CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

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Abstract: *Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) are a set of specific activities that instructors can use to quickly gauge students' comprehension. They are generally used to assess students' understanding of material in the current course, but with minor modifications they can also be used to gauge students' knowledge coming into a course or program. CATs are meant to provide immediate feedback about the entire class's level of understanding, not individual students'. The instructor can use this feedback to inform instruction, such as speeding up or slowing the pace of a lecture or explicitly addressing areas of confusion.*

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Language assessment is a measure of the proficiency a language user has in any given language. It could be a first or second language. Tests are one form of language assessment and there are many others. They fall into two categories: summative and formative. Read our other Teaching Wikis to find our more about summative and formative assessment. There are three main concepts in determining meaningful language assessment: validity, reliability, and feasibility.

1.   Validity means that what is assessed should actually be assessed.
2.   Reliability refers to the accuracy of the decisions made from the assessment.
3.   Feasibility means that the assessment has to be practical.

A language assessment can cover one or more of the following four key skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.Language assessment has two main forms: achievement assessment and proficiency assessment.

Achievement assessment is the completion of specific objectives set out by a course. It refers to work completed in lessons. It measures the extent

to which the pupil has met the learning goals in a given time-frame such as a lesson, series of lessons, or an entire course.

The meaning of your language assessment will depend on your setting.If you're teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), you'll firstly need to gauge your learners' proficiency based on the common reference levels (using the scale for your chosen qualification).

You'll then know the level you need to teach at in order to help the children to make progress. You can view all of our ESL teaching resources by level on our dedicated page of ESL Resources for Teachers.If you're in a primary setting with responsibility for supporting learners with an English as an Additional Language (EAL), you'll need a clear strategy for how to integrate children and their families into school life.

Find out how our resources are designed to help all learners, by watching this short video guide from our inclusion team: Proficiency assessment is the assessment of a pupils' ability - what they know and what they can do in the real world. It measures a learner's proficiency in a context outside the classroom.

Assessment is a key element of teaching—we need to know where our students are in the learning process, how effective our instructional strategies have been, and if there are additional challenges we need to be aware of as we plan future lessons and student support.

When thinking about effective assessment strategies for multilingual learners, what if we switched our attention away from school or district scores generated from testing that leave "gaps" in student performance and revisit data through the lens of stakeholders? Let's start with a series of questions about multilingual learners, our most important stakeholders, to help position their centrality in the assessment process and provide a context for interpreting assessment data.

● What are the languages, cultures, and educational backgrounds of your multilingual learners?

● To what extent does your language program leverage your multilingual learners' languages and cultures in curriculum and instruction?

● To what extent do your multilingual learners connect their personal interests and their home/community life to school?

The first step in planning classroom assessment is to determine its purpose. How might you prioritize the primary reasons for assessing multilingual learners in one or more languages?

● Do you want to get a pulse on multilingual learners' thinking, how they are feeling, and their self-reflection on learning? Being more inclusive of

students' views and encouraging student agency are features of assessment *as* learning.

- Do you want to provide feedback to multilingual learners to move their learning forward? Acting on insight from the interaction between students and teachers during instruction reflects assessment *for* learning.

- Do you want to contribute to programmatic or schoolwide accountability? Using student projects, performances, and products, along with uniform criteria for success formulated by teachers with input from students, are representations of assessment *of* learning.

Assessment **as** learning as a classroom practice is a student-driven activity that broadcasts multilingual learners' voice, empowerment, and identity. Assessment *as* learning can occur face to face or online when multilingual learners interact with their peers in the language(s) of their choice to:
- explore topics or issues of mutual interest
- contribute to crafting classroom activities or tasks
- engage in self- and peer assessment
- pursue learning from their own perspectives
- select preferred mode(s) of communication (e.g., oral, written, graphic, visual) for processing information and expressing learning.
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Assessment **for** learning might begin with teacher and student conversations leading to collaboration in making mutually agreed upon learning goals. Both are keenly aware of where multilingual learners are in their learning that is anchored to grade-level academic content and language proficiency/development standards. In assessment *for* learning, multilingual learners interact with their teachers in English or their shared language(s) to:
- co-construct criteria for success and types of acceptable evidence for their work
- apply criteria for success to give criterion-referenced feedback
- plan differentiated instruction for content and language learning
- give feedback in real time to student performance or needs.

Assessment **of** learning at a classroom level is shaped by teachers, individually or as a department or grade-level team, with input from

students. It represents what students have accomplished at the culmination of a period of instruction, such as a unit of learning. Assessment *of* learning is geared to determining student growth over time and centers on collaboration among teachers with support of school or district leaders to:

- match evidence for assessment with learning targets
- document extent of meeting standards for units of learning
- share of learning for products, performances, or projects
- guide student production of capstone projects or portfolios

When assessing my culturally and linguistically diverse students, I always like to think about my own experience as a language learner. We all function differently; we are all smart with certain dominant areas or language skills. For instance, I consider myself good at speaking and pronunciation, but writing is an area where I need extra help. That does not mean that I cannot produce in a second language. It only means that I need to polish specific language skills.

I like to rely on both formal and informal assessments and make my recommendations—to homeroom teachers and parents—based on the data I can gather from these instruments.

Listening and reading activities, writing prompts (that provide sentence starters), formal and informal conversations (my favorite), and role-plays are some of my preferred activities to assess my students.

Pop quizzes, games, note-sketching, prior knowledge questions, video recordings (like Flipgrid), and formal pretests and post-tests are all part of my assessment arsenal. You can pick and choose from a great selection of data-collection options. For sure, I loathe paper-pencil assessment as the only performance measurement (for children and adults). They do not show what we are all capable of in terms of language production.

When assessing multilingual learners, teachers have to keep in mind both content and language. Teachers also have to be focused about what they assess and academic-language development might not always be something they need to assess.

Rubrics can be an effective way to assess student understanding because there are multiple indicators that students are trying to meet. Rubrics are also a good tool for assessing multilingual learners because they provide a consistent criterion for grading when tasks or projects might be subjective. This criterion helps teachers ignore other factors and use only the criteria in the rubric to assess student learning. Instead of multiple-choice type of assessment where there is only one correct response, a rubric allows the teacher to pinpoint what the student is understanding and what the

student has yet to master. A rubric has a rating scale that provides the teacher with a way to provide feedback for students that will help them think about their work, ask questions, seek clarification, and improve their work. Rubrics also help students take ownership of their learning, because they are able to use the rubric to evaluate their work before they submit it for grading.

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