

University English language teachers' classroom-based assessment practices and influencing factors

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Presentation outline

- Background to the study
- Research questions
- Methodology
- Research findings
- Implications

Background to the study

English language education in Vietnam

EL education

- Under increasing demand to improve the EL education quality
- Various efforts made: improving learning materials, teaching methods, facilities; increasing teaching & learning time

EL assessment

- Given more attention recently
- Focusing largely on setting of standards and attainment goals, development of high-stake tests

Classroom-based assessment

- Little is known about assessment in the classroom context
- Lack of information about influencing factors

Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA)

- involves the seeking (or demonstrating) and interpreting information about students' learning in the classroom context.
- includes not only language tests but also
 - Planned or incidental observations of students' learning activities in class (presentation, lesson participation)
 - formal interactions with students (questions and answers in lessons)
 - informal interactions with students (rapport, small talk...)
 - feedback on students' learning
 - students' self- and peer- assessment
 - Checking of students' home works, class works
 - Portfolios, assignments, projects, etc.

Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA)

- can be used for different purposes
 - reporting (assigning students' levels or grades)
 - managing (students' behaviors)
 - socializing (to culture of assessment)
 - **modifying instruction to improve learning**
- can cost time (class time for CBA & out-of-class time for analysis and action planning)
- can cost coverage (the depth and breath of the topic)
- can be undertaken by **teachers** or student(s) or institutions

(Harwood & Cohen, 1999; Hill & McNamara, 2011)

Research questions

1. What CBA activities are carried out by English language teachers?
2. How are the CBA results used?
3. What factors influencing the teachers' CBA practices?

Methodology

Research design		Description
Qualitative case study		Teachers' CBA practices at 1 public & 1 private university
Participants	6 EL teachers	three early career and three mid-career teachers
	36 students	six from each participating class
	2 Executives	Faculty level (one from each university)
Data collection methods	Classroom observations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video recording of interactions between teachers & students • Audio recordings of students' talks in pair/group activities
	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with individual teachers before & after observations • Focus group interviews with students • Interviews with Executive officers
	Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching syllabus, teaching and learning materials • Students' work with written feedback from teacher and peers
Data analysis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploratory & interpretive

Research findings

Classroom-based assessment activities

Assessment-related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid-career	T2 mid-career	T3 Early-career	T4 mid-career	T5 Early-career	T6 Early-career
Questioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homework/previous lesson checking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pair/group work	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?
Self-/peer- assessment	✗	✗	✗	✗	?	✓
Oral presentation	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Feedback	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tests	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test preparation	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test review	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?
Assignment, project	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
✓ (often)	?			✗ never		
	(sometimes)					

Embedded peer- & self-assessment in students' pair work

SA: Go straight on when you see a bridge, you go over the bridge. **Thấy chưa? Nghe rõ chưa?**
[Got it? Can you follow me?]

Peer-assessment

SB: **Chưa, nhắc lại đi.**[No, repeat please.]

SA: Nhắc lại nhé. [OK, listen] Go straight on hoặc là [or] straight ahead cũng được hoặc [or] straight on cũng được **hiểu chưa? [Understand?]**. Có hai cách hoặc là đi thẳng hoặc là [There are two ways of saying]...

**Peer-teaching:
further explanation
& use Vietnamese**

SB: (pointing to a phrase) **Cái này là đi thẳng hả?** [This means go straight, doesn't it?]

Self-assessment

SA: Đây nhé. Đi thẳng hay đi về phía trước.
[Yes, go straight on or go straight ahead]

**Peer-teaching: further
explanation**

SB: Go straight on ...xong **cậu bảo gặp một cái cầu như thế nào nhỉ?** [What did you say 'gặp một cái cầu' in English?]

**Self-assessment
& seeking help**

SA: When you see a bridge...

SB: When you see a bridge ...

(3rd observation- T3_early career)

Classroom-based assessment activities

Assessment-related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid-career	T2 mid-career	T3 Early-career	T4 mid-career	T5 Early-career	T6 Early-career
Questioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homework/previous lesson checking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pair/group work	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?
Explicit self-/peer- assessment	✗	✗	✗	✗	?	✓
Oral presentation	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Feedback	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tests	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test preparation	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test review	?	?	?	?	?	?
Assignment, project	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
✓ (often)	?		(sometimes)	✗	never	

Institutional policies on English language education

Aspects	Public university	Private university
EFL courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 weeks • Study English together with other subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 weeks & intensive courses in preparation stage- mainly studying English • High tuition fee
EFL assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 progress tests (13.2%) • 1 mid-term test (13.2%) • 1 final test (67%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 progress tests (20%); • 1 mid term (30%) • 1 final tests (40%)
Test design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEIC oriented, writing and speaking included 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely based on text-book and course work
Administration of teaching practices	<p style="text-align: center;">Top-down</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional inspectors (punctuation & paper work) • Students' feedback at the end of the course. Teachers are informed if <75% Ss are satisfied with the course. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Bottom-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' formal and informal feedback on level of satisfaction • Negative feedback can result in termination of teachers' employment

Classroom-based assessment activities

Assessment-related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid-career	T2 mid-career	T3 Early-career	T4 mid-career	T5 Early-career	T6 Early-career
Questioning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Homework/previous lesson checking	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pair/group work	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?
Self-/peer- assessment	✗	✗	✗	✗	?	✓
Oral presentation	✓	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Feedback	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tests	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test preparation	?	?	?	✓	✓	✓
Test review	?	?	?	?	?	?
Assignment, project	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
✓ (often)	?		(sometimes)	✗	never	

Use of assessment results

Assessment- related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid- career	T2 mid- career	T3 Early- career	T4 mid- career	T5 Early- career	T6 Early- career
Responses to indicate correct answers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responses to manage behavior	✓	✓	✗	✓	~	✗
Response elaboration & instructions	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
HW & Observation to manage behaviors	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
HW & Observation to modify instruction	✓	✗	✓	✓	~	✓
Feedback on correct answer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FB on strengths and weaknesses	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
FB on how to improve	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Test results to motivate learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to identify errors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to modify instruction	✗	✗	~	~	~	~

✓ (often)	~ (sometimes)	✗ never
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Example 1: Teacher's questioning practices

(The teacher is checking students' answers to a listening task)

Teacher: Now number one, cả lớp [Whole class]?

Some students: 1000

Teacher: One...thousand. Very good! Number 2 'A visitor to France spends [...]', you please.

Student A: (Reads the whole sentence in the book including the answer)

Teacher: Ah, 400 hundred on average. OK. That's good. Các bạn có đồng ý với 400 không nhỉ? [Do you agree that the answer is 400?]

Some students: Yes.

Teacher: And number 3. Excuse me, you please.

Student B: 140

Teacher: \$140. Do you agree?

Some students: Yes

Teacher: OK (translates the sentence into Vietnamese and reads the next question)

(Classroom observation T2'- mid-career)

Example 2: Teacher's questioning practices

T: What do you choose, Hung? | **Teacher nominates specific student**

Hung: A

T: **Why do you choose 'A'?** | **Teacher expands on student's response**

Hung: Thưa cô, arrive rồi đến New York thì dùng 'to'. [When we mention the destination like New York we say 'arrive to'.]

Student demonstrates understanding

T: Thank you. **Do you have another idea? Do you have another idea for number 16? Hung chooses A with the preposition 'to'. How about you? Do you have a different answer?**

- **Teacher elicits peer-correction**
- **encourages demonstration of understanding**

Ss: ...(2s) (no response)

T: **Do you agree with him?**

Ss: ... (2s) (no response)

T: **Thế có bạn nào có đáp án khác không nhỉ?**
[Does anyone have any other idea?]

Teacher switches to Vietnamese

Ss: No.

T: No? Ok. **For number 16 remember that the verb 'arrive' usually we think that 'we arrive to somewhere'. However, we do not use preposition 'to' but we use preposition 'in' or 'at' (teacher gave further instruction on using 'in' and 'at')**

Teacher gives further instruction based on students' existing understanding

(2nd observation- T3-early career-Public University)

Example 3: Teacher's questioning practices

T: (to the whole class) Do you like going on vacation?

T: (seeing Hung's talking with a friend)

Hung, do you like going on vacation?

Questioning to manage behaviour

Hung: No

T: **No. Why?**

Expand on students' response

Hung: I don't ... er... I love HN because ...er...

SA: I don't like...

SB: I am lazy...

Students' side-tracked responses

T: **I did not ask you whether you love HN or not...**

Further instruction

SC: Em yêu Hà Nội nên em chẳng muốn đi đâu

[I like Hanoi and do not want to go anywhere else!]

Keep being side-tracked to make fun

(Whole class laugh including the teacher)

SD: (Comments on his peer) Chả liên quan [Not related to the question]!

T: **Long, please.**

Turn to another student

Long: ...Because... it's comfortable.

T: OK, it makes you feel comfortable.

(4th observation_ T4 early career-Private university)

Use of assessment results

Assessment- related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid- career	T2 mid- career	T3 Early- career	T4 mid- career	T5 Early- career	T6 Early- career
Responses to indicate correct answers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responses to manage behavior	✓	✓	✗	✓	?	✗
Response elaboration & instructions	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
HW & Observation to manage behaviors	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
HW & Observation to modify instruction	✓	✗	✓	✓	?	✓
Feedback on correct answer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FB on strengths and weaknesses	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
FB on how to improve	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Test results to motivate learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to identify errors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to modify instruction	✗	✗	?	?	?	?
(often)	(sometimes)		✗ never	?		

Checking learning of prior lesson or homework

T: (call one student to the stage) Show me your vocabulary book, please.[...] Now I will read some English words for you to write down on the board together with the Vietnamese meaning. [...]

(the student could not do the task)

T: You **have not learned the vocabulary**, have you? Return to your seat. See, you have not learned. I gave you one week to learn just those few words but **you did not learn**. See **what you have written... incorrect**. You did not study, [I gave you] bad mark. [...] **I will continue checking in the next lesson.**

(3rd observation_T2_Public Uni)

Since I had been really responsible and tried my best to teach, the negative feedback I got from students [on my practices] made me feel disappointed.[...] Previously, if a student did not complete his homework, I would give him a bad mark on learning attitude immediately but now I give him one more chance to complete it.

Teachers' practice: Using results from observation

(The teacher was teaching when she saw a student is sleeping)

T: Anh Trung, hôm nay sinh nhật anh mà anh không học lại ngủ thế này ah? [Trung, today is your birthday, why are not you learning but sleeping like this?]

(Trung slowly raises up his head and open his note book)

(4th Observation_T4_Private Uni)

If I find out [from observation] that the activity is too difficult or unattractive to students, I may adjust the difficulty or choose another one more appropriate to them.

Use of assessment results

Assessment- related activities	Public university			Private University		
	T1 mid- career	T2 mid- career	T3 Early- career	T4 mid- career	T5 Early- career	T6 Early- career
Responses to indicate correct answers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responses to manage behavior	✓	✓	✗	✓	~	✗
Response elaboration & instructions	~	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Observation to manage behaviors	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Observation to modify instruction	✓	✗	✓	✓	~	✓
Feedback on correct answer: praise	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FB on strengths and weaknesses	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
FB on how to improve	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Test results to motivate learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to identify errors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to modify instruction	~	✗	~	~	~	~
✓ (often)	~ (sometimes)			✗ never		

Teachers' feedback

Tuan, you have provided quite a lot of information about weather and people in Vietnam. However, think you should have more practice about word stress and making intonation. The important words in the sentence need to have stress. For example, [...]
You need to raise intonation at the end of yes/no questions. For example [...], to practise this I recommend you listen to the tape more at home and practise. Ok? (4th observation_T3)

Identify strength:
richness of ideas

Identify weakness: word stress and intonation

Further instruction

Suggestions for improvement

T6's student

My teacher often reminds me that my word choice is so Vietnamese. I have been trying to improve but I have not made much progress

Use of assessment results

Assessment- related activities	Public university			Private University		
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Responses to indicate correct answers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Responses to manage behavior	✓	✓	✗	✓	~	✗
Response elaboration & instructions	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
HW & Observation to manage behaviors	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
HW & Observation to modify instruction	✓	✗	✓	✓	~	✓
Feedback on correct answer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
FB on strengths and weaknesses	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
FB on how to improve	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗
Test results to motivate learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to identify errors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Test results to modify instruction	~	✗	~	~	~	~
✓ (often)	~ (sometimes)			✗ never		

Using test results

T2: Do you **remember this structure**? We learned about this **in unit 6**, didn't we? Many of you did not have correct answer, that's because you did not review carefully.

(T2_5th Observation)

T4: These are **three main types of your writing errors**. [...] We need to have a subject and a verb in every sentence. Many of you **write sentences without a subject**. For example you wrote [...]. You need to remember these common errors to avoid.

(T4_4th Observation)

*After the first two progress tests, the teacher found our listening marks were too low, so she gave us **more listening exercises to practise at home***

Teachers' use of test results

I have taught students everything. If they can't do the test well, it is because they did not study.

T2_Mid-career

[after having the test results] I pay more attention to low-achieving students, for example, call them more often or notice their errors to discuss with them.

T1_Mid-career

We cannot change the teaching after tests since we have to follow the prescribed teaching plan. We can slightly change the homework given to students

T6_ Early career

Teachers' perspectives

- “*Course books have been developed to include all the needed language knowledge and skills. If we do all activities in the course book well, we can attain our objectives*” (T1_mid-career)
- “*I ask students to learn the vocabulary at home. However, I do not know how to assess their learning to see how much they have learned or if they are able to use the new vocabulary.[...] I cannot check the whole class since there is limited time*”. (T1)
- “*I can follow and check the progress of only high achieving students since low achieving ones do not often give their opinions so I cannot know [if they work on my feedback and make progress]*” T3_early career teacher

Key findings

- Only some CBA activities are employed, most common ones are: questioning, homework checking, observation, feedback.
- CBA results are limitedly used to inform teaching
- Early career teachers tend to know more and make better use of CBA to inform teaching and learning
- Factors influencing teachers' CBA practices include
 - Institutional policy on EL education: education program, design of high-stake test, and using students' feedback for teaching management purposes
 - Teachers' limited knowledge and skills on teaching and assessing student learning.

Implications

For English Language education in Vietnam

- The potential of promoting CBA to improve the effectiveness of English language education
- Positive impact of recent changes in language teacher education on classroom practices

For Higher Education institutions

- The need to pay more attention to institutional policies on EL education
- The need to value early-career teachers' knowledge and expertise in employing classroom-based assessment.

For teacher training and professional development programs

- The need to provide training and professional development to assist EL teachers to
 1. Utilise classroom-based assessment tools to **involve students** in the assessment process, **collect evidence** of students learning and **provide constructive feedback** to promote their learning
 2. Analyse and interpret test results to inform teaching and learning...

References

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- Hill, K. and T. McNamara (2012). "Developing a comprehensive, empirically based research framework for classroom-based assessment." *Language Testing* **29**(3): 395-420.

Thanks for your attention!

