Review of "Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts"

Title	Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts
Authors	Icy Lee
Year of Publication	2017
ISBN	978-981-10-3924-9
No. of Pages	157
Place of Publication	singapore
Publisher	springer

Reviewed by Hongbo Yi (Anhui Technical College of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Wuhu, Anhui Province)

Assessing L2 classroom writing and responding to student writing are two crucial issues that have been a perennial interest to the teachers and researchers. *Classroom writing assessment and feedback in L2 school contexts* integrates the assessment, teaching and learning with the assessment and feedback addressed in depth.

The volume consists of 10 chapters. *Chapter 1* begins with the aim of the book, which "is to explore how classroom writing assessment and feedback can be utilized effectively to enhance student learning in the second language writing classroom in the school context" (p.2). This is followed by a precise explanation of the key concepts, underlying the assessment trend ranging from the assessment of learning (AoL) to the assessment for learning (AfL) and the assessment as learning (AaL). This chapter provides a clear picture of the nature and role of the L2 classroom writing assessment and feedback in student learning.

Chapters 2-4 deal with the L2 classroom writing assessment. *Chapter 2* lays the theoretical and pedagogical foundations for the whole book, examining the purposes, theories and practices of the L2 classroom writing assessment. It informs that AfL/AaL has the potential to enhance student learning and knowledge construction. The author concludes with some tentative principles of how to implement effective classroom writing assessment.

Chapter 3 delves into AfL in L2 writing, highlighting the learners' active role in learning. In terms of empirical research, the author discusses some issues that needed to be resolved before implementing AfL in the L2 classroom writing. The chapter ends with some pedagogical principles underlying AfL practices. In view of the fact that the student writing improvement is relatively slow, longitudinal studies and practices are warranted.

Chapter 4 concerns AaL in L2 writing. As a subset of AfL, AaL has the potential to enhance the learners' metacognitive awareness, self-regulation, autonomy and learning motivation. After reviewing the previous studies on AaL in L2 writing, the author outlines some AaL strategies that the teachers may utilize in the L2 writing classrooms. Nevertheless, AaL, as a holistic concept, composes all the key AaL strategies. Other aspects of AaL include the learners' metacognitive systems and self-regulating processes in the course of implementing AaL in L2 writing.

Apart from the assessment, the feedback is an indispensable part in L2 writing research (Lee, 2016). Chapters 5-7 focus on the feedback in L2 writing. *Chapter 5* serves as a general introduction to the various aspects of feedback in writing. As a sociocultural construct, the feedback in the L2 writing classroom should be intentional, transcendent and meaningful, and integrative of teaching, learning and assessment. Informed by the activity theory, the feedback may be seen as an activity system, composed of subject, object, mediating artifacts, rules, community, as well as the division of labor (Lee, 2014). This chapter emphasizes the significance of the sociocultural theory in improving our understanding of the feedback and effectiveness of implementing feedback practices, and ends with a brief introduction to the different modalities of feedback via teachers, peers and technologies.

Chapter 6 is concerned with the teacher feedback in L2 writing. It informs that the previous research conducted has an emphasis on the teacher feedback (i.e., content, organization, language, or genre), written corrective feedback (e.g., focused vs. unfocused, and direct vs. indirect), written commentary (i.e., clear, concrete and text-specific in the form of statements, imperatives, questions and hedges) and oral feedback (i.e., graduated from more implicit form to more explicit form). The author proposes some principles to foster the effectiveness of teacher feedback practices, in order to bridge the gap between the research and practice resulting from the contextual factors (e.g., learners' characteristics, teacher beliefs and the institutional context governing teaching and learning), the issue of accountability, the examination culture including all the key members involved (e.g., school administrators, learners and parents), as well as the lack of teacher training. This chapter helps the practitioners improve their teacher feedback literacy.

Chapter 7 focuses on the peer feedback in L2 writing. It commences with the introduction of theoretical foundations underlying peer feedback in the classroom writing assessment. After the exploration of some frequently asked questions, the author puts forward some tips on how to operationalize peer feedback in the L2 classroom writing assessment. In peer feedback, the learners are writers, readers and reviewers. However, in the L2 school contexts, how to make the learners readily accept peers' feedback is really a big question because of their relatively young age and language proficiency.

Chapter 8 describes the role of writing portfolios in the L2 classroom writing assessment. Composed of collection, selection and reflection, portfolio assessment is characterized by the delayed evaluation, comments on student writing performances on a wide range of topics/genres, as well as the student-centered learning. Generally, there are two types of writing portfolios in the L2 school contexts: learning portfolios, and showcase portfolios. The former records the overall writing process of the students in all their writing samples, while the latter only consists of representative writing samples selected by the students in accordance with teachers' requirements or the given criteria. Regardless of which type is being deployed in the L2 writing classroom, portfolio assessment can fully serve the purposes of AfL/AaL and AoL. As a pedagogical and assessment tool in L2 classrooms, the ways in which portfolios could be deployed in the L2 school contexts has been illustrated in detail. The main concern should be on promoting student active engagement in the portfolio process of the L2 writing classrooms.

Chapter 9 examines the role of technology in the classroom writing assessment and feedback. With reference to automated writing evaluation and screencast feedback, technology may be used in teacher evaluation of student writing, and in self- and peer evaluation in relation to the Microsoft Word tools, concordance, and other online tools. Although technology helps to improve the efficiency of assessment and feedback in the L2 writing classroom, human teachers are indispensable because writing is socially constructed, involving writers, readers and reviewers. In addition, much research is conducted in the college/university contexts. Further research concerning whether technology can be used to promote L2 school learners' language development is much needed.

Chapter 10, the final chapter, centers on the L2 writing teachers' classroom assessment literacy, including feedback literacy. This is of paramount important for the L2 writing teachers in "effectively utilizing the assessment process and outcomes to develop and improve the quality of instruction of teachers and learning of students" (Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2014, p. 2998). It is also

conducive to the L2 writing teachers' professional development, in which the teachers' assessment literacy and their attempts at innovations are two crucial components.

The author uses plain and lucid language to integrate writing assessment and feedback in the L2 school contexts and maintains a harmonious relationship between theories, empirical studies and practices. In terms of the format, each chapter begins with a brief introduction and ends with a succinct summary. This helps readers to have a better understanding of the content of each chapter. In addition, the author offers some feedback forms, scoring rubrics and assessment sheets with concrete items, as well as some instructive examples of assessment and feedback, which improves the practicality of her proposals.

There are some drawbacks in the book. Firstly, the organization of the book is a little confusing. Chapters 2-4 focus on assessment in L2 writing classrooms, Chapters 5-7 on feedback and *Chapter 8* focuses on portfolios in L2 writing assessment. "Writing portfolios provide a sound pedagogical and assessment tool for L2 classrooms" (p. 117). Therefore, *Chapter 8* should be presented immediately after *Chapter 4* to maintain the uniformity of the book. Moreover, some claims made by the author seem to be susceptible. For instance, in *Chapter 7*, the author empirically explains the reasons for some learners benefit from peer feedback while others may not. Though the studies selected were conducted in the university contexts, the author holds that "the applications for classroom practice also apply for L2 school contexts" (p.88). This claim needs more empirical and practical evidence. After all, the school learners have a weaker ability to control their learning. Finally, some key concepts are not definitive. *Chapter 9* showcases technology use in L2 writing assessment and feedback. Nevertheless, the technology mentioned is mainly computer-related, such as blogs, wikis and Word tools. As such, it would be better to replace *technology* with *computer mediation*.

Despite of the limitations identified, this book is quite valuable for the teachers and teacher educators of writing, providing effective ways to implement assessment and feedback in the L2 writing classrooms to facilitate the teaching of writing to learners in the L2 school contexts. Furthermore, the researchers of writing will find some new directions for future research.

References

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