

Book Review

Learning-Oriented Language Assessment: Putting Theory into Practice

Lu Geng Sun

English as an International Language Program, Graduate School,
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

Corresponding author: 6588046920@student.chula.ac.th

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1. Overview

The concept of learning-oriented assessment (LOA) has gained significant traction in the field of language assessment, offering a nuanced approach that intertwines assessment with learning to enhance student outcomes. Originating from the pioneering work of Carless (2007) and further elaborated by Mok (2012), LOA champions a holistic integration of formative and summative assessments within both formal and informal learning environments. This approach has culminated in the insightful edited volume by Gebril, *Learning-Oriented Language Assessment: Putting Theory into Practice*, which compiles a diverse array of research findings from esteemed academics worldwide. The book illuminates the necessity of aligning assessment practices closely with learning tasks to foster more effective instructional methodologies.

This book serves a dual purpose: elucidating the theoretical bedrock of LOA and showcasing its practical deployment across varied educational settings. The

structure first establishes the conceptual and theoretical foundation of LOA before exploring its application in classroom contexts. Early chapters are instrumental in setting the stage and explicating the core principles of LOA, including the pivotal roles of teachers and learners, the significance of scaffolding, and the seamless integration of assessment into the learning continuum.

2. Summary

This book begins with an in-depth exploration of the LOA framework, methodically unveiling its components, operational methodologies, and the necessary educator skill set. Beyond presenting a theoretical construct, the initial chapters prepare readers for forthcoming practical illustrations in later chapters, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of LOA's potential.

Subsequent chapters meticulously detail the essence of LOA, emphasizing stakeholder collaboration, the pivotal role of teachers in adapting assessments, and the imperative for clarity in defining LOA's operational skills and techniques. Chapter 4 investigates LOA's research within L2 classrooms, highlighting the importance of integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehend learning disparities.

The ensuing chapter, Chapter 5, delineates the rise of the LOA movement in recent years, primarily driven by the scrutiny of international examination bodies. The chapter acknowledges the contributions made by entities such as the Council of Europe and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in improving educational assessments. Nonetheless, it also pinpoints areas necessitating further amelioration, particularly regarding the fusion of learner-centered and contextually appropriate assessment methods, the provision of exhaustive teacher training, and the strategic management of resources. Chapter 6 redirects the focus to feedback mechanisms within LOA, advocating for practices that fortify learners' interactive competencies. This segment is notable

for its dissection of the complex nature of learning environments and the dynamic nexus between feedback, motivation, and assessment.

Importantly, this book confronts the challenges and triumphs of enacting LOA across diverse global contexts. Chapters 7 and 8 analyze the Egyptian educational milieu and its propensity towards exam-centric pedagogies. Chapters 10 and 11 add to the discussion by showing how LOA can be used in different situations and highlighting how flexible and adaptable LOA strategies are. The book culminates with the technologically-centered Chapter 12, which foretells a confluence of conventional pedagogy with cutting-edge technological instruments. This chapter accentuates the synergy between LOA and contemporary technology, proposing a vision for education that is both immersive and intuitive.

3. Commentary

While the book effectively outlines the LOA framework and its benefits, it occasionally lacks clarity in distinguishing between LOA and traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom practices. Traditional EFL approaches that have been a mainstay of EFL classrooms for a long time now often emphasize summative assessment and discrete point testing, which can obscure the ongoing process of language learning. In contrast, LOA advocates for a continuous assessment cycle that integrates learning and assessment, emphasizing formative feedback and the development of learners' metacognitive skills. This fundamental distinction, although implicit in the book's discussions, could be articulated more explicitly to underscore the paradigm shift that LOA represents.

Furthermore, the book's exploration of the challenges inherent in implementing LOA, such as teacher training and resource allocation, is insightful yet could benefit from a deeper examination. Specifically, the scalability of LOA practices and the requisite institutional support mechanisms remain areas warranting further exploration. Addressing these challenges in greater detail would

provide a more comprehensive understanding of LOA's applicability across various educational landscapes.

Additionally, while the book commendably highlights the successes of LOA in different contexts, a more nuanced critique of its theoretical underpinnings could enhance the discussion. For example, examining the tension between LOA's ideals and the practical realities of classroom dynamics, including learner diversity and assessment literacy among educators, would provide a more balanced view of LOA's practical viability.

In conclusion, *Learning-Oriented Language Assessment: Putting Theory into Practice* stands as an invaluable addition to the field of language assessment, offering both theoretical insights and practical guidance on implementing LOA. Despite certain areas where clarity and depth could be improved, the book successfully champions a learner-centered approach to assessment that promises to transform language education. It serves as a vital resource for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to understand and apply the principles of LOA in their own contexts.

4. References

- Carless, D. (2007). Learning-oriented assessment: Conceptual bases and practical implications. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 44(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290601081332>
- Mok, M. M. C. (2012). Assessment reform in the Asia-Pacific region: The theory and practice of self-directed learning oriented assessment. In Mok, M. (Ed.), *Self-directed learning oriented assessments in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 3–22). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4507-0_1