

# TEACHER COGNITION AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

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# Acknowledgements

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- The views expressed in this presentation are those of the presenter and do not represent those of the British Council.



Today's talk will have four sections

- Project background
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusions

- Assessment: attitudes, practices, needs (Sheehan and Munro, 2017)
- Language Assessment Literacy project
- Unexpected results from this project impetus for current project which explored teacher cognition and assessment

Teachers are required to engage in a large range of assessment-related activities e.g. school-leaving certificate examinations (Vogt and Tsagari, 2014)

Increased focus on Assessment for Learning increases the pressure on teachers to engage with assessment (Inbar-Lourie, 2008)

Assessment is the instrument through which curriculum reform is enacted (Looney et al., 2018)

Survey studies assessment literacy levels are low (Fulcher, 2012; Vogt and Tsagari, 2014)

- This project aimed to investigate teachers' cognitions and practices in relation to assessment.

The following research questions informed the project:

1. How do teachers develop their identity as assessors?
2. What role do teachers' experiences of assessment, both in their own schooling, and as teachers, play in the development of their assessment practices?
3. How do teachers put their assessment 'credo' into practice?

Qualitatively orientated multi-method strategy.

Questionnaire – inspired by Borg and Burns' (2008) survey of teacher beliefs about teaching grammar.

Interviews – to explore the reasoning behind the responses given on the questionnaire

Observation and interview – observation schedule (Sheehan and Munro, 2017) follow-up interviews to explore the teachers' thinking during parts of the lesson and assessment practices



- 3 sections
- How the participants were assessed while they were at school
- The participants' assessment training experiences
- The participants' assessment practices and their assessment 'credo'.

- Experiences of assessment
- Assessment training experiences
- Current assessment practices and beliefs

- Observation schedule influenced by classroom assessment research (Colby-Kelly and Turner, 2007)
- Interviews allowed us the opportunity to ensure the teachers agreed with our classification on an activity
- Covered how teachers planned their assessment activities and how they developed their assessment practices

Vogt and Tsagari (2014:377) define a teacher as:

*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*

Our participants taught all ages and levels of students from young learners to adults, including general English and EAP.

# Methodology and participants

<b>Data Collection Stage</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>
Questionnaire	Worldwide	261
Interviews	Worldwide	Ten interviews
Observations and follow-up interviews	Language centre at a UK university	5 experienced teachers with a range of qualifications

## **RQ1: How do teachers develop their identity as assessors?**

74.4 per cent of questionnaire participants disagreed with the notion that they used the same assessment techniques as teachers as they had experienced as teachers.

In observed lessons the teachers used a range of assessment practices associated with assessment for learning.

- Several other studies (e.g. Vogt and Tsagari, 2014; Xu and Brown, 2016) suggested that teachers test as they had been tested.
- Our data suggests the participants developed their identity as assessors by rejecting the assessment practices that they had experienced as school children.

## **RQ2: What role do experiences of assessment play in assessment practice?**

For some teachers there was one professional experience which changed their assessment practice.

IT2: “So I realised it wasn’t the way to motivate students. I realised I was closing the loop.”



- For other teachers reflecting on their own assessment experiences as a learner led them to develop their assessment practices.
- IT4: “My teachers liked to give us tests, multiple-choice tests, writing tests ...without explaining why we should do those tests, the tests were unreasonable.”

## **How do teachers put their assessment 'credo' into practice?**

Learner-centred teaching was important to the participants.

OT1: "I'm interested in finding what each person can do. You've got to be good at assessing and adapting so everyone can gain."

OT2: "You are always assessing students the minute they walk through the door, maybe not formally but informally."

- Such views of assessment seem to be absent from much of the literature relating to language assessment literacy.
- This may indicate that survey-based investigations (e.g. Fulcher, 2012) may have failed to recognise these facets of teacher cognition.

# Conclusions

1. Teachers' experiences of assessment were highly influential on their assessment practices.
2. The assessment 'credo' was based on supporting individual learners to achieve their best.

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