

**L.F. Bachman & B. Damböck. *Language Assessment for Classroom Teachers*. Oxford University Press. 2018. Pp. 304.**

With developments in language assessment over the past few years, attention has been increasingly drawn to the consequences or washback of assessment and testing practices in language classrooms. However, research in this area is nascent, and the reliability and validity of classroom-based assessments are not often empirically verified. Furthermore, few resources are available to provide teachers with systematic and coherent support for language assessment practices. Meanwhile, more students are, in general, affected by decisions made based on assessments in language classroom settings than by those based on large-scale standardized assessments (Cheng & Fox, 2017).

Bachman and Damböck's book entitled 'Language Assessment for Classroom Teachers' provides classroom teachers with an entirely new approach to developing and using classroom-based language assessments. The authors distinguish two main modes of classroom assessment: implicit and explicit modes. The *implicit* mode occurs as a part of classroom teaching and students are normally *unaware* of it happening in class. This mode of assessment is used mainly for formative decisions. Teachers receive training in this assessment mode in their teacher education programs, and their experience with this accumulates with daily classroom practice. The *explicit* mode of classroom-based assessments, on the other hand, is a separate activity from teaching. In the case of explicit assessments, students are aware that an assessment is happening, and outcomes are used mostly for summative decisions. Unlike the implicit mode of assessment, many teachers have doubts about their ability to effectively develop and use explicit assessments, since in many cases they receive little training in language assessment or only know some general principles based on large-scale standardized tests.

Bachman is a widely recognised and respected authority on language assessment, with previous works, including *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing* and *Language Assessment in Practice*, written primarily for language testing researchers and test developers. His co-author on this new book, Damböck, has extensive experience as a classroom teacher, teacher trainer and trainer of teacher trainers, and together they have produced a book that is reader-friendly and very useful for classroom teachers and students of language testing and classroom teaching.

The book is clearly presented in four parts, with a total of twelve chapters.

Part I provides an introduction to classroom-based language assessment. Chapter 1 explains that the new approach is based on current theory and practice in the field of language assessment (e.g. Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996, 2010), and points out that the field now takes a much broader view of language assessment, including classroom-based assessment that provides information for teaching and learning. Based

on the authors' extensive experience in the field, they understand the needs and concerns of classroom teachers in language assessment, and aim through this book to empower teachers to become better at assessing their students. Chapter 2 discusses the purpose of language teaching and the importance of classroom-based language assessment, followed by the decisions teachers need to make in the classroom, and the modes and uses of classroom-based assessments. Then, it discusses the roles of test developers and test users, which, in the case of most classroom-based assessments, are typically performed by a single teacher. They then discuss the issue of practicality, which, embedded in the entire process of assessment development and use, depends on the decisions to be made and the resources needed.

Part II presents the authors' approach to classroom-based assessment. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the approach by discussing the concerns for fairness and accountability, the process of assessment justification together with the claims of the Assessment Use Argument (AUA) framework (Bachman, 2005; Bachman & Palmer, 2010), the process of assessment development, and the ways to provide backing for an AUA. Chapters 4-7 describe the four claims (intended consequences, intended decisions, intended interpretations and intended assessment records) respectively, in terms of the outcomes and qualities for each claim, the procedures for stating the claim and the possible ways to provide backing for them.

Part III exemplifies the application of this approach to the language classroom. Chapter 8 describes the procedures for using TLU (target language use) tasks to develop assessment task templates, which in fact, are the key links between the AUA and the assessment tasks. Chapter 9 discusses how to develop multiple assessment tasks from a single assessment task template, while Chapter 10 describes how to combine multiple tasks to develop a classroom-based assessment. Chapter 11 discusses administrative procedures in terms of three activities: preparing the test setting, providing an encouraging testing environment, and communicating the instructions. Then Chapter 12 moves on to address the procedures and considerations for scoring test items and reporting assessment results to stakeholders.

Part IV provides nine fully-developed examples of classroom-based language assessments for different age groups and ability levels across all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). There are an additional six examples on the book's companion website, [www.oup.com/elt/teacher/lact](http://www.oup.com/elt/teacher/lact).

Throughout its chapters, the book gradually builds up a systematic and practical approach on how to develop and use classroom-based language assessments, including explanations of key terms, activities and examples that help readers understand all the concepts with relative ease. The four claims of the AUA are explicitly discussed and detailed descriptions for using TLU tasks to develop assessment task templates are presented step by step. At the end of the book, the authors provide not only appendices with a checklist of things to think about before using a language assessment, task

templates and sample answers, but also a glossary with definitions, and a list of references for further reading.

The quality of the assessment is one of the most vexing issues in classroom-based assessment. Traditionally, in daily practices, most classroom teachers follow a simple procedure of assessment planning, information collecting, judgement making and providing feedback in organizing a classroom assessment. They typically first determine the appropriate objectives of their course, then draw up a specific test or design the items, and finally consider the scoring or rating. But by looking at the classroom assessment issues from the perspective of an assessment use argument (AUA), the book reminds and challenges classroom teachers to *first* consider the beneficial consequences of the assessment before deciding about what and how to test the students. By following the AUA approach (from consequence to decisions then to interpretation and finally to assessment record), teachers will also be able to collect evidence and justify their claims about the assessment qualities, namely, *beneficence, values-sensitivity, equitability, relevance, sufficiency, meaningfulness, generalizability, impartiality, consistency, and practicality.*

Should there be any flaws in the book, it might be the relatively limited discussion of scoring and grading in the classroom. The result of grading has a significant impact on students' self-confidence, self-perception, and learning motivation. Thus, it is often regarded as a high-stakes practice in a low-stakes (classroom) environment. In a majority of language classrooms, a single teacher has to juggle multiple roles (e.g. teacher, test administrator, test developer, rater, test user) at the same time, and these roles may be in direct conflict in the grading process. For instance, classroom teachers know their students and when it comes to scoring or grading, they often tend to award students as much for their effort as for their achievement, or may have trouble separating these from each other. Furthermore, some teachers may teach the same course to several classes, and in this case, how can the consistency of scoring be maintained and test fairness be ensured when students in the latter class may get information about the assessment from the students in the former class?

Overall, this is a practitioner-oriented book that clarifies many fundamental issues of language assessment in the classroom and justifies the use of the AUA framework in the development of classroom-based assessments. It is also filled with charts, task templates, follow-up activities, and examples for teachers to adopt in the future. The AUA approach is highly commendable for the development of assessment literacy and would support teachers to conduct reliable and valid assessments that improve both teaching and learning.

*Reviewed by Lan Luo*  
Zhejiang University

## References

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