

Combining formative and interim assessment tools in the classroom

Trisevgeni Liontou, Associate Lecturer at the Department of Language & Linguistics, Faculty of English Language and Literature of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece

William J. Bond Director, Assessment & Measurement, Pearson

The value of assessment data in L2 classrooms is widely recognised, but teachers are sometimes unsure when formative assessment versus testing is most appropriate. This workshop considers a range of classroom activities and Pearson digital assessment tools used to provide a personalised view of students language proficiency on the Global Scale of English, their learning progress, and inform next steps.

In the modern language classroom, it is useful to consider how data can inform our teaching practice, both in the short and longer terms. But it is perhaps particularly useful to frame it as questions about our students, instruction, and program meriting investigation, and then think about how data could help us answer them (or not). For example, two very different questions are “Do my students understand the goal of today’s conversation activity?” and “Are my students making real gains in English proficiency in the first half of the year, and in what areas?” The first question is inherently formative in nature - students are more likely to benefit from an activity if they know what the instructional goal is and match their efforts with that goal.

The second question is an interim, longitudinal one: it is not about students’ mastery of the material presented in class, but rather whether all their study and efforts have resulted in a proficiency increase in a more general sense. In this workshop, together with participants, we will generate some of these kinds of questions in language learning contexts, work with a framework for understanding what kind of questions they are, and in small groups discuss the pros and cons of various practical activities and tools which provide data to help answer those questions. These different questions and data sources can be seen as working together to support learning, rather than being in opposition to one another.

Bill grew up in Chicago, and is a graduate of Northwestern University (B.A., French & Linguistics), the University of Hawai’i (M.A., Second Language Studies), and of the University of Colorado (PhD, Cognitive Science). His work includes the study of mastery of verbal and nonverbal sequences, the psycholinguistics of word combinations and second language phonological processing, the design and psychometric analysis of second language tests, and growth modeling of various kinds of assessment data. He taught EFL for more than ten years in Italy, Ecuador, Japan, and Brazil, and loves learning second languages himself as well. He now lives in Boulder Colorado with his wife and two sons

Trisevgeni holds a PhD in English Language & Linguistics with specialization in EFL Testing & assessment from the same faculty. She holds a B.A. in English Language & Literature and another B.A. in Spanish Language & Literature. She also holds an M.A. in Lexicography: Theory and Applications and another M.A. in Information Technology in Education from Reading University, UK. Along with her new position, she is working as an Adjunct Instructor at the Hellenic Open University. She has worked as a research assistant, expert item consultant, freelance item writer, oral examiner and script rater for various national and international EFL examination boards. She has made presentations in national and international conferences and has published papers in the aforementioned fields. Her current research interests include theoretical and practical issues of EFL pedagogy, testing and assessing foreign language competence, reading comprehension performance, computational linguistics and classroom-based assessment.

Key takeaways

- At its heart, assessment is conducted in order to answer questions. It is best to be very clear about what those questions are when planning, conducting, or looking at results from assessments.
- It is similarly important to understand how formative, interim, and summative assessment practices differ in their goals and procedures so that the right assessment practices are put into place for the right goals
- External resources like the Pearson Teacher Toolkit can help identify level-appropriate content for both instruction and assessment.

Key links

- <https://www.pearsonelt.com/about/gse/teacher-toolkit.html>
- *Formative Assessment: What Do Teachers Need to Know and Do?* <https://bit.ly/2rdqFNx>

Pearson English hopes to see you next year!