

BOOK REVIEW

S. W. Chong & H. Reinders (Eds.). *Innovation in Learning-Oriented Language Assessment*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2023. Pp 333.

Over the past few decades, there has been a paradigm shift in language assessment towards a “learning culture”, which prioritizes the learner and learning rather than exam preparation, or an “exam culture” (Hamp-Lyons, 2007). This shift has led to increased interest in learning-oriented assessment (LOA) for its potential to improve learning and teaching. Despite a growing body of literature exploring LOA’s concepts, types, principles, and implementation, many teachers struggle with applying LOA effectively in their unique contexts due to the intricate nature of the educational environment. Addressing this challenge, Chong and Reinders’s edited volume, *Innovation in Learning-Oriented Language Assessment*, emerges as a vital resource showcasing innovative LOA practices from 10 countries, which serve as exemplary models for its implementation.

The introductory chapter goes beyond the familiar classifications of assessment—assessment *of* learning, assessment *for* learning, and assessment *as* learning—to introduce a new dimension: assessment as ecology. This perspective underscores the fact that “language assessment operates not in isolation, but in alignment with learner needs and the surrounding environments” (p. 3). Building upon Turner and Purpura’s (2016) LOA model and drawing on the research insights from the 17 subsequent chapters, the authors establish ten principles for cultivating LOA. These principles stand as foundational pillars for the development and enhancement of LOA.

As the book unfolds, practical examples span a range of topics within the LOA field, offering valuable insights for readers. To enhance clarity and provide a more structured overview, this review is organized around five key topics: technology-

enhanced LOA (Chapters 4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16), strategies for effective feedback (Chapters 5, 6, 8, 17), the integration of LOA principles into summative assessment (Chapters 3, 7), enhancing teacher assessment literacy (Chapters 10, 16), and LOA development and validation (Chapters 7, 9, 18). There are also two review chapters (Chapters 2, 14).

In the rapidly evolving landscape spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, technology-enhanced language assessment has gained significant traction. Multiple chapters within the book delve into the integration of technology into LOA. Notably, Chapter 4 showcases a Brazilian high school's adaptation to online education. Both synchronous and asynchronous sessions were designed, with the former engaging students in simultaneous online learning, and the latter encouraging students to complete tasks independently with feedback in a virtual learning environment. Chapter 11 introduces the application of Padlet, an online collaborative writing tool, to writing courses. This platform facilitates the sharing of writing outlines and compositions, self-assessment, and peer evaluations, resulting in elevated writing skills and interactive learning environments. To tackle the challenge of limited authentic speaking contexts in ESL learning, Chapter 12 creatively employs virtual reality to simulate real-life situations for speaking assessments among adult EFL learners in Iran. The outcome is heightened engagement and motivation compared to traditional oral interviews. Chapter 13, centered on nurturing university students' core competencies for future professional and societal advancement, employs technology-mediated, scenario-based assessments through e-portfolios, aligned with action-oriented and task-based principles. Furthermore, the potential of gamification within language assessment is explored in Chapter 15. It introduces a pro-gamer-inspired speaking portfolio assessment wherein learners select a video game, acquaint themselves with gameplay and pertinent language aspects, record their gameplay, and engage in iterative play and analysis cycles. The outcome is a montage video showcasing gaming accomplishments akin to pro-gamers. This innovative approach capitalizes on the engaging nature of gaming activities to enhance student involvement. Moreover,

students consider it to be fairer as compared to traditional one-shot tests, as it empowers them to select and exhibit their best performances in the montage video. Finally, Chapter 16 explores the development of language teacher cognition about technology-enhanced assessment through a detailed case study (further details are provided below under the “teacher assessment literacy” theme).

The second theme addresses strategies for effective feedback. Chapter 5 reflects student perspectives on dynamic one-to-one assessment in writing classes, underscoring the importance of feedback tailored to individual preferences. Chapter 6 explores a learner-centered approach to feedback. An analysis reveals a notable disparity between self-assessment and teacher assessment concerning micro-aspects (language use) in contrast to the higher consistency observed in macro-aspects (constructing summary and argumentative essays), emphasizing the need for improved student self-assessment practices and enhanced feedback literacy. Practical recommendations include selective use of self-assessment for different purposes and the provision of clearer guidance on micro-level descriptors. Chapter 17 examines hybrid feedback in process-oriented writing, utilizing quasi-experimental research, validating its dual role in mitigating teacher workload and addressing the limitations of Automatic Writing Evaluation. Notably, the focus of Chapter 8 is on teachers rather than approaches to feedback; it explores the impact of language teacher autonomy on writing feedback via a case study. This research categorizes autonomy into three dimensions: action (engaging in self-directed professional action), development (pursuing professional development opportunities to enhance pedagogical practices), and freedom (emancipating oneself from the control of others). The first two dimensions emerge as positive influencers on writing feedback practices. However, it is acknowledged that teachers grapple with a low degree of freedom and contend with external constraints like school and parental expectations when giving feedback.

The book also delves into the utilization of LOA principles in summative assessments, which aims to amplify their positive impact. For example, Chapter 3 explores LOA’s

potential in Chinese high school entrance exam preparation. Interactive activities and learner-centered teaching methods are found to foster independent learning and involvement in assessment. However, challenges persist, including time constraints, a test score-centric teaching milieu, limited teaching experience and language expertise. In a similar vein, Chapter 7 outlines how a summative test can be thoughtfully designed to serve as a tool for promoting ongoing learning (further details are provided below under the “LOA development and validation” theme).

In addition, the implementation of LOA puts forward new requirements for teachers. Several chapters focus on the topic of teacher assessment literacy. Chapter 10 focuses on pre-service English teacher training by investigating how CELTA tutors execute LOA-related training. While the CELTA curriculum often addresses LOA, attention is needed for “how assessments can influence materials and course design” (p. 176)—especially as instructors feel less confident in this area. Chapter 16 explores the development of English teacher cognition regarding technology-enhanced language assessment, utilizing one course in a TESOL Master’s program as an example. While the student teachers’ initial knowledge is enriched through the course, the challenge lies in developing their ability to translate that knowledge into practice, accentuating the importance of developing practical skills in teacher education.

The book also features case studies illustrating LOA development and validation. Chapter 7 outlines the creation of a local context-specific academic writing test for graduate students in a Japanese university. The process involves comprehensive needs analysis, theoretical conceptualization of the measured skills, and the inclusion of faculty members in test task design and development of the rating process. In Chapter 9, the National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy addresses the absence of a systematic vocabulary test for UK KS3 students (Year 7-9) by developing a vocabulary achievement test aligning with the syllabus to help students systematically learn and master key vocabulary. Chapter 18 explores the assessment of learner autonomy through e-portfolios. Using Evidence-Centered Design (ECD) as a

framework, researchers craft an e-portfolio for non-English major undergraduates in a Chinese university to self-assess the development of their autonomous learning abilities. The e-portfolio is seen to remedy existing drawbacks in measuring autonomous learning ability while fostering its development. By enabling the collection and automatic analysis of diverse types of evidence, it effectively navigates the multidimensionality of learner autonomy—a feat that conventional self-report scales and student narratives often fall short of achieving.

Enriching this compilation are two review chapters, keeping readers informed about the latest research. Chapter 2 offers an overview of the literature on formative language assessment through an analysis of empirical research articles, encompassing its nature and mode, research contexts, methods, and findings. Chapter 14 collates research articles centered on mobile-assisted language assessment for adult EFL learners, elucidating the most commonly-used assessment tasks, language domains these tasks assess, and their task characteristics.

This book aptly embodies the essence of innovation within the LOA field. It encompasses a spectrum of innovative practices, from integrating emerging technologies like VR—emphasized as a future direction in Gebril's (2021) final chapter considering the role of technology—to innovative teaching methods such as gamification, the assessment of broader constructs like core competencies and learner autonomy, and the introduction of novel assessment modalities such as scenario-based assessments. Notably, the utilization of ECD as a conceptual developmental framework enhances its comprehensive approach. These dynamic practices collectively exemplify the latest advancements in teaching, learning, and assessment, imparting fresh perspectives to readers.

Additionally, this volume holds several distinct advantages, solidifying its role as an irreplaceable resource for educators, researchers, and practitioners alike. Foremost among these is its pragmatic approach to LOA, offering readers tangible insights into

the successful operationalization of LOA principles in a wide variety of contexts and uses. Every chapter culminates with a “practice brief”, equipping language educators with actionable strategies that they can integrate into their own instructional practice.

Furthermore, the book adopts the “assessment as ecology” paradigm, underscoring the paramount role of context. It showcases LOA implementation across diverse contexts spanning 10 countries, covering high and low-stakes assessments, classroom, and large-scale assessments. It addresses diverse age groups of EFL learners, including young learners, high school students, university attendees, and adult learners. This comprehensive perspective sets it apart from the existing literature.

Another strength lies in the book’s emphasis on the integration of technology within LOA. In an era defined by technological progress, the book harnesses the potential of technology-enhanced language assessment, spotlighting tools like online collaborative platforms, virtual reality, and e-portfolios. This contemporary stance mirrors the evolving educational landscape, priming educators to harness technology’s full potential.

However, the book also has some limitations. Firstly, its orientation towards practical applications results in a conglomerate of real-life cases. A more systematic categorization based on specific themes could enhance coherence and reader accessibility. Additionally, a more balanced coverage of language skills would enrich the book’s content since reading and listening are underrepresented. Lastly, while the core idea of LOA is highlighted in the initial chapter, further clarity on its connection to related concepts such as dynamic assessment, formative assessment, assessment *as* learning, which are used in subsequent chapters, would assist readers less versed in these concepts. Supplementary resources such as Jones and Saville (2016)’s work could provide enhanced theoretical understanding.

Despite these limitations, we firmly believe that this book stands strong as a practical guide for teachers seeking to implement effective language assessment practices. It is

also a valuable resource for graduate students, researchers, policymakers, and language testers seeking to advance their knowledge of LOA and its possible applications.

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