Re-examining formative assessment in ESL classrooms in China

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Outline

1. A synthesis study of FA research in China (2001 to 2012)
2. The perception and practice of FA by Teachers in Secondary Schools
A synthesis study of FA research in China from 2001 to 2012

(1) **Purpose**
(2) **Method**
(3) **Findings and Analysis**
(4) **Implications**
(5) **Conclusions**

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www.britishcouncil.org.cn/newdirections
Purpose

• To investigate the current situation and predicament of
• To make suggestions for future development
  • by drawing on international experiences with reference to Chinese educational contexts
  • based on the analysis of journal articles and educational newspapers as well as monographs and Ph.D. dissertations
Method

Three types of materials were searched and obtained:

① 1958 articles.

② Four published monographs (through Google)

③ Three Ph.D. dissertations (from CNKI Ph.D. database and one through personal contact)
A mix method of quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis

- The quantitative method aims to analyze the macro-situation
- The qualitative method tends to analyze the current problems in FA from a micro perspective
Findings
Number of publications of FA

New Directions English: Language Assessment in China
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<tr>
<td><strong>Journal</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>42</td>
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<td>134</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>346</td>
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<td><strong>Newspaper</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Monograph</strong></td>
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“英语新方向”系列研讨会：中国英语语言评估
New Directions English: Language Assessment in China
Types of journal articles
“英语新方向”系列研讨会：中国英语语言评测
New Directions English: Language Assessment in China

THE NUMBER OF KEY FOREIGN LANGUAGE JOURNAL ARTICLES ACCORDING TO COURSE TYPE

- College English for Non-English Majors: 84%
- Wring course of English Majors: 4%
- Translation course of English Majors: 4%
- No-specific course (review work): 8%
Table 2: Types of journal articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Key journals</th>
<th>Ordinary journals</th>
<th>Supported by funds</th>
<th>High citation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>25/1.3%</td>
<td>1893/98.6%</td>
<td>40/2%</td>
<td>36/1.87%</td>
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- Table 2: Only 25 (1.3%) of all these articles are published by key journals of foreign language
- e.g., Foreign languages in China, Foreign Language Research and Foreign Language World
• the financial investment into FA is inadequate;
• the general research quality is poor;
• too little quality FA efforts for primary and secondary L2 classrooms.

• In order to gain a closer view of FA research: Research themes classified (Table 3)
Table 3: The research themes of FA articles in China from 2001 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Representative articles (authors and issued time)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretic conceptualization</td>
<td>Cao, 2012; Li, 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and reliability</td>
<td>Li &amp; Zeng, 2008; Li, 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher development and FA</td>
<td>Xu &amp; Liu (2008); Xu (2011); Cheng 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Wang &amp; Fu, 2006; Wu, 2008; Li, 2012.</td>
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</table>
1. Theoretic conceptualization of FA
Little effort made to clarify what FA is until 2012:

• Li (2012): FA a principle; but no elaboration

• Cao (2012): reexamined the concept of FA in relation to Curriculum and learning theories and proposed that all assessments are FA.
2. FA policy and implementation

• Huang (2010): A survey of 20 universities for their implementation of FA in college English

• Chen’s (2012): Research investigated two universities
  – analyzed institutional response to national requirements of FA
  – teachers’ response to institutional specification of FA

• Jin (2010): a questionnaire survey with 45 teachers from 25 universities across 16 provinces and cities
3. Study of FA policy and implementation


• No paper has explored the distinguishing FA features for L2 classroom.
4. Construct of FA system and working model

• A formative assessment system:
  – aligned for college English teaching
  – based on the theoretical framework of cognitive-social learning theory of education
  – under the guidance of task-based and cognitive approaches to language (Huang, 2010).

• A FA system for English major writing, consisting of peer assessment, self-assessment and portfolio (Li, 2011).
4. Construct of FA system and working model

• Contribution: (1) deepen our understanding of FA;(2) reveal the applicability of FA for different courses.

• Limitations :(1) Interaction of different components of FA system not discussed; (2) Failure to represent all the components of FA cycle. General FA model has been deeply researched so far in international
5. Validity of FA

• Li & Zeng (2008):
  (2) Proposal of the framework by Bachman for validity study of FA

• Li (2012): Consequence should be the key issue in the study of FA validity.
6. Teacher professional development and FA

• Xu & Liu (2008):
  (1) formation of teachers’ knowledge of FA influenced by their personal life, academic experience, social relationship, and their living and working site
  (2) Attention should be paid to teacher’s personal experience and creation of favorable working environment for teachers

• Xu (2011):
  (1) teacher’s identity is constructed under the influence of social and historical factors
  (2) teachers’ identity change is caused by assessment reform
7. Literature review of FA

• Contribution
  (1) a bird’s eye view of FA in China.
  (2) where it should be going.

• Limitation
  (1) The reviews are based on analysis of limited materials.
  (2) The problems they pointed out are too general.
Summary (7 points)

• Inadequate financial support
• Lack of quality research into various aspects of FA
• Imbalanced quality research focus
• Limited knowledge of the latest developments of FA
• The shortage of L2-related FA research
• The tension between FA and SA in the dominant testing culture in China
• The time-consuming nature of FA and lack of professional FA training.
Implications

- Policy-makers, researchers and practitioners should work together to enhance FA for L2 in China by:
  1. taking into consideration of local contexts
  2. drawing on international experiences.
Specifically, efforts in the following areas:
• More financial support for quality research in FA
• Clarification of FA concept
• Study of FA in relation to L2 theories
• Promotion of student SA performance through FA
• Development of ready-to-use FA
• Strengthening professional development for FA
Conclusion

• Strong passion and motivation towards FA
• Implementation in L2 classrooms
• Challenges and problems remain
  – Lack of research would impose negative impact on both policy making and classroom practice
  – More efforts should be made for better understanding and implementation of FA
The perception and practice of FA by Chinese English Teachers in Secondary Schools

- **Purpose**
- **Method**
- **Findings and Analysis**
- **Implications**
- **Conclusions**
Purpose

• To explore Chinese EFL teacher’s
  (1) perception of FA
  (2) practice of FA
Method

- Participants: 37 M. Ed, students and 61 EFL teachers of Secondary schools
- Data Collection: at a workshop in Aug. 2013
Questionnaire 形成性评价问卷-Luo2.docx consist of 2 parts:

(1) The first part: further development of Taras (2008)’s QUESTIONNAIRE on Summative and Formative Assessment.

(2) The second part was a further development of Formative Assessment Practices Teacher Survey (Wylie et al. 2012).

- A pilot study: 3 university teachers
- Modification of the layout and wording
• Teachers’ perception of FA: 3 questions from Part 1 to examine
  – Agent
  – Content
  – Timing
  – instrument of FA and
  – The relationship between FA and SA

1. What is the definition of FA?
2. Give an example of your FA practice.
3. How is FA related to SA?
Findings and analysis
Definition of FA

- Agent
- Construct
- Feedback
- Instrument
- Timing
- Relation between FA and SA
Definition of FA

1. Agent:
   - + teachers (89/98)

2. Construct (focus) of assessment
   - A wider concept of SA
   - Teachers’ instruction instead of students’ learning
   - Focus on smaller learning targets, e.g., steps in completing a specific task.
3. Timing of assessment: FA takes place
(1) in the process of teaching or learning
(2) at the end of a period of learning
(3) minute by minute and day by day basis
(4) the completion of a specific task, or during classroom instruction or at the end of a specific class
(5) the classroom reaction or responses to teacher question
(6) …
4. Feedback

(1) To use feedback to obtain information from assessment for the purpose of adjusting instruction.

(2) Feedback not perceived as essence of FA by most of the teachers.
5. Instrument of collecting information

(1) Portfolio

(2) Homework

(3) Classroom performance

(4) Tests such as small quizzes, monthly text, mid-term tests and finals

(5) One teacher mentioned self-assessment table at the end of unit instruction.
6. Relation between FA and SA

- FA and SA are related in two ways:

(1) FA will promote students’ performance in SA.
(2) FA can be aggregated into SA.
   - “FA in different phases will constitute SA.”
   - “SA should take into consideration some evidence provided by FA.”
   - “SA will be more scientific by including FA.”
7. Teacher practice - analyzed under five formative assessment characteristics
(1) Learning expectations and Success criteria

- + learning expectations;
- - sharing them with students or use them to evaluate

- 13.4% participants never use learning goals to evaluate students progress.
- 22.7% never discussed openly success criteria with students.
(2) FA and learning

- information collection: 33%
- use of information to adjust or inform instruction: 26.8%
+ developing skills: 55.7% ~ 59.8%
+ proficient in skills: 8.2% ~ 9.3%
+ qualified as mentors: 1.0% ~ 2.1%
- systematically monitor whole class progress or individual needs: 14.5% to 18.5%
- give students the opportunity to demonstrate learning progress: 13.4%
(3) Feedback and feedback use

- Participants are confident in giving feedback.
- But,
  - 0-7.2%: never identify areas of improvement, strength or individualize feedback when providing feedback.
  - 0-21.6%: never give students the opportunity and time to use feedback to revise and edit their work, nor a clear structure for using feedback.
(4) Self-Assessment and peer-assessment

- **7.2-15.5%:**
  - encourage nor instruct students to do self-assessment,
  - feedback to themselves
  - changes to their own work.

- **5.2-34.0%:**
  - instruct students on peer assessment
  - guide peer feedback process
  - integrate peer assessment into FA or use it for SA

- **Only 34.0% and 25.8% use peer assessment for summative purpose and grading.**
(5) Formative use of summative assessment

• 1.0-32.0%: - try various skills of formative use of SA

• 32.0%: - requiring students to develop test items and marking scheme and standards on their own

• 1%: + examine students’ assignments and previous test items to identify students’ weaknesses and prepare students for tests.
Implications

• 0% to 4.1 participants think themselves qualified as mentor for FA skills, which makes professional development if we rely on teacher learning community difficult.

• Expert intervention might be necessary for professional development of FA capacity.

• Teacher practices and proficiency vary from skill to skill.

• Different efforts and resources needed for development of different skills.
Conclusion

• Chinese ESL teachers misconception and inappropriate practice of FA.

• Professional development should be given top priority if FA is to be properly practiced for learning and as learning.


Thank you!