Assessment for learning:
Investigating assessment used to serve learning in an L2 classroom

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Christian Colby-Kelly
McGill University
Montreal
Canada
christian.colby@mail.mcgill.ca
Colby-Kelly and Turner’s (2007) Definition of formative assessment

*Formative assessment* is defined as the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for making substantively grounded decisions or judgments about the product of a learning task in order to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there. (p. 11)
Black and Wiliam (1998a) reviewed 250 studies, summarized in 8:

1. Fontana and Ferenandes (1994)
2. Whiting, Van Burgh and Tender (1995)
4. Bergan, Sladeczek, Schwarz and Smith (1991)
7. Frederiksen and White (1997)
There is a body of firm evidence that formative assessment is an essential component of classroom work and that its development can raise standards of achievement. We know of no other way of raising standards for which such a strong prima facie case can be made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>General Education</th>
<th>L2 Education</th>
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</table>
<pre><code>  | Broadfoot        |              |
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<p>|      | Brown and Hudson |              |
|      | James and Gipps  |              |
|      | Torrance and Pryor |           |
| 1999 | Weeden and Winter |            |
| 2000 | James            | Rea-Dickins and Gardner |
|      | Triggs, Weeden, Winter and Broadfoot | |
| 2001 | Black            | Spence-Brown  |
|      | Brookhart        | Rea-Dickins   |
| 2002 | Ross, Hogaboam-Gray and Rolheis | |</p>
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<td>Cheng, Yu and Andrews (2008)</td>
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<td>Davies (2008)</td>
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The Assessment Bridge

Assessment → Teaching → Learning

Colby-Kelly & Turner (2007)
**Decision 1**
Teacher-student feedback is useful and should be provided.

**Decision 2**
Teacher-student feedback is useful and motivates some learners.

**Intended Interpretation (Claim)**
Teacher-student feedback is useful.

**Alternative Decision 1**
Teacher-student feedback is not useful and should not be provided.

**Alternative Decision 2**
Teacher-student feedback is not useful when learners do not take it seriously.

**Alternative Decision 3**
In order for teacher feedback to be useful, it should be accompanied by a learning component.

**Warrant**
That teacher-student feedback will contribute to improve learner performance over time.

**Back up -**
Observations and learner interviews demonstrate that learner oral presentation performance improves over time with feedback (e.g. learners do take learning feedback seriously).

**Data**
Teacher-feedback will be provided to learners following presentations, based on teacher experience and research findings on assessment.

**Rebuttal Data -**
Observations and learner interviews demonstrate that learner oral presentation performance does not improve over time with feedback (e.g. learners do not take learning feedback seriously).

**Rebuttal**
That teacher-student feedback will not contribute to improve learner performance over time.

**unless**

**since**
Assessment for Learning in the classroom
AFL asks learners to -

- be actively involved in their own learning
- appropriate the goals of assessment
- carry out self and peer assessments

...and
AFL asks teachers to -

- encourage learner involvement in assessment
- guide learners to understand assessment goals
- provide feedback useful in learner development
- adapt lesson planning in consequence of assessment outcomes

(Black & Wiliam, 1998a; 1998b; 2005; 2006)
Assessment for Learning

Research-based principles of assessment for learning to guide classroom practice

Assessment should take account of the importance of learner motivation
- Assessment that encourages learning fosters motivation by emphasizing progress and achievement rather than failure. Comparison with others who have been more successful is unlikely to motivate learners. It can also lead to their withdrawing from the learning process in areas where they have been made to feel they are “no good”. Motivation can be preserved and enhanced by assessment methods which protect the learner’s autonomy, provide some choice and constructive feedback, and create opportunity for self-direction.

Assessment for learning should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed
- For effective learning to take place, learners need to understand what it is they are trying to achieve and want to achieve it. Understanding and commitment follows when learners have some part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress. Communicating assessment criteria involves discussing them with learners using terms that they can understand, providing examples of how the criteria can be met in practice and engaging learners in peer and self-assessment.

Assessment for learning develops learners’ capacity to self-assessment so they can become reflective and self-regulated
- Independent learners have the ability to seek out and gain new skills, new knowledge and new understandings. They are able to engage in self-reflection and to identify the next steps in their learning. Teachers should equip learners with the desire and the capacity to take charge of their learning through developing the skills of self-assessment.

Assessment for learning should recognize the achievement of all learners
- Assessment for learning should be used to enhance all learners’ opportunities to learn in all areas of educational activity. It should enable all learners to achieve their best and to have their efforts recognized.

Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers
- Teachers require the professional knowledge and skills to plan for assessment, observe learning, analyse and interpret evidence of learning, give feedback to learners and support learners in self-assessment. Teachers should be supported in developing these skills through initial and continuing professional development.

Assessment for learning should be regarded as a key professional skill for learners
- Learners need information and guidance in order to plan the next steps in their learning. Teachers should prepare the learner’s strengths and advise on how to develop them, be clear and constructive about any weaknesses and how they might be addressed; provide opportunities for learners to improve upon their work.

Assessment for learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there.

Assessment provides understanding of goals and criteria
- Helps learners know how to improve; develops the capacity for self-assessment; recognises all educational achievement.

Assessment for learning should be an integral part of effective planning of teaching and learning
- A teacher’s planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. It also has to be flexible to respond to new and emerging ideas and skills. Planning should include strategies to ensure that learners understand the goals they are pursuing and the criteria that will be applied in assessing their work. How learners will receive feedback, how they will take part in assessing their learning and how they will be helped to make further progress should also be planned.
The AFL 10 principles

1. AFL should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning.
2. AFL should focus on how students learn.
3. AFL should be recognized as central to classroom practice.
4. AFL should be regarded as a key professional skill for teachers.
5. AFL should be sensitive and constructive because any assessment has an emotional impact.
6. AFL should take account of the importance of learner motivation.
7. AFL should promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are assessed.
8. Learners should receive constructive guidance about how to improve.
9. AFL develops learners’ capacity for self-assessment so that they can become
AFL components

- Self-, peer- and teacher-assessments
- Scaffolding of knowledge
- Guided questioning techniques
- Teachers asking learners questions like, “What do you think I want you to learn from this lesson?”
- Learners taking much more responsibility for their learning
- Diagnostic assessment component – determining where learners are, then where they are and how to go beyond in their learning
A mixed methods investigation of AFL in an L2 classroom
Primary research question

Do Assessment for Learning practices in classroom settings enhance the learning of specific language features?
Secondary research questions

a) Do Assessment for Learning practices enhance the learning of a modal form in a second language classroom?

b) Does a computer assisted learning activity incorporating self-assessment enhance the learning of a modal form in a second language classroom?

c) Does a group reflective, peer-assessment knowledge construction activity enhance the learning of a modal form in a second language classroom?

d) Does a teacher-guided questioning and scaffolding formative assessment component enhance the learning of a modal form in a second language classroom?

e) Is there evidence of the Assessment Bridge when Assessment for Learning practices are employed in a second language classroom?
Instruments

QUALITATIVE:

- Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)
- Individual student online CM production
- Group concept map (CM) production (paper and pencil)
- Teacher-class CM production (using acetates and an OHP)
- After each step, teacher and student surveys on their experience perceptions
Quantitative:

- Pre-, post- and delayed post-
  - Fill-in-the blanks tests
  - Essay tests
  - Student and teacher questionnaires surveying their agreement with the 10 principles of AFL
Methodology

Treatment

- CALL
  - Module including guided questioning, self-assessment
  - Interactive quiz with learning hints
  - Individual online student CM production

- Group work CM
  - Group discussion, cooperative learning, including peer-assessment
  - Co-constructed group CM production

- Teacher-class CM production
  - Class discussion, guided questioning, knowledge scaffolding
  - Co-constructed teacher-class CM production
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training session</td>
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<td>POST-TREATMENT</td>
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<td>Student survey on treatment &amp; learning</td>
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Preliminary pilot study results
Piloted fill-in-the-blanks test results:
Mean: 7.5/10  Mode: 8.0/10  SD: 1.45
Table 1

Frequency of obligatory contexts and correct modals in written essays

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<th>Scores in ratios</th>
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The English [grammar] Mystery Module
WELCOME TO THE ENGLISH MYSTERY PAGE!

Home

Here you will attempt to solve the English language grammar mystery of the disappearance of will in favour of would in some contexts.

But beware! Appearances can be deceiving! Sometimes would takes over and gets rid of will in other contexts.

Uncover the mystery of when to use will and when to use would in English.

Click on the links below for clues, diagnostic and learning quizzes, exercises, and concept mapping to help in your modal investigations.
The Interactive Diagnostic Learning Quiz
A Quizzical Mystery

Gap-fill exercise

Fill in all the gaps, then press “Check” to check your answers. Use the “Hint” button to get a free letter if an answer is giving you trouble. You can also click on the “[?]” button to get a clue.

Joe [“?”] like to see that car in his parking space.
Concept Mapping
Exercises

- Self-
- Group-
- Teacher-class
Preliminary study results
Individual student online concept map production
Group co-constructed concept map production (paper-and-pencil)
Teacher-class co-constructed concept map production (acetate and OHP)
A Learner’s Viewpoint

This way change the way I think about how to learn. I think this way, I don’t need to spend to much time to remember how to use would and will because I had deep impress in my mind.
Acknowledgements

My thanks for the help and support of Dr. Carolyn Turner, Dr. Janna Fox, Dr. Joanna White, Dr. Lise Winer and PhD Candidates Heike Neumann, Talia Isaacs, Pamela Gunning, May Tan, Beverly Baker, and Candace Ferris. Thanks also go to the administrative and technical support staff, teachers and student participants of the school involved in the study.
References


Triggs, P. (2000). The LEARN project: Phase 2: Developing assessment in the primary school project report. (University of Bristol Graduate School of Education CLIO Centre for Assessment Studies). *Report for the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority*. Available at: [http://qca.uk/ages3-14/afl/292.html](http://qca.uk/ages3-14/afl/292.html) (September 2005).