

# What do teachers want to know about assessment?

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

# The Project Report

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
- Page Header:** Help, Log in, Sign up, Newsletter, LearnEnglish Kids, LearnEnglish, LearnEnglish Teens
- Logos:** BRITISH COUNCIL, BBC, TeachingEnglish
- Navigation:** Home, Professional development, Publications, Teaching resources, News and events, Training
- Breadcrumbs:** Home » Publications » Case studies, insights and research
- Article Title:** Assessment: Attitudes, practices and needs
- Share Buttons:** Tweet (89), Share (4794), Email (14), Share (5066)
- Text:** 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
  - A B C D E F G H I J K L M
  - N O P R S T U V W Y
  - 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
- Taskbar:** Windows Start button, icons for File Explorer, Microsoft Teams, Chrome, and PowerPoint. System tray shows network, volume, and time (10:38).

Today's talk will cover 4 main areas:

- The materials – topics
- The materials – suggestions for use
- Project methodology
- Key findings and implications for practice

- assessing level and the CEFR
- assessing young learners
- assessment for learning
- language assessment for teachers

- Practicality was stressed by the participants as can be seen in the following quotations
- “Some teachers want something that is efficient and easy to use because they have a full timetable and they cannot possibly devote any more time than what they have already given”
- “Good examples of assessments that work – something that is tried and tested”
- “To find out what other people have found to be a reliable procedure”

## Overview

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This module provides an introduction to issues surrounding level and how to create assessment tasks at a particular level. Level is discussed in the context of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk)

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## Classroom posters

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- Look at these [classroom posters](#) which were created as part of [a project](#) which aimed to support teachers.
- The posters contain 'can do' statements for each of the 4 language skills.
- Furthermore, they contain grammar and vocabulary objectives.
- The posters also contain examples of the type of language needed to achieve the 'can do' statements in the language work sections.
- The posters cover levels A1 to C1 of the CEFR.



## Reflective task

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- Review the posters and consider how they could be used in the classes you teach.

## Commentary

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- The posters can be used for self, peer or teacher assessment.
- They can be used to discuss learning goals.
- They can guide materials selection.

## Core Inventory of general English



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- [Watch](#) the authors of the Core Inventory talk about its creation and how it can support teacher assessment of classroom learning
- Make notes to answer the following questions:
  - What are the main aims of the project?
  - How can the Core Inventory be used?
  - What are the 'Core Language points'?
  - What is a scenario?

## Assessing young learners - video

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Watch this video, which introduces the topic of assessing young learners.

As you watch, answer the following questions:

- Young learners are divided into three age groups – what are they?
- What are the different ways to assess the three groups?
- Why is fun important for all ages?
- [Watch the video.](#)

## Ways to assess young learners without using a test

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So, how can we assess young learners without giving them a test?

How can we integrate assessment into classroom activity?

- Listen to Maria talking about approaches to classroom assessment. What are the four approaches mentioned?
- [Play](#) the audio.



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## Other ways to assess: Project work

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- Project work can combine all four language skills. It can be motivating for weaker students because of the opportunity to learn from classmates.
- At the same time it can motivate stronger learners as they have a chance to display knowledge and skills.

## Assessment for Learning

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These materials provide an overview of Assessment for Learning (AfL) and its use in English language teaching. In this module we discuss how assessment can be used to support the learning process.

This module is aimed at:

- teachers of English as a foreign language
- in-service teachers.



## Overview

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- This session is an introduction to Assessment for Learning. It will help you to develop your knowledge of the principles of Assessment for Learning and also provide an overview of practical strategies which can be used in language learning classrooms.
- It assumes little or no current knowledge of Assessment for Learning.



## 10 principles of Assessment for Learning

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- 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?

## What makes effective feedback?

Good feedback should:

- focus on the task and successful task completion
- be positive about the current performance
- make the learner aware of specific actions to take to improve performance.



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It is important to give feedback the learner can process and use effectively in the next stage of learning.

## Commentary

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### Student A

- High number of corrections.
- No written, qualitative feedback.
- No guidance on how to improve.



### Student B

- Some corrections but some errors are just highlighted, allowing learners to think about the mistake themselves.
- Detailed written comments explain what the student has done well, and how the work can be improved.

## The importance of LTA



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- How much of your time as a teacher do you spend assessing learners or being involved in assessment related activities?
- How much time do you think the typical teacher spends on assessment or assessment related activities?
- The answer on the next slide may surprise you.

## The importance of LTA

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- The answer which has been reported is one third to a half of the teacher's time (Coombe, Troudi, and Al-Hamly, 2012)
- Does that answer surprise you?
- How does it compare with your experience?
- We think that this shows the importance of LTA literacy. If teachers are spending half their time on assessment then it is important that teachers have the knowledge they need to undertake this activity effectively.

## Commentary

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- Perhaps some teachers are afraid of assessment or perhaps some teachers feel that writing assessments is someone else's job.
- It has been argued that lack of interest may be due to teachers having insufficient resources. (Coombe et al, 2012)
- Teachers may also feel that their training has not prepared them to engage in LTA.



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- A place where teachers can find further resources on the topic of assessment.
- All resources are freely available as the participants discussed their lack of access to academic libraries and the cost of journal articles.

- Independent study
- CPD session
- Teachers can dip in and out of them according to their needs and time available



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.”

## What do teachers want to know about assessment?

- 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.

- Training for teachers should build on what they know.
- Training should take into account the working conditions of teachers.
- Teachers should be given a louder voice in the assessment literacy debate.

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