assessment and classroom learning', forms the evidentiary basis for this summary, upon which the authors conclude that the answer to all three of these questions is

affirmative. This summary focuses on 'the nature and force' of that evidence and aims to justify this conclusion.

The first section summarizes the evidence for the raising of standards. The authors conclude that the studies they surveyed for the full review reveal that innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant, and often substantial, learning gains. They give details of how these gains are measured, and highlight another important feature of the studies: that better formative assessment helps low attainers more than other learners. Thus improvements in formative assessment spread attainment as well as increasing its level.

The remaining two main sections look at the obstacles, shortcomings, and negative factors in everyday assessment practice, and ways to improve formative assessment in the classroom, for example instilling a culture of success, training pupils in self- and peer-assessment, and how to foster effective teaching. The article closes with recommendations for policy and practice, including a four-point scheme for development, as well as recommendations for future research.

Source: BERA short Final Draft 11, 6 November 2001. A version of the document, amended for readers in the USA, has been published in the journal *Phi Delta Kappan* 80(2), October 1998: 139–148. Now also available in booklet form from: <http://www.g1-assessment.co.uk/products/inside-black-box>

Link: <https://weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf>

Article title:

Assessment for learning: Beyond the black box

Authors: Assessment Reform Group, comprising Professor Patricia Broadfoot (University of Bristol), Professor Richard Daugherty (University of Wales, Aberystwyth), Professor John Gardner (Queen's University, Belfast), Professor Caroline Gipps (Kingston University), Professor Wynne Harlen (formerly Scottish Council for Research in Education), Dr Mary James (University of Cambridge), Dr Gordon Stobart (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority)

Precis:

The authors begin by citing Black and William 1998, and assert that their review proved 'without a shadow of a doubt' that effective informal classroom assessment involving constructive feedback to the learner will raise attainment levels. They further note that the scale of the effect of assessment in raising pupil achievement identified in that paper would be equivalent to between one and two grades at GCSE for an individual pupil.

So, the pamphlet starts from a twofold premise: that used in the right way assessment for learning is a powerful educational tool but also that this value has already been widely recognized. However, because research shows that classroom practice does not live up to this principle, this pamphlet focuses on policy and practice in order to help teachers to actually use assessment effectively in the classroom to enhance pupil achievement.

The first section, 'The problem', looks at the barriers to successful assessment in the classroom. The next section, 'The evidence from research', focuses on Black and Wiliam 1998 and gives a useful summary of its findings, including the five key factors in improving learning through assessment, as well as inhibiting factors. 'The evidence from inspections' looks at further evidence of how practice falls short. 'Assessment for learning in

practice' outlines the characteristics of assessment that promote learning, in order to distinguish it from other kinds of assessment and so as to avoid the misconception that what is already being done is sufficient. This section also examines and defines key terms, such as 'formative' and 'diagnostic' and finishes by looking at what goes on in classrooms where assessment is being used to help pupils learn. The next section, 'What can government and its agencies do?', offers practical suggestions for changes in government assessment policies, covering such areas as Initial Teacher Training, Continuing Professional Development, the school curriculum, and inspection. The pamphlet concludes with a six-point plan of proposals.

Source: University of Cambridge School of Education, 1999. Now available for download from the Nuffield Foundation: <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group>

Link: http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/beyond_blackbox.pdf

Article title:

Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom

Authors and affiliations:

Paul Black, Christine Harrison (Department of Education and Professional Studies, King's College London), Clare Lee (Warwickshire County Council), Bethan Marshall (Department of Education and Professional Studies, King's College London), and Dylan Wiliam (Learning and Teaching Research Center, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ)

Precis:

The results of one of several follow-up projects based on the findings in Black and Wiliam 'Inside the black box' in which groups of teachers were supported in developing innovative classroom practices. The project took place in Oxfordshire and Medway in southern England. Each district chose three secondary schools and each school selected two science and two mathematics teachers to participate. In January 1999, the King's-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project (KMOFAP) began. While at the outset the project worked with maths and science teachers, it was expanded to involve teachers of English in the participating schools and teachers of other subjects in other schools.

For the nineteen teachers for whom researchers had complete data, 'improvements, produced across a school would raise a school in the lower quartile of the national performance tables to well above average'. The article focuses on the outcomes of the project and draws conclusions based on them about how to make change happen. It sets out the main findings from the project about classroom work in four areas: questioning, feedback through grading, peer- and self-assessment, and the formative use of summative tests. In each area it gives suggestions for action based on the teachers' experiences, and then reflects on some deeper underlying issues such as learning theory and subject differences. It closes with recommendations and guidance on how to improve classroom learning.

Source: Black, Paul, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall, and Dylan Wiliam, Working inside the black box: Assessment for learning in the classroom, Phi Delta Kappan, 86(1), September 2004: 9–21. Originally published by GL Assessment, 2002. Also now available in booklet form from: <http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/working-inside-black-box>

Link: http://datause.cse.ucla.edu/DOCS/pb_wor_2004.pdf

The findings of the KMOFAP project were published in the following four research articles and book:

Black, Paul, and Dylan Wiliam (2003). 'In praise of educational research': Formative assessment, *British Educational Research Journal*, 29: 623–637: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/82510.pdf>

Lee, Clare, and Dylan Wiliam (2003). Studying changes in the practice of two teachers developing assessment for learning, *Teacher Development*, 9(2): 265–283: <http://eprints.ioe.ac.uk/1145/>

Wiliam, Dylan, Clare Lee, Christine Harrison, and Paul Black (2004). Teachers developing assessment for learning: Impact on student achievement, *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 11: 49–65: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0969594042000208994>

Harrison, Christine (2005). Teachers developing assessment for learning: Mapping teacher change, *Teacher Development*, 9: 255–264: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13664530500200251>

Black, Paul, Christine Harrison, Clare Lee, Bethan Marshall, and Dylan Wiliam (2003) *Assessment for Learning: Putting It into Practice*, Maidenhead: Open University Press: <http://oro.open.ac.uk/24157/>

Article title:

Formative assessment: Can the claims for effectiveness be substantiated?

Authors: Randy Elliot Bennett

Affiliation: The Educational Testing Service, Princeton, NJ

Precis:

The author begins by noting how formative assessment has become a key theme in primary and secondary education, with strong claims for effect-sizes of between .4 and .7 standard deviations being most commonly cited ('a gain that is roughly double the average growth US children in the upper primary to lower secondary grades would be expected to make on standardized tests in a school year'), and some claiming effects of up to 2 standard deviations. He traces these claims back to the two key Black and Wiliam works reviewed at the start of this report, among others. While he agrees that effectiveness of research in primary and secondary schools does suggest practices associated with formative assessment can, with the right conditions, help learning, he characterizes these claims for effect-sizes as 'a misinterpretation that has arguably become the educational equivalent of urban legend'. He nevertheless states that the 1998 Black and Wiliam article for Assessment in Education is a very valuable qualitative synthesis.

This paper examines the evidence for these claims and makes suggestions for what the author sees as more responsible ways of representing the effectiveness of formative assessment. The basis of this, according to the author, would be a stronger definition of the term 'formative assessment' than existed at the time of writing (something that Black and Wiliam also noted as lacking in their 1998 Assessment in Education article).

Source: This paper is adapted from R.E. Bennett (2009) A critical look at the meaning and basis of formative assessment (RM- 09-06). Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.

Link: http://www.iaea.info/documents/paper_4d5260ae.pdf

A later article by the same author further develops his ideas around the lack of a well-defined set of practices:

Formative assessment: A critical review, Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 18(1), 2011: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0969594X.2010.513678?scroll=top&needAccess=true>



Article title:

What is the nature of evidence that makes a difference to learning?

Authors: John Hattie

Affiliation: University of Auckland

Precis:

The author of this conference presentation, a researcher in education and Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute, begins by noting that huge volumes of data are collected from schools but teaching carries on in the meantime without benefiting from them. The presentation's key theme is that accountability models for schools, teachers, and students are needed that are located at the system and school level so as to enhance learning and outcomes, and, more specifically, this system must start from the student level upwards. The author proceeds to outline such a system, the asTTle (Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning) model. In the process, he raises the issue that if it were possible to summarize all the studies on what makes a difference to student achievement, you would find only a few that did not report some success. To put it another way, nearly everything seems to enhance achievement, so the question becomes whether those effects can be enhanced by more than the average.

In sum, while this paper discusses the role of assessment, its focus is much more broadly on the development of an evidence-based accountability model that will help teachers determine the nature of evidence and use it to make a difference to learning.

Source: Hattie, John (2005) What is the nature of evidence that makes a difference to learning? Australian Council for Educational Research: http://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference_2005/7 <http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/inside-black-box>

Link: http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=research_conference_2005f

More information about this author and his various publications can be found at the following website, which features practical classrooms resources, videos, etc.:

<http://visible-learning.org/>

Article title:

Formative assessment: Improving learning in secondary classrooms

Authors: OECD

Precis:

The OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) studied the use of formative assessment in Australia, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Italy, New Zealand, and Scotland. It also collated reviews covering English-, French-, and German-language research literature. This *Policy Brief* is the result.

The *Brief* starts from the premise that the OECD has found that the gains in achievement associated with formative assessment are among the largest reported for educational interventions, but furthermore that it improves 'the equity of student outcomes' in that gains are particularly high for students who had previously underachieved.

The document briefly outlines the key elements for the successful use of formative assessment in secondary schools, as well as obstacles to practice, for which teachers' practical solutions are offered. It describes policy trends in the various countries studied and makes recommendations. It closes by raising the question of whether formative assessment can be used to benefit adult learners.

Source: OECD, November 2005, *Policy Brief*

Link: <https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/35661078.pdf>

Article title:

The national strategies: A review of impact

Authors: Ofsted

Precis:

A report that evaluates the effectiveness of various aspects of the National Strategies' programme, including assessment for learning; and which takes into account how local and regional leaders and managers judged their impact. The report notes that while National Strategies' initiatives have had some successes with individual teachers, departments, groups of pupils, and schools, when measured against nationally agreed targets for 2011, progress in improvements has been too slow.

In autumn 2008 Ofsted inspectors visited twelve local authorities, and met with nine senior regional directors from the National Strategies programme, and between December 2008 and March 2009 thirty-three primary and twenty-one secondary schools were subsequently visited. The majority of schools involved were positive about some aspects of the National Strategies' programme, and assessment for learning was among those most frequently mentioned.

The report summarizes the key findings, including that while the National Strategies have contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning, evaluating the impact of their various initiatives has been difficult for schools and local authorities. The report goes on to make recommendations.

Source: Ofsted, February 2010

Link: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/1102/1/The%20National%20Strategies%20a%20review%20of%20impact.pdf>

Article title:

Assessment for learning: The impact of national strategy support

Authors: Ofsted

Precis:

An earlier Ofsted survey that evaluates the impact of the National Strategies' approaches specifically to assessment for learning primarily in English and mathematics. The sample comprised twenty-seven primary and sixteen secondary schools inspected between April and December 2007. It also touches on other subjects, including art, physical education, ICT, and modern languages, in the last of which it found the best assessment to have been built into lessons, for example in the form of teachers listening in on students working in pairs, and regular evaluation by students of each other's work.

It found that the impact on achievement and provision was no better than average for nearly two-thirds of the schools (outstanding in five schools, good in eleven, satisfactory in twenty, inadequate in seven), although it was better developed in primary than in secondary schools, in the best examples of which approaches to assessment for learning were consistent and the schools could show a clear link between regular assessment and raised achievement levels. The report evaluates the factors determining the varying impact, quoting extensively from inspectors' reports and giving examples from particular schools; it goes on to summarize key findings and to make recommendations.

One key finding was that the most important factor in effective assessment for learning was very strong direction from senior staff based on a whole-school vision combined with assessment for learning being prioritized in the schools' improvement plans as well as being a key element of their training programmes. Another was that where practice was less effective, this was due to teachers not having understood sufficiently how the approaches were meant to improve pupil achievement. In short 'Sustained, consistent and well understood assessment principles and practices had a demonstrable impact on pupils' achievement.'

Source: Ofsted, October 2008

Link: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9309/1/Assessment%20for%20learning%20-%20the%20impact%20of%20National%20Strategy%20support.pdf>

Article title:

A critical review of research on formative assessment: The limited scientific evidence of the impact of formative assessment in education

Authors: Karee E. Dunn and Sean W. Mulvenon

Affiliation: University of Arkansas

Precis:

The authors identify a lack of scientifically based evidence that formative assessment contributes to positive learning outcomes as well as of an agreed-upon lexicon, and they call into question methodological approaches. Nevertheless, they state that 'It is difficult to hypothesize, and somewhat irresponsible to conclude that the use of formative assessments does not provide information to help improve instructional practices or student outcomes in classrooms'. Thus the article sets out to clarify terminology and to critically analyse the literature. In sum the authors do not argue against the importance of formative evaluation but rather state that 'limited empirical evidence exists to support the "best practices" for formative evaluation'.

Source: Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 14(7), March 2009

Link: <http://pareonline.net/pdf/v14n7.pdf>

Article title:

Formative assessment – an optimistic but incomplete vision

Authors: Paul Black

Affiliation: King's College London

Precis:

The closing article of a special issue of the journal *Assessment in Education* on 'Assessment for Learning: Lessons Learned from Large-Scale Evaluations of Implementations' (large-scale in the sense of involving national policy or involving relatively large numbers of schools and teachers) whose articles describe projects in eight different countries (Chile, Scotland, Norway, Singapore, Trinidad & Tobago, Sweden, Canada, and USA) aimed at implementing and improving the practice of formative assessment (see below and <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/taie20/22/1?nav=toCList> for the Table of Contents).

The author, Paul Black, who also co-wrote the landmark survey 'Assessment and classroom learning', reviewed above, notes that the articles in the issue are 'evidence of that review's impact in their description of how that publication has influenced policy and practices in eight different countries'. However, the picture that emerges from them is not one of overall success.

The article goes on to summarize the key problematic issues identified across three main sections: the first on the roles of both formative and summative assessment; the second on the specific ways in which assessment feedback helps learners in becoming reflective and independent; the third on how assessments present teachers with challenges. As well as the evidence from the eight countries it draws on the ARG's KMOFAP project (King's-Medway-Oxfordshire Formative Assessment Project), described in 'Working inside the black box', reviewed above.

Source: *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 22(1), 2015: 161–177

Link: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/0969594X.2014.999643?needAccess=true>



The other articles in the special issue are as follows:

Editorial: Large-scale implementation of Assessment for Learning

Therese N. Hopfenbeck and Gordon Stobart

Systems, ideologies and history: A three-dimensional absence in the study of assessment reform processes [Chile]

María Teresa Flórez Petour

Assessment is learning: The preposition vanishes [Scotland]

Louise Hayward

Balancing tensions in educational policy reforms: Large-scale implementation of assessment for learning in Norway

Therese N. Hopfenbeck, María Teresa Flórez Petour, and Astrid Tolo

Large-scale implementation of formative assessment practices in an examination-oriented culture [Singapore]

Christina Tong Li Ratnam-Lim and Kelvin Heng Kiat Tan

The promise and reality of formative assessment practice in a continuous assessment scheme: The case of Trinidad and Tobago

Jerome De Lisle

Evaluating a large-scale implementation of assessment for learning in Sweden

Anders Jonsson, Christian Lundahl, and Anders Holmgren

Instructional rounds as a professional learning model for systemic implementation of assessment for learning [Canada]

Christopher DeLuca, Don Klingler, Jamie Pyper, and Judy Woods

The fidelity of formative assessment implementation: Issues of breadth and quality [USA]

E. Caroline Wylie and Christine J. Lyon

Research focused on language teaching

Article title:

Snares and silver bullets: Disentangling the construct of formative assessment

Authors and affiliations:

Pauline Rea-Dickins (University of Bristol) and Sheena Gardner (University of Warwick)

Precis:

An article from the Language Testing special issue (see below: Further Resources) that looks at formative assessment (with an emphasis on observation-driven teacher assessment) in a primary school language learning context (ages five to seven). It is based on research at nine UK inner-city schools where intervention projects aimed to address low levels of achievement in English and makes particular reference to learners for whom English is an Additional Language. The article begins with a short literature review on formative assessment as it relates specifically to language teaching, and then goes on to analyse school-based assessment data, including how assessment data are used by teachers, the nature of assessment activity, and factors likely to influence variations in learner performance (which can lead to unreliable results).

One of the authors' key arguments is that 'the distinctions between formative and summative assessment are not as straightforward as typically portrayed and that the interplay between reliability and validity for purposes of class-based assessment is highly complex' – one of the 'snares' of the article's title. They note that formative assessment is nevertheless appealing to teachers – the 'silver bullet'.

In conclusion they point to future research questions and identify the conditions of language learning as crucial: Will there be differences in patterns of assessment in the foreign language learning classroom, for example, and that for learners with EAL? Will a separate literature, research, and praxis be needed?

Source: *Language Testing*, 17(2), 2000: 215–243

Link: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/17/2/215.abstract>

Article title:

Current research and professional practice: Reports of work in progress into the assessment of young language learners

Authors: Pauline Rea-Dickins

Affiliation: University of Bristol

Precis:

An introduction to the 'Work in Progress' section of the special issue of *Language Testing* detailed below. Prof. Rea-Dickins asserts that 'In all fields, only a limited proportion of activity is formally reported in journals and books. This is especially the case in the rapidly expanding area of primary foreign language teaching where there is, simultaneously, evidence of considerable innovation as well as a lack of clarity on some fundamental issues'. Her article thus offers a brief summary of such research including the Zangl, Hasselgren, and Gattullo (reviewed below) articles in the special issue, with a view to presenting examples of innovation in the assessment of young language learners.

Source: *Language Testing*, 17(2), 2000: 215–243

Link: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/17/2/245.full.pdf+html>

Article title:

Formative assessment in ELT primary (elementary) classrooms: An Italian case study

Authors: Francesca Gattullo

Affiliation: Università di Bologna and Università di Trieste, Italy

Precis:

This article gives an account of some research that describes the classroom implementation of assessment in three Italian primary schools. Four teachers and seventy children aged eight to ten were involved. The author presents her findings on how formative assessment is being interpreted and applied by EFL teachers in the classes she observed. The data analysed indicate that 'some formative assessment actions are more common than others (i.e., questioning, correcting, judging), at the expense of those that could be considered more beneficial for learning (e.g., observing process, examining product, metacognitive questioning).'

Source: *Language Testing*, 17(2), 2000: 215–243

Link: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/17/2/278.full.pdf+html>

Other work by Gattullo includes:

Gattullo, Francesca, and Gabriele Pallotti (1999) Baseline study on FLT to young learners in Italy, in Marianne Nikolov and Helena Curtain (eds.), *An Early Start: Young Learners and Modern Languages in Europe and Beyond*, European Council for Modern Languages: <http://www.ecml.at/tabid/277/PublicationID/47/Default.aspx>

Gattullo, F. (2000) Corrective feedback and teaching style: Exploring a relationship, in J. Moon and M. Nikolov (eds.), *Research into Teaching English to Young Learners. International Perspectives: An edited Collection of Papers from Two Conferences*, University Press PECS:

http://www.academia.edu/18853040/Research_into_teaching_English_to_young_learners_International_perspectives

Article title:

The effects of self-assessment among young learners of English

Authors: Yuko Goto Butler and Jiyoung Lee

Affiliation: University of Pennsylvania, USA

Precis:

The authors note that many countries have begun foreign language teaching at elementary level, with English as the typical target language. Furthermore, a number of governments have preferred non-traditional or so-called alternative forms of assessment such as classroom observation, and self- and peer-assessments (all typical of formative assessment) over more traditional achievement tests for young learners.

This study analysed the effectiveness of self-assessment in Korea among 250 6th grade students of English as a foreign language in two public elementary schools with very different socio-economic backgrounds. Korea was chosen for several reasons, including because the government has promoted formative assessment in foreign language instruction at elementary schools' (FLES) programmes, and because the highly uniform implementation of such programmes facilitates comparison. The young learners were asked to perform regular self-assessment in English classes for one semester. The authors give a quantitative analysis of their results and also touch on perceptions among teachers and pupils regarding the assessments.

The researchers found that over time the pupils' ability to self-assess improved and their quantitative analysis found marginal but positive effects on their English performance and confidence in learning. They examine the contextual and individual factors that may explain the limited nature of the effects (including varying perceptions of assessment, feedback, and measurement criteria).

Source: *Language Testing*, 27(1), 2010

Link: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/27/1/5.abstract>

Article title:

A sociocultural perspective on assessment for learning: The case of a Malaysian primary school ESL context

Authors: Sedigeh Abbasnasab Sardareh and Mohd Rashid Mohd Saad

Affiliation: Faculty of Education, University of Malaya

Precis:

A socio-cultural study of how assessment for learning is viewed in a Malaysian primary school ESL context. It begins by introducing 'assessment for learning' as a concept and traces its origins. It then outlines the Malaysian primary education system and, in particular, the 2011 introduction of the new Primary School Standard Curriculum and the implementation of a new English syllabus within that, plus the role of assessment for learning. It then introduces the qualitative study in a Kuala Lumpur school and presents its findings. The authors conclude by highlighting elements they found to be important in the process of assessment for learning, including feedback, collaboration, reflection, active learning, and scaffolding among others.

Source: *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 66 (2012): 343–353

Link: http://ac.els-cdn.com/S1877042812052627/1-s2.0-S1877042812052627-main.pdf?_tid=16957d16-75c2-11e6-9b13-00000aacb362&acdnat=1473338894_d5cd5ad9b58980b28dbd060258901ea3

Further resources

Articles, reports, and chapters in books:

Michael Scriven is said to have coined the terms 'formative' and 'summative' in relation to assessment in the following work:

Scriven, M. (1967). The methodology of evaluation. In R.W. Tyler, R.M. Gagné, and M. Scriven (eds.), *Perspectives of curriculum evaluation* (Vol. 1, pp. 39–83). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

The following two articles formed the baseline for the 1998 Black and Wiliam review:

Natriello, G. (1987) The impact of evaluation processes on students, *Educational Psychologist*, 22: 155–175.

Crooks, T.J. (1988) The impact of classroom evaluation practices on students, *Review of Educational Research*, 58: 438–448

To complement the generic approaches and strategies in research into assessment for learning, applicable to all subject areas, the following article examines two specific lessons observed by the authors: a mathematics and an English class (which studied Henry V). The article compares the lessons in order to see how the differences between the subjects affect the application of formative assessment:

Hodgen, Jeremy, and Bethan Marshall (2005) Assessment for English and mathematics: A Comparison, *The Curriculum Journal*, 16(2): <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09585170500135954>

The following is a selection of articles focusing either on very specific aspects of formative assessment and their efficacy in language learning contexts, or on the efficacy of formative assessment more generally but in specific aspects of second-language teaching contexts:

Baleghizadeh, Sasan, and Atieh Masoun (2013) The effect of self-assessment on EFL learners' self-efficacy, *TESL Canada Journal*, 31(1): <http://www.teslcanadajournal.ca/tesl/index.php/tesl/article/view/1166/986>

Burner, Tony (2015) Formative assessment of writing in English as a foreign language, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00313831.2015.1066430>

Davison, Chris (2007) Views from the chalkface: English language school-based assessment in Hong Kong, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 4(1): 37–68: <http://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/57428/1/134517.pdf?accept=1>

de Saint Léger, D. (2009). Self-assessment of speaking skills and participation in a foreign language class, *Foreign Language Annals*, 42(1): 158–178: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/229766348_Self-Assessment_of_Speaking_Skills_and_Participation_in_a_Foreign_Language_Class

Lee, Icy (2010) Bringing innovation to EFL writing through a focus on assessment for learning, *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 5(1): <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17501229.2010.502232>

Lee, Icy (2011) Formative assessment in EFL writing: An exploratory case study, *Changing English*, 18(1): <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1358684X.2011.543516?journalCode=ccen20>

Leung, Constant, and Bernard Mohan (2004) Teacher formative assessment and talk in classroom contexts: Assessment as discourse and assessment of discourse, *Language Testing*, 21(3): 335–359: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/21/3/335.abstract>

Umer, Muhammad, and Omer, Abdul Majeed Attayib (2015) Investigation of Saudi English-

Major learners' perceptions of formative assessment tasks and their learning, *English Language Teaching*, 8(2): <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/44506>

The following article summarizes the important trends, research, and literature in the field of early language learning. In its fourth section it focuses on assessment:

Nikolov, Marianne, and Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović (2011) All shades of every color: An overview of early teaching and learning of foreign languages, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, pp. 95–119: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/annual-review-of-applied-linguistics/article/all-shades-of-every-color-an-overview-of-early-teaching-and-learning-of-foreign-languages/B2124D3DF430E55429358EC1BCA60704>

Also by Marianne Nikolov:

Assessing Young Learners of English: Global and Local Perspectives, ed. Marianne Nikolov, Springer, 2016: <http://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319224213>:

An edited volume comprising thirteen chapters that summarizes key trends in early language learning, teaching, and assessment, identifying the main issues.

WestEd, 'a national nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service agency — works with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults', publishes the following report on formative assessment and ELL/English Language Learners:

Alvarez, Laura, Sri Ananda, Aida Walqui, Edynn Sato, and Stanley Rabinowitz (2014) Focusing formative assessment on the needs of English Language Learners: https://www.wested.org/wp-content/files_mf/1391626953FormativeAssessment_report5.pdf

The following link includes details of all WestEd's publications on formative assessment:

http://www.edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/20150107_Formative_Assess_final.pdf

Journal special issues:

There is a special issue of the journal *Language Testing* (2000, 17(2)) on assessment in early years language learning contexts, edited by Emeritus Professor at the University of Bristol, Pauline Rea-Dickins. Prof. Rea-Dickins has many years of experience in language testing and assessment research, teacher development, and programme evaluations in a range of English-language education contexts around the world.

The language teaching contexts covered in the special issue include ESL, EAL, and LEP for 'young learners', defined as children of ages five to twelve, and 'classroom assessment' is used in a generic sense, ranging from techniques used in the classroom used by teachers through to formal tests.

The editorial offers a useful guide to literature pertaining to assessment in the teaching languages at primary school. The articles (three of which are reviewed above) were selected to reflect the range of uses of assessment in this particular educational context and are as follows:

Editorial: Assessment in early years language learning contexts

Pauline Rea-Dickinson

Context-sensitive assessment of modern languages in primary (elementary) and early secondary education: Scotland and the European experience

Richard Johnstone

The assessment of a foreign language at the end of primary (elementary) education

Peter Edelenbos and Marja P. Vinjé

Teacher assessment and psychometric theory: A case of paradigm crossing?

Alex Teasdale and Constant Leung

On ESL standards for school-age learners

Penny McKay

Snares and silver bullets: Disentangling the construct of formative assessment

Pauline Rea-Dickins and Sheena Gardner
[reviewed above]

Current research and professional practice: Reports of work in progress into the assessment of young language learners

Pauline Rea-Dickins [reviewed above]

Monitoring language skills in Austrian primary (elementary) schools: A case study

Renate Zangl

The assessment of the English ability of young learners in Norwegian schools: An innovative approach

Angela Hasselgren

Formative assessment in ELT primary (elementary) classrooms: An Italian case study

Francesca Gattullo [reviewed above]

Link: <http://ltj.sagepub.com/content/17/2.toc>

Books and reports:

Foreign Language Assessment Cultures: Policies and Practices in European Union Countries, Peter Edelenbos, Study on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education, 2005: <http://www.peteredelenbos.nl/studies/europe/>:

An overview of the assessment cultures in foreign language teaching in twenty-five EU countries, which gives a sense of the proportion of which include formative elements and the extent to which they do so.

Assessing Young Language Learners, Penny McKay, Cambridge University Press, 2005:

A framework for the assessment of young language learners in foreign- and second-language learning contexts, with an emphasis on classroom-based assessment.

Modern Foreign Languages Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Modern Foreign Languages Classroom, Jane Jones and Dylan Wiliam, King's College, GL Assessment, 2008:

A language-specific (although related to MFL in particular) book in the 'Black Box Assessment for Learning' series. It gives practical guidance to teachers on effective assessment, backed up by evidence summarized in Section 2:

<http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/modern-foreign-languages-inside-black-box>

Another book in this practical series with a language focus:

English Inside the Black Box, Bethan Marshall and Dylan Wiliam, King's College London:

<http://www.gl-assessment.co.uk/products/english-inside-black-box>

Handbook of Formative Assessment, eds. Heidi L. Andrade and Gregory J. Cizek, Routledge, 2010:

A research-based, practical collection of current knowledge, which intends to provide information on cutting-edge research. Includes a chapter by Carla Meskill on the everyday formative assessment practices of English to Speakers of Other Languages professionals.

Assessment and Learning, ed. John Gardner, second edition, SAGE, 2012 (2006):

Insights into assessment for learning/formative assessment informed by research from various international contexts and mostly focusing on the compulsory phases of education. Divided into the following sections: Purposes and practice; Impact; Theory; and Validity and Reliability. It has chapters by a range of contributors, mostly from the original ARG group.

State of the Field Review: Assessment and Learning, Baird et al, Report for the Norwegian Knowledge Centre for Education, 2014: <http://www.forskingsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?c=Rapport&cid=1253996755700&lang=en&pagename=kunnskaps-senter%2FHovedsidemal>

A state of the field review of the research literature on assessment and learning that covers major international developments. Chapter 5, by Gordon Stobart and Therese N. Hopfenbeck (Institute of Education, University of London, and OUCEA), focuses on assessment for learning and formative assessment.

Assessment and Autonomy in Language Learning, eds. Carol J. Everhard and Linda Murphy, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015:

A volume exploring the relationship between assessment and autonomy in language education with the aim of assessing how autonomy in language learning might be used to support learning, and how assessment might support the development of learner autonomy.



Useful websites:

The website of the Special Interest Group (SIG) for Classroom Assessment of the American Education Research Association, includes information on their key initiatives, awards, meetings, and events:

<http://www.aera.net/SIG018/Classroom-Assessment-SIG-18>

A guide to the Assessment Reform Group and their many publications and projects:

<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/assessment-reform-group>

The website of the AAIA – a voluntary, not-for-profit organization aimed at promoting assessment practice that supports learning:

<https://www.aaia.org.uk>

The blog of the British Educational Research Association, and some examples of its posts relating to formative assessment:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog>

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/involving-students-in-assessment-conversations>

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/what-difference-can-be-made-to-teacher-practice-in-assessment-for-learning>

The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD. The website features extensive resources, including information on the latest research, recent publications, and upcoming events, including much on formative assessment:

<http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/>

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, which in the 'Assess and progress' section of its website gives practical advice and guidance on assessment practice:

http://ccea.org.uk/curriculum/assess_progress

The website of Shirley Clarke, former primary school teacher, lecturer at the Institute of Education in London, and currently researcher in and advocate of formative assessment, is a hub of information on assessment for learning featuring the latest research, publications, practical classroom resources, and videos. Also included are details of her 2014 book *Outstanding Formative Assessment: Culture and Practice*, published by Hodder Education – a practical guide for primary and secondary teachers on how to use formative assessment in the classroom:

<https://www.shirleyclarke-education.org>

The website of Dylan Wiliam, formerly of King's College London, and one of the members of the ARG. His website gives details of many useful resources including his publications, DVDs, and videos on assessment for learning:

http://www.dylanwiliam.org/Dylan_Wiliams_website/Welcome.html

Conclusion

The generic literature on assessment for learning/formative assessment is extensive and extremely diverse.

The literature pertaining to this kind of assessment in language teaching is smaller but is no less varied, for example in terms of its specific aims and research questions. However, based on the selection of work reviewed above, it is possible to tentatively conclude that the potential value of formative assessment is today very widely recognized. The fact that, since the terms were first coined in the late 1960s, formative assessment has been adopted and applied in many countries around the world from the national level through to that of the classroom and individual teacher testifies to that acceptance.

Even those who raise a note of caution above are reluctant to state that formative assessment has no value at all; instead, what concerns them is the extent of the educational and learner achievement gains that result from it as well as how to systematically and reliably enhance and measure those.

Thus, the overriding concern in research and the literature today seems to be with how to implement assessment for learning effectively in the classroom, and how to gauge the success of such practice (see, for example, the range of issues and questions in the works reviewed above, particularly those in the two journal special issues, and the section in Further Resources on the more specialized and specific research that is going on in the field of language teaching).



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