

Online self-access materials: developing LAL materials which respond to teachers' needs

Susan Sheehan

Acknowledgements

- We gratefully acknowledge the support of the British Council for the project through the ELTRA award scheme.

Today's talk will cover 4 main areas:

- Project background
- Methodology and Key Findings
- Materials
- Conclusions

- Inbar-Lourie (2008:389) describes assessment literacy as: “having the capacity to ask and answer critical questions about the purpose for assessment, about the fitness of the tool being used, about testing conditions, and about what is going to happen on the basis of the results.”

Many teachers receive little or no training in either the theory or practice of testing and/or assessment (Hasselgreen et al., 2004).

Taylor (2009) reports that there is little focus on testing and assessment in post-graduate courses.

Some teachers feel afraid of assessment or lack the resources to engage successfully with it (Coombe et al., 2012)

- This project investigated teachers' attitudes to assessment, their assessment practices and their needs in terms of training materials.
- The aim of the project was create a set of online training materials which addressed their stated needs both in terms of content and format.

The following research questions informed the project:

1. What impact does testing have on the classroom?
2. How confident do teachers feel to engage in assessment activities?
3. What are teacher attitudes to assessment?
4. What are the language assessment literacy needs of teachers?

Multi-method qualitatively orientated study of teacher knowledge of assessment and training needs.

3 stages of data collection

- Interviews
- Focus group interviews
- Workshop

Following Vogt and Tsagari (2014:377) we have adopted this definition of teacher:

- Someone who is a practising EFL teacher who has undergone regular training to teach English as a foreign language at state or private tertiary institutions, colleges or schools

Spoke to a variety of teachers who entered teaching through a number of different routes.

Participants

Data Collection Stage	Location	Participants
Focus Group Interviews	English language teaching centres in European capital cities	48 experienced teachers
Workshop	International conference for ELT teachers, held in UK	20 people – a diverse group comprising practising teachers, LTA experts, MA students

1. The teachers stated that they had not received much training on assessment in their initial teacher training courses.
2. There were requests for practical ideas and activities. The teachers did not want the theory of assessment.
3. The teachers wanted the materials to be readily accessible and quick to read.

In discussion teachers acknowledged their lack of training.

- “There are so many things that I didn’t have a clue about how to do so I wouldn’t put assessment at the top of the list.”
- “We were not planning and designing assessments we were planning and delivering lessons.”

- “We didn’t do it (assessment) in practice on the CELTA”
- “In most places testing and assessment is out of the hands of teachers... They are told this is the assessment you are using.”

- “We’d like speaking tasks – task and criteria”
- “We’d like clear criteria for marking speaking and writing”
- “Examples of level – recording or writings for non-exam classes”
- “I would have liked more practical elements in my training and assessment – more situation based.”

- “The basics with some theory.”
- “Assessment literature is very dense, so an accessible series of tips would be useful.”
- “Lots of teachers don’t want to know about assessment, so offering something that people don’t want doesn’t always lead to delivery of aims.”

- The presentation now turns to the online toolkit.
- The workshop confirmed the results of the previous rounds of data collection. Theory and guided readings were not requested
- [full set of materials available on the British Council Teaching English website](#)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following elements:

- Browser Tabs:** University of Huddersfield | Staff, Assessment: Attitudes, practices
- Address Bar:** teachingenglish.org.uk/article/assessment-attitudes-practices-needs
- Navigation:** Home, Publications, Case studies, insights and research
- Article Title:** Assessment: Attitudes, practices and needs
- Share Buttons:** Tweet (89), Share (4794), Email (14), Share (5066)
- Summary:** This paper explores teachers' attitudes, practices and needs relating to assessment.
- Image:** Cover of 'ELT Research Papers 17.08' titled 'Assessment: attitudes, practices and needs' by Susan Sheehan and Sonia Munro.
- Table of Contents:** A-Z of Content with a list of articles under letters A through Y.
- Taskbar:** Windows taskbar with icons for Start, File Explorer, Edge, PowerPoint, and system tray (10:38).

Table of Contents:

A - Z of Content												
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	R	S	T	U	V	W	Y			

Articles listed in the Table of Contents:

- A comparative study of English language teacher recruitment, in-service education and retention in Latin America and the Middle East
- A global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training and career development
- A history of IATEFL: The first 50 years of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
- An investigation into improved primary school English language learning in the traditional classroom
- Assessing and Evaluating English Language

rectangular strip

You can also access the following free self-access training modules associated with this publication:

- **CEFR and assessing level** - an overview of the challenges of assessing level and a practical approach to devising assessments at a particular level.
- **assessing young learners** - an overview of the issues of assessing English as a foreign language for young learners and practical suggestions.
- **assessment for learning** - how assessment can be used to support the learning process.
- **language assessment for teachers** - an introduction to language testing and assessment and why an understanding of language testing and assessment is important for both teachers and students
- **assessment resources** - this module will help teachers to find key sources of information on language testing and assessment.


University of Huddersfield | Staff x Assessment for Learning LAL TEV x +

teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Assessment%20for%20Learning%20LAL%20TEv8.pdf

teaching for Success

The benefits of assessment for learning University of HUDDERSFIELD

- What are the benefits of assessment for learning? Take a few minutes to think about this and make notes.
- Now [listen](#) to an English teacher talking about the benefits of Assessment for Learning.
- Compare your answers.



Windows taskbar: Windows logo, File Explorer, Microsoft Teams, Google Chrome, PowerPoint, System tray: Network, Volume, 10:44

University of Huddersfield | Staff x Assessment for Learning LAL TEv x +

teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Assessment%20for%20Learning%20LAL%20TEv8.pdf

Teaching for Success

10 principles of Assessment for Learning

University of
HUDDERSFIELD

- The Assessment Reform Group lists 10 guiding principles which reflect the most important characteristics of Assessment for Learning. You can find them [here](#).
- Look at the 10 principles.
- To what extent do you think the principles are likely to promote learning? How could you use them in your own teaching?

Windows taskbar: 10:47

What are the language assessment literacy needs of teachers?

- Teachers expressed a preference for activities rather than theory or principles
- There was a high level of agreement among teachers about their needs:
 - Assessing skills e.g. speaking tasks and criteria
 - Assessing levelness - examples of level from non-exam classes
 - Short training materials placed online

Conclusions

1. Teachers have had little training in assessment and have little interest in the theoretical underpinnings of assessment.
2. There is evidence to suggest that assessment practices are rooted in both past learning experiences, and through working with and observing students.

- Coombe, C, Troudi, S, and Al-Hamly, M (2012) Foreign and Second Language Teacher Assessment Literacy: Issues, Challenges and Recommendations. In Coombe, C, Davidson, P, O'Sullivan, B, and Stoyhoff, S (eds.) *The Cambridge Guide to Second Language Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crusan, D, Plakans, L and Gebril, A (2016) Writing assessment literacy: Surveying second language teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. *Assessing Writing*, 28: 43–56
- Davies, A. (2008) Textbook trends in teaching language testing. *Language Testing*, 25(3), 327-347
- Hasselgreen, A, Carlsen, C and Helness, H (2004) European Survey of Language Testing and Assessment Needs: General Findings. Available online at www.ealta.eu.org/resources.htm
- Inbar-Lourie, O. (2008). Constructing a language assessment knowledge base: A focus on language assessment courses. *Language Testing*, 25(3), 385-402. doi:10.1177/0265532208090158
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Taylor, L. (2009). Developing assessment literacy. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 29, 21-36. doi:10.1017/S0267190509090035
- Vogt, K., & Tzagari, D. (2014). Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers: Findings of a European study. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 11(4), 374-402. Doi:10.1080/15434303.2014.960046