

Bridging Teaching,  
Learning and  
Assessment in the  
English Language  
Classroom



# Bridging Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the English Language Classroom

Edited by

Tijen Aksit, Hande Isil Mengü  
and Robin Turner

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This book about the role of student assessment in English language learning is dedicated to **Professor Emeritus Sauli Takala**, who spent the great majority of his life working for the improvement of language assessment, a life he lost in a tragic traffic accident shortly after he had submitted his contribution to this book.



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## FOREWORD

Over the last two decades English language teaching (ELT) has undergone a change in attitude in the way it sees the place of assessment and evaluation in the field. Previously, assessment and evaluation were seen more as the responsibility of governmental policy and decision makers, examination boards, and testing agencies, as a task to be completed through norm-referenced testing focusing on how much of the input given to the students has been mastered and can be performed under exam conditions. However, the current understanding in the field of ELT also considers assessment to be an integral part of teaching and learning, focusing more on the process and the outcome rather than the input. This perspective inevitably gives more responsibility to the teacher and the student in the planning and application of assessment. The recent understanding of assessment in ELT focuses more on the assessment for learning rather than the assessment of learning, where teachers use assessment methods to evaluate learners' performance to make instructional decisions that would enhance learning both for the group and individual students.

Learning English as a foreign language in any formal education context requires opportunities for learners and teachers to give and receive feedback on the teaching and learning process as it is happening. These opportunities could be created via various in-class activities specifically designed for this purpose. Teachers who create and use these diagnostic opportunities effectively detect what learners need in a timely fashion and provide remedial teaching at the right time and mode, so that chances can be created for learners to improve their learning. There is no one universally accepted way for how this is done. There are various approaches for collecting, analysing and reviewing data for this purpose.

This book encapsulates the unbreakable relationship between teaching, learning and assessment by scrutinizing assessment across a wide spectrum, ranging from the role of assessment in language learning, to ELT teacher assessment literacy, from the use of technology in classroom-based assessment to practicing teachers' reflections on their classroom action research, and from the role of the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) to empirical data analysis.

The first section of the book reflects on the role of assessment in language learning.

Tony Green opens the section by highlighting the importance of teachers' role in the assessment of student learning. However, he asserts that ELT teachers are generally not well equipped to assess their students' learning due to their low level of assessment literacy. The paper shares results and discusses the implications of improving teachers' assessment literacy.

Peter Davidson reflects on the ways of using assessment to facilitate learning in an ELT classroom clarifying some concepts like assessment of learning and assessment for learning, and the place of backwash in assessment. He concludes by providing the reader with some tips and practical suggestions for using assessment to enhance student learning.

Hilal Serin looks at the end state grammars in L2 acquisition, arguing that an overall competence at the same level as monolinguals is hard for adult second learners. She also presents some recent findings about the teaching and assessment of morphological variability, and differences between competence and performance.

Moving on to the teaching and assessment of speaking, Steve Ferrara specifically reflects on how well-handled and assessed classroom discussions can develop language proficiency, academic knowledge and skills. He proposes some solutions regarding the incorporation of emerging technology in the development of conversational and academic speaking skills.

Peter Davidson also looks at the place of technology in language teaching and assessment, especially, its use in automatically grading student essays. He critically examines the use of automated essay scoring in EFL programs, discussing how teachers can make use of it and its possible backwash effects on teaching and learning.

Robin Turner's reflection questions how the underlying principles of gaming can be incorporated into the design, planning and application of student teaching and testing. After listing the fundamental characteristics of games, which he believes resemble those of effective assessment, he proposes that game design and gamification methods could cautiously be considered for test design.

The section closes with Servet Altan, Linda O. Bruce and John O'Dwyer bringing a perspective to formative assessment practices by focusing on classroom-based assessment in the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme. They clarify the underlying principles and the understanding of formative assessment in that context and explain how

these can also be employed in other settings, including university language programs.

The second section of the book includes illustrative examples of assessment practices.

Giray Berberoğlu opens this section by looking at how large-scale assessment results can be incorporated into classroom teaching and testing practices. He highlights the importance of providing effective feedback as a major instructor competency that needs to be developed through in-service training to enhance the effectiveness of formative assessment. He asserts that success in providing effective feedback depends on the amount of guidance it includes that helps develop students' cognitive skills.

Elif Kaya and İlker Kalender compare the scores of the computerized adaptive test (CAT) and the paper and pencil versions of the same language test. They discuss the findings with regard to the applicability of CAT in language classes and conclude by asserting that the results are promising especially for the implementation of CAT in small-scale environments.

Reza Neiriz Naghadehi and Mary Ann Walter describe a newly developed online, computerized task-based speaking test of academic English proficiency. The preliminary results show that the newly developed test has potential to predict the first semester GPAs of students from all areas of study.

Stefan O'Grady investigates the interaction between planning second language speech and performance in a proficiency test with Turkish learners of English. The findings suggest that planning does impact spoken performance in a language test positively. He concludes by asserting that the method of assessment clearly influences the degree to which planning improves test performance.

Ersin Soylu compares the written works of students before and after instructor feedback, and the nature of feedback resulting in meaningful learning. She concludes by stating that appropriate and positive feedback given by the instructor guides the students and helps them to make substantial and effective revisions on their papers.

This section closes with Özlem Vural looking at the impact of a discussion session on the speaking performance of students and the extent to which oral presentations and discussion sessions prove to be valuable opportunities for speaking practice.

The final section of the book is devoted to the role of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in language assessment.

Sauli Takala, who was associated with the Council of Europe's work on modern languages, and more recently with the CEFR, in particular the *Manual for Relating Language Examinations to the CEFR*, generously shares his first-hand experience and knowledge of the history and development of the frame, highlighting its relation to student assessment. He also makes close references to the Council of Europe's most recently initiated development work regarding the CEFR, especially the work related to the development of new scales for mediation.

Rounding off the book, Neus Figueras, one of the authors of the *Manual for Relating Examinations to the CEFR*, who regularly works with the Council of Europe especially regarding the use of CEFR for testing and assessment purposes, provides an in-depth overview of the past and present state of the use of CEFR in the context. She also looks ahead and makes projections as to how new developments in the CEFR may have an impact on the future endeavours of language testing and assessment.

This book is centred on the concept that student assessment in ELT is a vital component of the teaching and learning process. While the book accepts the challenge that this would pose to teachers, the content of the book provides its readers with a useful combination of theoretical and practical reflections on the challenge, illustrative examples of assessment practices, and explicit explanations regarding its links to international benchmarking, which we hope will give much food for thought.

Tijen Aksit, Hande Isil Mengü and Robin Turner (Editors)

**SECTION I:**

**REFLECTIONS ON THE ROLE OF  
ASSESSMENT IN LANGUAGE TEACHING**

# TEACHER ASSESSMENT LITERACY FOR THE CLASSROOM

ANTHONY GREEN

## Abstract

Assessment has been marginalized or even ignored in initial language teacher-training. As a result, teachers are generally poorly equipped to assess student learning and to use assessment data to guide their practices. There is an urgent need to develop a better language assessment training infrastructure for teachers across Europe to help them to improve their assessment literacy. Addressing this shortcoming, a three-year EU-funded project, Teachers' Assessment Literacy Enhancement, involving a network of experts from five European countries aims to: develop innovative training materials and services delivered through online learning systems; offer support and mentoring for teachers working in a range of countries; expand the exchange of language assessment expertise between educational contexts; build cooperation between and within different disciplines and various sectors of training in order to foster efficient and meaningful assessments suitable for language learners in primary and secondary education. This paper shares emerging results and discusses implications for assessment training courses in the European context.

**Keywords:** assessment literacy, teacher training.

## 1. Introduction

Recently, concerns have been raised over levels of “assessment literacy” in language education around the world. The term, assessment literacy was introduced by Rick Stiggins in 1991 to refer to a general failing on the part of teachers and the wider public in the USA to interpret assessment information. Stiggins linked this to poor communication on the part of specialists in assessment and weaknesses in teacher training.

Like school teachers in the USA, language teachers around the world are expected to take a growing role in assessing learners in the classroom and to prepare their students to take national and international tests. Glenn Fulcher (2012) referred to this as a “phenomenal increase in the testing

and assessment responsibilities placed upon language teachers” (p. 113) which he associated with the popularity of accountability systems and the influence on education policies of external frameworks such as the Common European Framework for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001).

In this context, the question of assessment literacy has come increasingly into focus in international language education. In 2001, Geoff Brindley complained that there was almost no research into language teachers’ levels of training, professional development needs and assessment practices. However, this is no longer the case and over the past decade a number of researchers have explored the area.

One direction that has been followed has involved adapting a set of standards for teacher education in assessment developed by the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association (1990). Kathi Bailey and J. D. Brown (1996) suggested that “it behoves us, as a profession to consider drafting or adapting a similar set of standards dealing specifically with language assessment” (p. 250). With this in mind, Bailey and Brown (1996) investigated which topics were covered in graduate language assessment courses. In a follow-up paper, published in 2008, they asked the same questions again to find out what had changed. Very little had changed: elements such as validity theory, reliability, measurement error, statistics for test and item analysis, the critique and analysis of test content and item writing skills were the mainstay of most courses on both occasions.

Some researchers have tried to test how much language teachers know about key assessment concepts and practices. Tim Newfields (2007) constructed a test of assessment literacy designed for self-diagnosis that included four broad topic areas: *Terminology*, *Procedures*, *Test Interpretation* and *Assessment Ethics*. Others have looked at the quality of teacher-made tests or the techniques they use to assess their learners. A common finding across all these studies is that assessment can, and should, be used more effectively.

It has been suggested that the content of courses in assessment needs to change. Training courses generally concentrate on the practice of large-scale testing and statistical analyses, but teachers are expected to create their classroom assessment procedures that do not need to follow the same restricted formats as large-scale tests. They are expected to use the results to report on the achievements of small numbers of learners. Statistical tools designed for large-scale tests are not very useful for this purpose. Brindley (2001) suggested that “since most teachers are not engaged in the construction of formal tests, there are strong arguments for placing the

emphasis in professional development—at least initially—on the role of assessment in the learning process rather than on theoretical and statistical issues in testing” (p. 131). He suggested that training courses for teachers should “begin with a focus on curriculum-related assessment” (p. 129) and should include such alternatives to testing as the use of “observation schedules, portfolios, conferences, project work, journals, self-assessment techniques and progress and achievement profiles” (p. 130). Glenn Fulcher (2012) raised additional issues: traditional courses tend to ignore the social purposes of assessments, the history of assessment practices, the question of fairness and the ethics of testing practices.

Although the content of courses in assessment has come in for criticism, an even more serious concern is that many teacher training courses give little or no time to any assessment issues. Introductory courses such as the Trinity Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CertTESOL) and the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) include only brief references to assessment, and Lynda Taylor (2009) noted that even advanced programmes for experienced language teachers “typically devote little time or attention to assessment theory and practice, perhaps just a short (often optional) module” (p. 23).

If teachers are given too little and sometimes unsuitable training in assessment, how much and what kind of assessment literacy do teachers actually need? And how does this compare with levels of assessment literacy needed by other people? Rick Stiggins (1991) proposed three levels of assessment literacy: a *functional* level needed by public officials and others who only need to use assessment results; a *practical* level needed by teachers and other educators who not only use assessment data, but also produce them when assessing their students; and an *advanced* level required by specialists in educational measurement who generate data for others to use.

However, the primacy of testing and measurement specialists has been questioned. Rather than a difference of degree, the expertise needed for assessing students in the classroom may be something quite different from the expertise needed to build tests. Teachers might therefore benefit from a different form of assessment literacy to that offered by traditional courses in language testing. Ofra Inbar-Lourie (2008) argued that language assessment courses for teachers should promote what she calls an “assessment culture” in preference to the measurement approach or “testing culture” reflected in traditional testing courses.

The differences between assessment and testing cultures have been summarized by Liz Hamp-Lyons and Anthony Green (2014) (see Table 1).



In an assessment culture, precedence is given to forms of assessment carried out by teachers and by learners themselves in the course of regular classes. Assessment is an interactive process that involves the teacher supporting learners by scaffolding language use and providing targeted feedback. Key outcomes are not scores or grades that are readily amenable to statistical analysis, but insights into the learning process that can guide development. Ofra Inbar-Lourie (2008) uses the term *language* assessment literacy to emphasise the value of training teachers in how languages are learned and how learners are motivated to learn because this kind of awareness can support effective scaffolding and feedback processes.

Some writers have suggested that teachers, who need to use assessment to support learning, should be given training in classroom assessment, but that training in measurement (the focus of traditional courses in language testing) should only be given to testing specialists. However, research in the classroom has shown that in reality teachers need to work with tests and accountability systems as well as assessing learner development. Pauline Rea-Dickins (2001), based on classroom observation and interviews with teachers, suggested that teachers would need to develop a range of “different identities of classroom assessment” (p. 432). These included a *bureaucratic identity* concerned with meeting externally driven demands for accountability; a *pedagogic identity* that monitors learners’ progress and generates data that can be shared with other teachers; and a *learning identity* that focuses on the process of assessment as a means of learning and the role of the learner in this process.

Whether highlighting commonalities or contrasts between the practices of classroom assessment and testing, most commentators seem to agree that in relation to both, teachers need knowledge of the principles of assessment, practical skills in creating effective assessment procedures and interpreting performance and critical reflection on the role of assessment in education. Assessment needs to be fully embedded in training courses for teachers so that we have language educators capable of recognising whether or not their students have succeeded in learning.

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## Tables

**Table 1.**

*Contrasts between an assessment culture (assessment for learning) and a measurement culture (large-scale testing) (from Hamp-Lyons and Green, 2014)*

<i>Assessment for learning</i>	<i>Large-scale testing</i>
Learning-focused tasks	Judgement-focused tasks
Scaffolded task completion	Support not permitted
Interactive/exploratory questioning	Interlocutor/assessor questioning
Learner-involved assessment	Learner-excluded assessment
Self-assessment	Authority assessment
Peer evaluation	Authority assessment
Learning-focused feedback	Judgement-focused feedback
Interlocutor/assessor	Summary decision reporting
Scaffolding	Delayed or no feedback
Immediate feedback	No feed-forward
Focus on feed-forward	
Assessment is contingent	Assessment is absolute

# HOW CAN WE USE ASSESSMENT TO FACILITATE LEARNING?

PETER DAVIDSON

## Abstract

This paper examines the ways in which assessment can be used to facilitate learning in the classroom, beginning by reviewing Earl's (2003) useful distinction between assessment *of* learning, and assessment *for* learning. Following on from this it looks at both negative and positive backwash and how they can impact on teaching and learning, then examines the underlying principles of Learning Oriented Assessment (Carless, 2009) and how they relate to facilitating classroom learning. Finally, the different ways that assessment can be used to promote learning before, during and after assessment are discussed.

**Keywords:** learning oriented assessment, washback.

## 1. Introduction

All teachers are aware that the main purpose of assessment is to measure and evaluate what students know. However, assessment can also be used in the classroom to motivate students and to engage them in learning—what Tomlinson (2005) refers to as “learning validity”. The purpose of this article is to examine the ways in which assessment can be used to facilitate learning in the classroom. I begin by looking at some key questions before reviewing Earl's (2013) useful distinction between assessment “of” learning, and assessment “for” learning. Following on from this, I will look at positive backwash and how it can impact on teaching and learning (Biggs, 1999). I will then examine the underlying principles of Learning Oriented Assessment (Carless, 2009) and how they relate to facilitating classroom learning. In the final part of this chapter, based on my experiences, I will discuss the different ways that assessment can be used to promote learning before, during and after assessment. As will be demonstrated, when implemented in the appropriate way, assessment can

become an integral part of the learning process and have a significant positive impact on teaching and learning.

## **2. Key questions**

One of the most important questions we need to ask ourselves is “Do we already test our students too much?” Furthermore, does this over-testing get in the way of teaching? Another key issue is whether or not we are testing our children when they are too young. Recently in the UK parents have been withdrawing their children from taking SATs exams, stating that their children are too young and the exams are causing them undue stress (Richardson, 2016). Another important question we need to ask ourselves is whether or not “teaching to the test” is a bad thing.

Let’s attempt to answer these key questions one by one. In some instances, I’m sure some teachers do test their students too often. But whether or not you test too much depends on the purpose of your assessment. If you are implementing progress and achievement tests every day, then you are likely testing your students too often. However, if you use tests daily to help facilitate learning, this is more likely to be a positive rather than a negative. Do we start testing our children when they are too young? I don’t think so. Our children need to get used to tests. They need to learn how to deal with them and deal with stress. Sheltering them from tests at a young age is not doing them any favours. And is teaching to the test a bad thing? No, it is not. Not if the test is aligned to the curriculum, and helps to promote student learning.

## **3. Can testing be a good thing?**

Testing is often portrayed as something negative—at best, a necessary evil. However, there are many positive aspects of testing that are worth noting. Most obviously, tests are necessary to measure student progress and achievement, and to diagnose areas of strength and weakness. Tests can also have a significant positive backwash. For example, tests can be used to motivate students. How often have your students asked you if what you are teaching will be in the test? If it is not in the test, then students are less willing to learn it. In effect, students take tests very seriously. Some students even like tests, as they provide them with an opportunity to showcase to their teacher what they can do. Testing can have a positive backwash effect if it is focused on learning outcomes and based on the curriculum, and if it utilizes performance or task-based test task types that

are more likely to facilitate learning than other more traditional test task types such as multiple-choice or true-false questions.

#### **4. Assessment of, for and as learning**

Earl (2013) makes the following useful distinctions: assessment of, for and as learning. Assessment *of* learning is summative assessment conducted at the end of a course. It is teacher-centred, judgemental, and results are expressed as grades. Assessment *for* learning, however, is formative assessment. It is continuous assessment that takes place throughout the course, and it is more interactive, with teachers focused on identifying the learning needs of their students. Assessment *as* learning takes assessment for learning even further. As Earl (2013, 26) notes, the role of the student is key “as active, engaged and critical assessors, can make sense of the information, relate it to prior knowledge, and master the skills involved.”

#### **5. Backwash**

Backwash is the impact that assessment has upon teaching and learning (Taylor, 2005). The impact that testing has on teaching and learning should not be underestimated. It has been recognized now for some time that assessment does have a major impact on teaching and learning (Crooks, 1988). As noted by Biggs (1999, 141), “Backwash works positively when the assessment tasks are deliberately and firmly referenced to learning standards contained in the curriculum. In preparing for the assessments, students will then be learning the curriculum.”

#### **6. Learning-oriented assessment**

With Learning-oriented Assessment (LOA), the main purpose of assessment is to promote learning. So, this is really nothing new—just a new title for something that has been around for a while. With LOA, all assessment, both formal and informal, should contribute to learning. LOA aligns assessment with the curriculum (syllabus, materials, teaching, testing, and training) (Carless, 2009). Cambridge ESOL emphasizes that with an LOA approach, all levels of assessment, (macro and micro) should contribute to both the effectiveness of learning and the evaluation of learning outcomes.

## **7. How can assessment facilitate learning?**

### ***7.1. Think about timing and the number of assessments***

In order to promote deep, sustained learning, you need to implement formative, on-going, continuous assessment. If you only use summative assessment at the end of the course, it is unlikely to promote deep or sustainable learning, but rather just short-term surface learning. To facilitate learning, it is also better to have lots of shorter, low-stakes tests, which also have the added bonus of reducing test anxiety.

### ***7.2. Think about test task types***

The test task type you choose will also impact on the amount of learning that your test is likely to promote in your students. In Table 1, the test task types on the left are unlikely to facilitate any learning, whereas the task types on the right are more likely to promote learning.

### ***7.3. Adjust your test conditions***

In order for your tests to facilitate learning, you may need to alter your test conditions. Students sitting silently in rows are unlikely to facilitate any learning. Students may need to sit in groups and discuss things, and may need to work outside of the classroom. Students will need to be given plenty of time to complete their tasks, and they may need access to additional resources and equipment such as computers and the Internet. Students may also need to be allowed to use dictionaries and computers when doing tests, and have access to their course textbook and other materials. Finally, you need to ensure significant weighting is given to the assessment if you want students to take it seriously and to learn from it.

### ***7.4. Involve students in the assessment process***

For students to learn from the assessment process, they need to understand that assessment is something done with and for them, not to them. It is important for teachers to make the assessment process transparent, making sure that students know what will be in the test. You need to keep in mind that the purpose is to get students to learn, not to trick them. Try and involve students in the decision-making process of the assessment; e.g., when an assessment will take place, what areas of the curriculum the assessment will cover, what assessment task types will be used, and the

weighting given to the assessment. Another consideration is to use student-generated assessment and student self-assessment.

### ***7.5. Think about the potential of computerized assessment***

There is great potential for computerized assessment to promote learning. Similar items on a test can be tagged, for example questions related to the present perfect on a grammar test. So, rather than getting an overall score for each student, the teacher can see how each student is performing on different but related parts of the test. Computerized testing also allows us to look at test path data—such things as the order in which students answered questions, how long they took to answer questions, which questions they left blank and answered later, and which answers they changed. All of this data gives us a better understanding of the test results than whether students simply answered questions correctly or not. In effect, computerized testing allows us to analyse test results in a more sophisticated way and make better informed inferences based on these results. Another great benefit of computerized testing is that it can give instant feedback to students, and personalize and individualize their learning by providing links to suitable teaching material for them. The potential of computerized testing to promote learning is huge.

## **8. Practical suggestions**

### ***8.1. Before the assessment***

To facilitate learning from tests you need to be transparent. Before the test begins, tell your students what areas the test will cover and what questions will be in the test. You can even show students the test the day before you give them the test. You can even let students take the test home the day before the actual test—this is sure to promote learning. Another way to get students to learn from a test is to get your students to write the test, with the teacher taking on the role of test editor.

### ***8.2. During the assessment***

I have found that one of the most effective ways to facilitate learning during a test is to make it an “open book” test. As mentioned previously, allow students access to other sources; i.e., dictionary, textbooks, and the Internet. Let students ask you questions during the test, and give plenty of time. Consider using pair assessment where two students complete one test



or group assessment where a small group completes the same test. Recently in my classes I have been experimenting with whole-class assessment where the whole class completes the same test and they all get the same score. This generates a phenomenal amount of class discussion and the learning potential is massive.

### ***8.3. After the assessment***

One technique that I have been using with some success now for a number of years is to let the students redo the assessment after some additional teaching input from me. For example, I may get the students to write an essay for me early on in the course, but because they do not use thesis statements and topic sentences and develop their ideas sufficiently, they usually do poorly in the test. I try to get the students to ask me if they can write the essay again, and I “reluctantly” agree to this and offer to teach them some things to improve their writing. All the students pay attention. Then I mark the essay again, using the same marking rubric that I used before, and the students can see the improvements they have made in different parts of the rubric. This technique is highly motivating for students and it makes their learning more relevant, personalized and individual.

## **9. Conclusion**

Assessment provides us with an excellent opportunity to facilitate learning. There is nothing wrong with “teaching to the test” if the test is based on the curriculum. Using assessment to facilitate learning may require a slight paradigm shift, adjusting the timing and number of assessments you give and the type of test task types you employ, as well as adjusting the testing conditions. However, it should also be noted that using formative assessment to facilitate learning should augment, not replace, summative assessment. When assessment is an integral part of the learning process, it can have a significant positive impact on teaching and learning. Not exploiting the potential learning gains that assessment can achieve is a huge wasted learning opportunity.

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## Tables

**Table 1**  
*Test task types*

<i>Task types unlikely to facilitate learning</i>	<i>Task types likely to facilitate learning</i>
multiple-choice questions true/false questions Matching cloze tests gap fill	task-based questions performance-based questions authentic assessment tasks projects portfolios
short-answer questions	essays

# MORPHOLOGICAL VARIABILITY AND INSIGHTS ON TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

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## Abstract

When we look at the end state grammars in L2 acquisition, we see that having an overall competence at the same level as monolinguals is hard for adult second language learners. Adult second languages are usually incomplete or divergent when compared with native speaker languages. Speakers sometimes use necessary inflection in one sentence but they may omit it in the next sentence. Recent findings about morphological variability, differences between competence and performance, its reasons and possible ideas for teaching and assessment will be discussed.

**Keywords:** speaking, inflection, adult second languages, competence and performance.

## 1. Morphological variability

There seem to be variations in the production of L2 learners: they sometimes use the necessary inflection morphology and sometimes they do not. Researchers want to understand the underlying causes of the variation regarding L2 learners' use of inflection morphology and the link between overt morphology and underlying syntax. In the past, some researchers thought that the missing inflectional markers in the production meant that the corresponding syntactical features were impaired. There are several theories stating that view.

The first one is the Minimal Trees Hypothesis proposed by Vainikka and Young-Scholten (1994). According to this theory, at the beginning of L2 acquisition, only lexical categories are available to the learner whereas grammatical and functional categories are absent. The learner starts with resetting L1 parameters. As the learner works on the input, he/she develops the phrase structure ( $X'$ ) of L2. There is a linear order while forming the  $X'$  structure. First, the learner has to identify a head and to

acquire the maximal projection. Then, he/she forms a complement position in accordance with the positive evidence. Lastly, he/she forms a specifier position. This linear development and the stage model (VP—IP—CP) were later challenged by other researchers. The second theory is the Impaired Representation Hypothesis. According to this view, optionality is a result of an impairment in functional projections (Meisel, 1997) or feature strength (Beck, 1998; Eubank, 1993).

Haznedar and Schwartz (1997) and Haznedar (2001) studied the data of Erdem, a Turkish child learning English and stated that although there were variations in the usage of inflectional morphology, the child could still show evidence of underlying syntactic projections. Erdem was 4.3 years old at the beginning of data collection. This study was longitudinal research, lasting 18 months and containing 46 recordings. The production of overt subjects, nominative subject pronouns, subject-verb agreements, and regular past tense (–ed) was examined. The results show that:

1. Lexical verbs usually don't have third person –s and regular or irregular past tense morphology for a long time;
2. Erdem quickly realized that English doesn't allow null subjects, so he almost always used overt subjects;
3. Subject pronouns are almost always nominative.

Although he correctly produced some structures such as the copula, overt subjects and nominative subjects even from the beginning of the recording, his usage of inflection for agreement and tense showed variety through the whole period of study. When we look at the production of the copula *be*, auxiliary *be* and the movement of syntactic elements to AgrSP/TP or to the Specifier of AgrSP/TP, we see that the functional projections are present in his grammar. Unlike what is stated in the Minimal Trees Hypothesis, he has unconscious knowledge of the syntactic properties of English such as overt subjects and nominative subject pronouns even before he uses inflectional morphology consistently.

Another study conducted by Prévost and White (2000) went over the production data of German and French adult L2 learners. The participants produced both finite and non-finite verbs interchangeably even in the same set of answers as a fluctuation. When the learners use finite forms, the usage is usually correct and they often use appropriate agreements. Finite verbs are not likely to occur in the positions of non-finite verbs. Finite verbs are raised as required in German and French, but non-finite forms may occur in raised or unraised places. Non-finite forms may be used instead of finite forms, but not vice versa.

Another hypothesis about the syntax-morphology interface, the Feature Reassembly Hypothesis, comes from Lardiere (2005). Lardiere states that each L2 learner should have morphological competence, and that includes knowing which forms are used with which features (2005). When there is a more complicated form-function mapping, problems are more likely to occur, and L1 effects are more visible. What is difficult for learners is not choosing the appropriate features in L2, but reassembling them with appropriate morphological representations. Lardiere worked on a case study of an adult Chinese speaker whose L2 is English in 1998. The subject's name was Patty and her English was at its end state, in that it was unlikely to improve further. Patty could not use the third person singular marker correctly, and she often omitted it. Still, she showed good use of several syntactic properties of English, such as appropriate nominative case assignment, correct accusative pronouns in non-nominative contexts and almost no null subjects. That again shows that she had the necessary syntactical projections such as tense and agreement in her interlanguage grammar.

What is the reason for this variability? Haznedar and Schwartz (1997) discuss the possibility that missing inflection means that the variation only represents the deficiency in the surface manifestation, not at the underlying level. According to Lardiere (2005), continuing issues with inflection indicate non-target-like morphological competence. The problem in the syntax/morphology interface is not a learning problem or impairment in interlanguage grammar. Morphology has to be learnt just like vocabulary items, but even when it is learnt, learners may not be successful at retrieving it every time. The learner may have difficulties in linking the abstract features such as the tense or agreement to overt morphology. The problem in the syntax/morphology interface is a mapping problem. The learners cannot map from abstract projections to the overt morphological realizations. If the learners can retrieve the correct morphological features, they use the appropriate inflection. However, if they cannot, the inflection is absent. Even when there is a mapping problem, the inflection is missing rather than faulty. Moreover, substitutions are not random. Non-finite verbs can substitute for finite verbs, but not the other way round; masculine gender can be used instead of feminine gender; indefinite articles can be used instead of definite articles. Such situations show that some forms act as "default" forms in our mental grammars, and therefore they can be substitutes for their counterparts. To conclude, the issue regarding the morphology/syntax interface is the degree to which learners can supply agreement, not