**Facets of Classroom-based Language Assessment: evidence from professional practice**

> **"an educator (whose) success is to be judged by what others learn rather than a referee (for) a basketball game who is hired to decide who is 'tight' or wrong' (Cronbach *et al*, 1980)**

**TASK 1**

1) First of all, reflect on what you understand by assessment and in particular classroom assessment. How would you define assessment? Is it different from language testing? If so, what do you think are some of its main defining characteristics?

2) What are the different purposes of assessment? Why do you assess your students?

**TASK 2**

Now compare your views about assessment and the reasons why you assess your learners in relation to the data below.

**Purposes of language support team assessment**

*(a)*     *as input for managing and planning teaching*
         e.g. to influence future teaching plans
         e.g. use of baseline assessments to plan level of support

*(b)*     *as evidence of language learning and development*
         e.g. how much language a child knows
         - demonstrates ability to use language appropriate to curricula activities (links with understanding)
         - pupils can independently demonstrate creative use of language appropriate to     learning activity

*(c)*     *as evidence of learner attainment against locally determined levels*
         - to provide grades for the Linguistic Ability Achievement  records

*(d)*     *as evidence for evaluation of teaching*
         e.g. reflection on appropriacy of teaching content and objectives

*(e)*     *as evidence to monitor progress towards project goals*
         - in particular a child's ability to access the National Curriculum

**TASK 3**

What do teachers need to make decisions about when assessing their students? You might find it useful to match these decisions against the different phases of the assessment cycle.

Planning
Implementing
Monitoring
Formal Reporting

**TASK 4**

Look at Data Source 4. Analyse the influences on the teachers when they are planning their assessments. What have they/are they making decisions about?


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**Characteristics of Activities for Formative Assessment**
One of the aims for EAL/ESL professional practice is to develop activities that promote language use in different curricular contexts and that are formative for the learners in that they lead to language development.  This presents a number of challenges for formative classroom assessment.  These include the development and implementation of assessment activities that:

1)    stimulate the children's language awareness and language learning

2)    engage their learners in the assessment dialogue so that they have opportunities:

(i)    for language learning and
(ii)    to stretch their linguistic understandings and ability as they communicate in their school subjects through the use of English
(iii)   to reflect on their language use as well as
(iv)   to engage socially with other learners in an activity.

3)    elicit rich, diverse, and meaningful language samples which are used by teachers to guide further support for individual learners, as well as their short and long term planning for individual learners.

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**TASK 5      How do you know when your learners know something?**

Look through the following transcript of an assessment episode.  Can you identify an example which might be interpreted as evidence of a child's understanding or of potential language learning?

*False Episode*
This extract comes from a whole class activity within the Literacy Hour focusing on antonyms.  The learners were working in pairs using whiteboards to write down the antonym of the word given by the class teacher.  The words given by the teacher were taken from the story being studied by the class at the time and this activity followed some work on antonyms which had been taking place.

| BEA | 1. | True and false. does it matter about the spelling? Good girl |
|------|----|------|
| LS2 | 2. | Right! Show me |
| | 3. | ((indistinguishable)) |
| LS2 | 4. | alright ready shhh. Listen. Right lots of you have got the right answer the answer is [false but- |
| Px | 5. | [I don't |
| LS2 | 6. | Some people have spelt it correctly Sonya you have well done. 's a funny spelling look (.) false the 'a' making a funny sound (inaudible) |
| | 7. | ((indistinguishable)) |
| LS2 | 8. | Ready? |
| Px | 9. | Is there 'e' at the end? is there 'e' at the end? theirs is wrong |

**TASK 6**

What constitutes evidence of learning and/or engagement in a task?  List your evidence. Then compare with your partner.

**TASK 7**

*Balloon Episode*

In this assessment episode, the teacher has been working on phonics and with flashcards with the sounds /oo/, /ue/, /oe / and /ew/ on them. One small group of five learners with EAL is working with their class teacher using a word maker to construct their words.  He invites words with: a "double O sound", "some words with /oo/ in the middle".

| 341 | CT | See who can make this one<br>This is a hard one | |
|-----|-----|------|---|
| 342 | Nuh | No it's not | |
| 343 | CT | Okay<br><br>BALLOON | |
| 344 | Nuh | Balloon<br>I done it<br>I made it | |
| 345 | CT | Oh, nearly<br>Let's have a look, see if anybody else has got anything different | |
| 346 | Nuh | Balloon<br>/b.b.a./-<br>there's a /a/ here | |
| 347 | CT | Ah, somebody's heard something<br>What sound's at the beginning of the word?<br>BALLOON | |
| 348 | Nuh | /a/ | |

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| 349 | CT | Let's get the beginning of the word | |
| 350 | Nuh | Balloon | |
| 377 | CT | Right, can you all make balloon for me? | |
| 378 | Nuh | Yep | |
| 379 | Px | I'm almost there now | |
| 380 | CT | Let's see if you can all make balloon first of all | |
| 381 | Mav | I did it | |
| 382 | CT | I know you did it<br>You almost got it, you did really well<br>[Have a look at your first letter | |
| 383 | Mav | [I'm sounding it out | |
| 384 | CT | and then have a look-<br>yeah, that's it, that's the important thing, if you sound it out you'll get it<br>good boy<br>oh, what's the difference between yours and-<br>BALLOON | |
| 385 | CT | Look at Mav's | |
| 386 | Mav | (we) don't need to have that U in | |
| 387 | CT | What did she do?<br>Oh, well done<br>BALLOON | |

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## What are Features of Formative Assessment?

In an assessment that is formative for learners, you would expect to see some of the following features:

- a teacher focuses on points of difficulty

- there are "opportunities for pupils to express their understanding" (Black and Wiliam, 1998:11)

- there are sustained exchanges between a teacher and a learner and *between* learners

- there are opportunities for learners to self- and peer-assess

- there is rich teacher questioning and probing

- a pause time is given between a teacher question, or probe, and learner response

- learners are given 'space' to ask their own questions or clarify an aspect of their performance or activity in some way

- the use of divergent assessment activities that get learners engaged in thinking, reasoning and provide opportunities for them to express their meanings to others through 'collaborative' talk

- different types of teacher scaffolding of learner responses

- teacher feedback/scaffolding that encourages learners to self-monitor and provides learners with strategies for completing an activity

- 'space' for learners to self-assess and to monitor their own contributions to the activity

- different types of teacher feedback

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**Data Sources for Tasks**

## Task 3:  TEACHER DECISION MAKING: LIST OF CODES

**General Characteristics**
- collaboration [83:282]
- EAL [110:526]
- general assessment [44:206]
- reflection on Language Sampling [55:225]
- use of Heritage Language  [25:88]

**Planning**
- appropriacy [44:167]
- choosing the procedure [118:381]
- how assessed [62:217]
- how data will be used [63:218]
- how marked [20:71]
- preparation of pupils [42:167]
- procedural planning issues [34:119]
- what content [107:326]
- what feedback plans [14:46]
- what formality [47:154]
- what revisions [20:68]
- when assessed [55:141]
- which criteria [99:279]
- who chooses [51:163]
- who implements [39:114]
- why assess [56:183]

**Implementation Strategies**
- feedback [13:49]
- introducing the activity:
    how [5:13]
    what [3:8]
    why [2:4]
- learner self-evaluation [2:9]
- observation/listening [31:149]
- peer evaluation [3:11]
- procedural issues [7:26]
- scaffolding [16:47]

**Appraising & Monitoring**
- collecting & recording [114:388]
    evidence of achievement [24:81]
    evidence of learning [4:11]
- NC tracking [50:204]
- criteria [153:414]
- interpreting [193:826]
- revising T/L plans [77:286]
- sharing findings
    pupils, parents [11:43]
    teachers [26:84]

**Recording & Formal Reporting**
- formal review strategies [36:102]
- in levels/bands [48:151]
- NC tracking [14:47]
- progress overview [32:97]


## Data for Task 4:  PLANNING ISSUES


- **Planning for Assessment: <u>Class Teacher's comments:</u>**

**(1)** TEXT: E_1D_CT  (70/72)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure(G:100)
We take the **learning objectives** and the **learning outcomes** and then express
those in, you know in terms of the kind of activities we'll do.

**(2)** TEXT: E _1D_CT  (220/222)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
I would think about **targets of literacy** because we do do three times yearly we
**test reading age** through the NFER, reading tests,

**(3)** TEXT: E _1D_CT  (223/225)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
The writing I keep ...   I think Dawn showed you the **samples** which they do
weekly without any help

- **Planning for Assessment: <u>Language Support Teacher's  comments:</u>**

**(5)** TEXT: E_1C_LST  (148/152)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
But where I had four set questions to ask each group and they sort of rotated
around the class and it was 'Why is a jar made out of glass?' 'Why are toys
made out of plastic?' 'Why is a radiator made out of metal?'  So I asked the
same question to each child.

**(6)** TEXT: E_1C_LST  (344/350)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
What we've been doing for most of this term, and it varies, is using old SATs
papers for the guided reading so that although we're doing it orally, the whole
idea of having a chunk of text and some questions about that text, getting them
into the habit of that, locating, you know, the whole idea of having to look
for the answer in the text, using the question to give you clues as to, you
know ... looking for key words

**(7)** TEXT: E_3A_LST  (114/116)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
'Well just giving them the opportunity to talk about what they've learnt in a
situation where I could actually record some of that by writing.

**(8)** TEXT: E_1C_LST  (215/218)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
So it's been mostly role play, retelling, you know, those sorts of things.
Because I've got this literacy framework I'm getting a really good variety, I
think, of language opportunities.

**(9)** TEXT: E_3A_LST  (105/107)
CODE: Planning.choosing the procedure  (G:100)
Well on the QCA scheme of work that I was using you know basically that was the
final activity.  So that was I suppose the main prompt  really.

**3) Appraising & Monitoring: Criteria - <u>Language Support Teachers' comments:</u>**

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(10) TEXT: E_3A_LST  (81/86)
CODE: Appraising & Monitoring.Criteria  (G:100)
She was calling them big wood standers she said and some straight woods.  You
know, that's a nice opportunity then to get them using quite ... you know
they're really thinking on their feet aren't they?  They're using new
vocabulary, or they try to make up for lack of vocabulary by describing what
they're doing aren't they?  So constructing quite complex sentences as well.

(11) TEXT: E_3A_LST  (155/158)
CODE: Appraising & Monitoring.Criteria  (G:100)
you know when I was saying to them 'What sort of force were you using?'  I was
trying to see if they had really grasped ... either just then and now or
previously the force, think force, think push and pull' and sort of make that
link really.
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**TASK 6: What is Evidence of Learning?**

We need to know what represents evidence of a child's learning, and there are a number of potential 'clues' that we can use as an indication of a child's understanding.  We can note some of them in the False episode above. These include when a learner:
- is able to extend a concept
- is able to relate the activity to own experience
- uses 'processes' in a different context
- is able to 'focus attention'
- provides evidence of engagement and 'persistence on a task'
- self- or peer assesses
- is able to take ownership of and shapes an activity
- is able to analyse an aspect of what it is they are learning (content or language)
- is able to clarify or confirm an aspect of what it is they are learning (content or language)

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**TASK 7:**

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*Focus on Learners in the Balloon Episode*

Nuh, one of the learners receiving additional language support, is seen here engaging fully in the activity set by the teacher:
- he disagrees with his teacher (342) who states that 'balloon' is a hard word to spell,
- he sounds out his letters (346) which the children are encouraged to do as part of their phonics work (another example of this is Mav in line 383); and
- he 'discovers' there should be an /a/ and self-corrects by removing the OO card on his word maker (346); in response to a prompt by his teacher:
- he repeats the correct sound to himself (348) and then:
- in 350, he shows his teacher the revised word; in turn 384, the teacher invites Nuh to look at Mav's spelling: she has got it right; then:
- he traces the spelling of the word with his finger (a strategy they are taught in class) and Mav corrects Nuh in line 386: 'we don't have that U in':
- he then removes the U from his word (387)

Other evidence of learner engagement or peer assessment, see Mav in turn 386; also an example of learner self-monitoring in turn 379.

(See also Rea-Dickins, P. 2001)