

RESEARCH

Assessment for Learning (AFL): Its Role in L2 Writing Contexts

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Abstract

Assessment plays a significant role in learning. Traditionally, it is regarded as a judgement on students' learning proficiency. In such cases, summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) generally plays its leading role. This type of assessment has long kept a seat for many centuries. The value of assessment in terms of fostering learning has not been instantly recognized. Up until recently, formative assessment or assessment for learning (AfL) has stepped into the spotlight. This academic article aims to reveal a different but interesting aspect of assessment and its full potential to maximize students' L2 learning, specifically in the L2 writing contexts, with an introduction of assessment for learning (AfL) in L2 writing pedagogy as a learning tool to effectively support students' L2 learning and skill development. Before reaching that goal, however, several interesting issues concerning the nature of assessment for learning (AfL) and L2 writing pedagogy need to be carefully considered as being discussed in the present article. As a number of benefits of an implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) to both students and teachers in L2 writing pedagogy are disclosed in this article, it is worth challenging the old practice, the traditional L2 writing classroom practice, as described in the article.

Keywords: assessment for learning (AfL), L2 writing pedagogy, EFL writing contexts

Introduction

Writing is a significant means of communication these days. It involves both formal writing and informal writing for multiple purposes in one's life. From the early state of their life to the current one, writing is a part of their process of growth. Unquestionably, this skill is regarded as an important skill for everyone to develop either in L1 or L2 in the pedagogy. When a certain language skill is acquired and developed, assessment is required in order to see how far users or learners can master such language skill. Unfortunately, this kind of assessment, assessment of learning (AoL), normally takes part in almost the final stage of the process in the traditional writing classrooms, including the L2 academic contexts. In so doing, students do not gain the benefits from such assessment for their language competence and skill development, since writing assignments are treated as the writing tests where students' writing performance and scores or grades are solely and mainly focused, and the writing process is minimized. This makes students traditionally hold a common mistaken belief that if they get A for their writing products, that means they are good at this skill. The students, thus, do whatever they can in order to produce their writing products without a single flaw, and this usually leads them to plagiarism. These students focus on the products and forget the process, especially the fundamental aim why they took this course in the first place: to learn and improve their language skill. This is what commonly happens in Thailand, an EFL academic context, where

summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) has long been applied in the L2 writing classrooms. According to Lee (2017), this eventually results in low motivation for language and skill development and low confidence in writing, especially in L2. Unquestionably, writing in either L1 or L2 turns out to be the most difficult language skill to master and least preferred language skill for these students to learn and develop.

In order to tackle such issues, assessment for learning (AfL) is getting more and more popular in teaching and learning of English writing, including in the L2 writing classrooms because of its merits. With a crucial role of assessment for learning (AfL) in the writing classrooms, students can take advantage of it to foster their language competence while they are achieving such skill. This kind of assessment promotes students' achievement (William, 2013). That means they can witness their own writing ability along the way and learn how to improve it in order to finally master the skill based on the formative feedback they receive from assessment for learning (AfL) in the collaborative and interactive language learning and skill improvement atmosphere where everyone is regarded as a facilitator to help each other learn and develop their L2 writing skill. In such cases, the writing process and language learning play the key roles in students' language competence development according to the process-based approach rather than the product-based approach adopted in the traditional writing class. That means assessment is perceived as a bridge between teaching and learning (William, 2013). Nonetheless, there are still some certain issues teachers have to face whenever they make an attempt to implement assessment for learning (AfL) in their writing pedagogy, especially in the EFL academic contexts. In order to deal with those problems, a discussion of assessment for learning (AfL) and its implementation in the L2 writing pedagogical contexts, specifically in the EFL writing classrooms in Thailand, is delivered in the present article.

Objective

To discuss assessment for learning (AfL) in L2 writing pedagogy for its more effective and practical implementation, particularly in the EFL contexts in Thailand

Writing Assessment in L2 Contexts

In a general sense, assessment is referred to testing or evaluation in the academic context. Its objective is to mark in order to recognize what learners can achieve in the form of grading which is commonly known as summative assessment (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). The aim of summative assessment is to show the level of students' proficiency after taking courses. The information students get from this kind of assessment, however, can be used in another step or a different stage of their life, such as higher stages of education or employment. Traditionally, summative writing assessment, assessment of learning (AoL) how to write, or assessment of writing products in terms of scores or grades can generally be seen in writing pedagogy, including L2 writing classrooms. This kind of writing assessment mainly focuses on students' writing competence at the final stage of language learning and skill development. This is commonly found in Thailand or what Lee (2017, pp. 3) mentions as the L2 school context where "an examination culture" is applied. In such context, including Thailand, a writing examination as summative writing assessment is integrated into L2 writing pedagogy. Consequently, the students' goal of learning how to write is to replicate the writing models and to pass the writing tests, not to achieve L2 writing skill. Nevertheless, as summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) is integrated into the L2 writing classrooms, it is good that students know the outcomes at the end of their learning process, especially after a long struggle throughout the semester for those L2 students. They can see the areas where they accomplish and what they still cannot, but this result has nothing to help them learn more about L2 or improve their L2 writing skill further. In other words, the result itself is just a label of their L2 writing competency.

As a result, formative assessment or an ongoing improvement is another kind of assessment to which teachers turn their attention. This type of assessment takes place in the interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere to create more effective learning experience that fosters students to learn about L2 and to develop their L2 writing skill. Through this type of assessment, students receive constructive feedback for more effective learning and skill development (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). As it is recognized as an ongoing improvement form of assessment, it is not the final judgement on students' L2 learning and skill development like the assessment previously mentioned. However, it does not mean that summative assessment is bad, but “it is merely getting the balance right” (Spendlove, 2009, pp. 4). That is, we can remain a balance between the process and the product through formative assessment. The process along the way is as significant as the goal that we want to reach. The goal of formative assessment is to develop students to succeed through feedback they get from doing interactive and collaborative activities or class assignments. Formative assessment is, therefore, carried out in order to discover students' areas of improvement for providing a diagnostic instruction through feedback in the learning process (Cotos, 2014). Quite recently, assessment for learning (AfL) which gives special attention to what students have learnt and what they still need to achieve for their language competence improvement has stepped into the spotlight (Lee, 2017). This sort of assessment, nonetheless, covers both summative and formative assessment (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). It is how we use assessment as a tool to yield positive effects on language learning and skill development on the part of students (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013; Lee, 2017). When the balance is right, a more effective goal can be achieved. Figure 1 illustrates the difference between summative assessment and formative assessment.

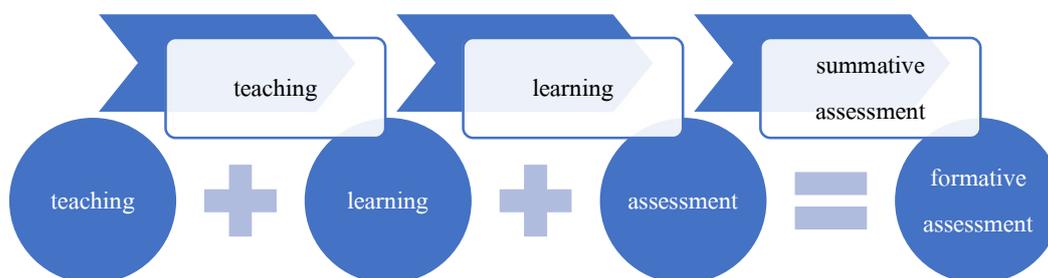


Figure 1 The Difference between Summative Assessment and Formative Assessment

According to Figure 1, the first top figure shows where summative assessment belongs when it is integrated into the learning process. The second one underneath illustrates the learning process where formative assessment is applied. Regarding these two figures, it is obvious to see that the distinctive difference between summative assessment and formative assessment is that assessment is taken at the final stage of the learning process when summative assessment is adopted. On the other hand, assessment is considered as a crucial part in the learning process when formative assessment is employed. Unquestionably, formative assessment has a larger territory in the academic arena since assessment itself is treated as another tool to facilitate students' learning, not a measuring tool of their learning. It is a kind of assessment that is used to support teaching and learning for developing learning (Shepard, 2019).

Consequently, L2 writing pedagogy should embrace assessment for learning (AfL). In so doing, it introduces a new concept of assessment in L2 writing pedagogy where both teachers and students share their roles and their mutual goal; that is, to use formative and constructive

feedback from assessment to help enhance students' L2 writing skill (Lee, 2017). This is regarded as a new challenge to change not only students but teachers' attitudes toward assessment from the scary measuring tool to the friendly positive and productive equipment. Both of them are able to be employed in order to help develop better instructions and improve students' L2 writing skill.

Issues of Assessment for Learning (AfL) in L2 Writing Classrooms: A Direct Message to EFL Writing Contexts

It is more than a decade that assessment for learning (AfL) has been used in the educational context. Nowadays, its positive effects on learning are widely recognized. Unfortunately, it is generally in the state of its own crisis; that is, it is still not firmly or deeply embedded in schools as claimed by Gadsby (2012). This possibly happens because of diverse factors since different schools across the world have their own distinctive characteristics of their academic contexts. Even the contexts like ESL and EFL are not the same. Apart from that, conventional assessment like summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) takes its root even more deeply in the academic system than it should have been in some educational contexts, and Thailand is not an exception. Therefore, it is sometimes beyond the challenge to plant a new practice of assessment to yield its effective fruits. In the EFL writing contexts, especially in Thailand, some notions need to be taken into account if a successful employment of assessment for learning (AfL) is the target. The following are some important issues that should be taken into account in order to get ready for the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) in the EFL writing contexts, including Thailand.

One of the foremost issues is that it is difficult for teachers and students to give up their familiar teaching and learning practice and their conventional assessment. With the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) in the EFL writing classrooms, it is probably an alien thing to their classroom tradition in which their roles have to shift gear. The teacher who is once the almighty instructor exercising his or her power by splashing red ink on the students' writing turns out to be a monitor and a facilitator of his or her students' language learning and skill development. The students themselves are not passive learners who do as instructed anymore, but the central active ones who take charge of their own L2 learning and writing skill improvement. To start employing assessment for learning (AfL) in the EFL writing contexts, therefore, both teachers and students need to understand the new roles they are required to play under the new concept of assessment. In such a case, a gradual implementation is highly recommended at first for both practitioners' new role adjustment. After a new cultural classroom atmosphere is cultivated, its full benefits are definitely not that hard to be seen and achieved.

However, since each student has his or her own learning style preference, and different students learn differently, learning style is another noteworthy notion affecting teaching and learning to write in L2 (William, 2011). Fortunately, certain studies revealed that if students learn in the style that is not their preferred one, the possibility is that that new learning style will take a deeper root and last longer in their learning. This calls for any new learning styles to be adopted for more effective learning. Thus, if a lifelong learning style can be created and developed through an integration of assessment for learning (AfL) in the L2 writing classrooms, assessment for learning (AfL) should be applied in L2 writing pedagogy, specifically the EFL contexts where lifelong learning is hard to find, especially in Thailand where the main source of knowledge is still from teachers, and this is the reason why Thai students rely on them instead of themselves either in their L2 learning or L2 skill enhancement. With this new learning style under the new concept of assessment, students' behaviors will be changed according to the assessment environment. That is, a friendly interactive and collaborative assessment atmosphere is created for students to play the active role to take

advantage of its full merits in the L2 writing class to foster their own L2 learning and skill improvement. In other words, assessment for learning (AfL) in this kind of academic atmosphere is regarded as “a tool for learning” or “learning-oriented assessment” for students (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013, pp. 4).

Regarding the interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere being created when assessment for learning (AfL) is implemented in the writing classrooms, Sambell, McDowell, and Montgomery (2013) remark that isolation, lack of some students’ engagement, and students’ poor study practices are the common problems found in such learning communities. Since isolation is regarded as students’ learning style preference, students’ attitude toward a new learning style like learning communities should be boosted up at the beginning. This can possibly be done through a good introduction and a comprehensive instruction, and thus, valuable benefits of the implementation of learning communities in L2 writing pedagogy, especially in the EFL academic contexts, can be acknowledged and witnessed by students. With this technique, it can also encourage more students’ engagement in taking part in the interactive and collaborative activities. For the final factor impeding the integration of learning communities in the L2 writing contexts, students’ poor study practices can be dealt with through the activities teachers assign to control the quality of study practices. For the in-class activities, for example, they are able to control the activities and learning situations since they can observe and help students in real time. However, if learning communities have to be taken place beyond the classroom context, this calls for the use of technology. To illustrate, a video or social media applications can be employed to make sure that students put effort into the activities and do their best when they have to do activities and learn by themselves.

Feedback, additionally, plays a crucial role in assessment for learning (AfL) as it is considered as the heart of formative assessment according to William (2013). It is sometimes considered as the only one aspect people notice in this sort of assessment; as a result, this approach is commonly viewed in a fragmented way (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). To correct this misunderstanding and to perceive this kind of assessment as a whole, it is, on the contrary, should be treated as a holistic or overall approach whose aim is to foster students’ learning, and it encompasses not only formative feedback but also learning communities in the classroom: collaboration, social interaction, participation within a social group, peer learning, enquiry-based learning, research-based learning; student engagement in learning activities, subject matter, and the assessment process, identity development as a practitioner; social and community-based features: student-teacher contact, active learning methods, prompt feedback, co-operation amongst students, and respect for diverse learning styles, for instance (Sambell, McDowell, & Montgomery, 2013). That means that simply using feedback as an assessment tool for learning in the EFL writing classrooms is just a part of assessment for learning (AfL). In order to achieve its full potential, the L2 writing instructions should embrace what is being mentioned above in their learning practice in the EFL writing classrooms.

Last but not least, the quality of teachers is another significant factor discussed by William (2011). That is, teachers should be the ones who intentionally develop their students’ necessary skills of collaborative learning, independent learning, lifelong learning, problem solving, and etc. rather than those whose aim is merely to teach their students to do the tests and achieve high scores. This is a big challenge for teachers in the EFL writing classrooms, especially in Thailand where teachers are forced by the national education system to teach their students to pass the tests and to get high scores, since an examination culture is a national and traditional academic practice. This is carried out based on the social equation norm that students’ scores reflect their academic success. Hence, the higher scores they get means the better students they are. To establish the new concept of L2 teaching, learning, and assessment in the EFL learning contexts like this, some certain teachers’ attitudes toward teaching and

learning how to write in L2 should be adopted. This means teachers must first see themselves as a moderator and a facilitator, not an authority and a proctor. With such roles, they are responsible for moderating and facilitating students to learn and develop their L2 learning and skills by themselves. They should understand their roles and let their students play theirs in order to become active learners, not the passive ones, who take charge of their own learning and improvement because these characteristics the teachers build can be embedded in their students' personality as a future personal reward when they are grown up.

The Integration of Assessment for Learning (AFL) into L2 Writing Pedagogy: A CALL to the EFL Writing Contexts

Assessment for learning (AfL) is not something new in the EFL writing pedagogy. Yet, it is not something that both teachers and students are familiar with or feel comfortable in their writing classrooms where it is implemented into. Its full potential to be effectively used is, therefore, somewhat far to be reached. Subsequently, it is necessary for both teachers and students to learn how to integrate this productive element into the writing process in order to embrace the positive notion of assessment to facilitate L2 learning and skill development in the interactive, collaborative, and supportive learning environment where the writing products are well polished, and at the same time, the students' writing skill can be boosted up.

Fundamentally, the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) into the L2 writing contexts requires a new mindset of both teachers and students as this concept needs a re-conceiving L2 writing class culture where some of original norms are required to change (Spendlove, 2009). To give an example, the idea of feedback should be re-conceptualized, especially in the Asian cultural classroom contexts, particularly Thailand, where feedback is treated as something personal and the notion of face is culturally crucial. As the feedback procedure is normally run in public to promote student learning when assessment for learning (AfL) is applied to the L2 writing classrooms, there is a tendency for students, specifically in the Asian EFL academic contexts, to recognize feedback as strong and public criticism that makes them lose their face instead of considering it as the constructive one. To illustrate this point, the students in my writing class were terrified and embarrassed at the moment when they knew that their writing assignments were supposed to appear on the screen, so all of them could learn from their own and their peers' mistakes. They even pleaded me not to do so because they found that it was embarrassing. Even if I guaranteed that their names or students IDs would never be seen, they said that their friends could still figure out since they all recognized their peers' handwriting. This kind of attitude toward feedback is an alien to assessment for learning (AfL). It is a barrier which reduces the positive influence of assessment for learning (AfL) to an absolute minimum on learning support. With this sense of perspective, no feedback or a limited amount of it in the writing classrooms can possibly mean that a progress towards their L2 learning goals can be hindered or minimally and gradually made.

In order to challenge this notion, a new mindset of this abstract and theoretical concept should be carefully and systematically introduced and developed in practice, so students can witness the real value of this innovative assessment and reap its full benefits. In order to have its merits, an orientation and a detailed instruction of how students can engage with and take advantage of feedback they receive when assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into the L2 writing class should be provided. Otherwise students possibly perceive feedback they get from assessment for learning (AfL) as their birthmark like the one they get from summative assessment and then nothing can be done to promote their learning. With a newly shaped attitude toward feedback through assessment for learning (AfL), students will regard feedback, particularly the negative and constructive one, as a bridge to eliminate a discrepancy between their goals of L2 learning and their current L2 proficiency and skill. Thus, after an orientation about feedback and its benefits and a practical demonstration were launched to my students,

they realized the advantages they would get. Eventually, their minds were opened to this new concept, and they were willing to take part in the activity. That moment was the right time when an introduction of assessment for learning (AfL) could initially be a part of our L2 writing classroom.

Therefore, when assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into the educational context, crucial elements of assessment for learning (AfL) as described by Laveault and Allal (2016) can be viewed and displayed in Figure 2 as follows.

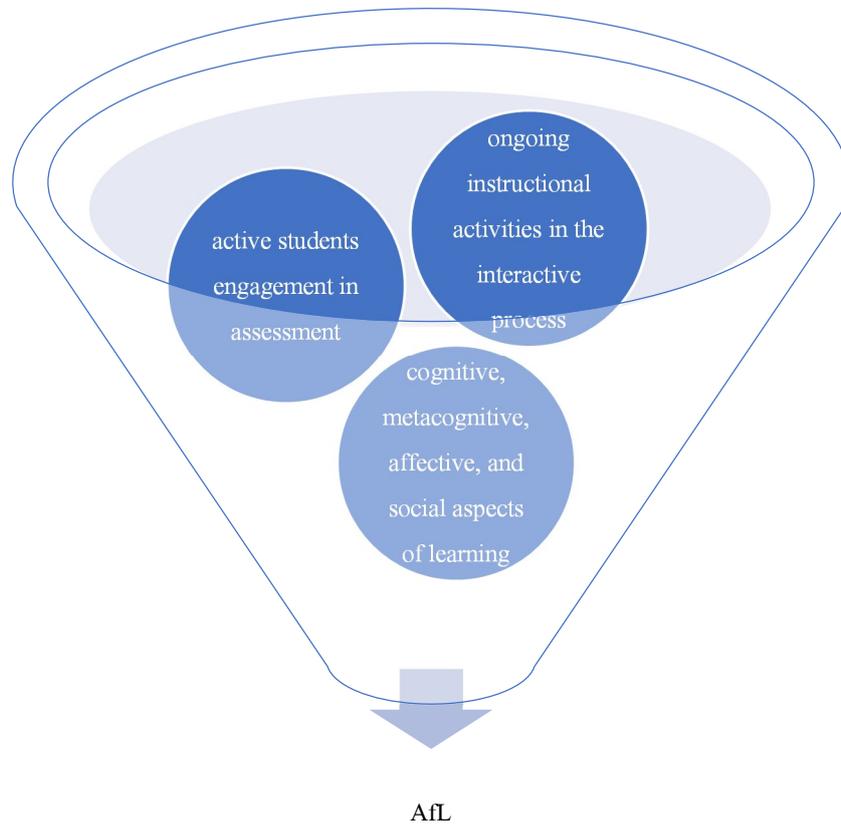


Figure 2 Crucial Elements of Assessment for Learning (AfL)

According to Figure 2, assessment for learning (AfL) entails three main features primarily focusing on students themselves, assessment in terms of ongoing interactive activities, and skills. Regarding assessment for learning (AfL), the role of students is highlighted. Students are perceived as active learners doing interactive classroom activities in which assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated like self-assessment or peer-assessment for their language learning and skill development. These assessment-embedded activities are basically designed to develop students' cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social skills of learning. Through such activities, students learn from both self-reflection and peer-reflection through collaboration and cooperation where their attitudes toward learning and their motivation to learn and develop their language skill can be positively driven while their relationships can also be maintained and positively developed.

To draw a clearer picture of the EFL writing classrooms where these three significant features can be witnessed when assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into, an elaboration can be given in the following paragraph.

A concept of assessment for learning (AfL) is regarded as a learning tool to promote students' L2 learning and skills in the EFL writing classrooms. In my writing class in Thailand, for instance, two types of assessment: self-assessment and peer assessment are the basic tools

for students' L2 learning and skill development apart from teacher assessment, which is used in the form of formative assessment. With this couple of assessment, students play the active role to learn how to write and how to be a reviewer and an editor to review and edit both their own and their peers' writing at the same time. In so doing, a writing rubric is a map that guides them to reach their destination. The use of the rubric also helps identify students' writing performance progress (William, 2013). The teacher, however, is treated as a tourist police officer who helps the students just in case they have some issues which are beyond their capability. With both forms of assessment, students are able to learn from their own mistakes and their peers'. Specifically, students can improve not only L2 but also their L2 writing skill in the interactive and collaborative learning atmosphere because they participate in the peer feedback activity where assessment is used as a learning tool, not a grading one. Through these two types of assessment, their social aspects of learning can be further developed with the teacher and among their peers apart from the development of their linguistic, cognitive, metacognitive, or affective skills in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) based on Vygotsk's concept. The most important thing is that when assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into the EFL writing classroom like this, students' perception of assessment would be positively changed. The goal of their L2 learning shifts from "a grade master" to "a language master" which is the real goal of language learning.

As it is mentioned earlier, an integration of assessment for learning (AfL) is either new or awkward in the L2 writing contexts, particularly in the EFL writing classrooms. The L2 teaching and learning atmosphere in such a context turns out to be something different from the conventional one with which both teachers and students are familiar because assessment becomes a language learning and skill improvement tool instead of a measuring device. With this novel concept of assessment, the roles of both students and teachers in this new writing classroom design also change. According to White (2010), the roles of both students and teachers in the EFL higher educational context where assessment for learning (AfL) is implemented can be shown in Figure 3 as follows.

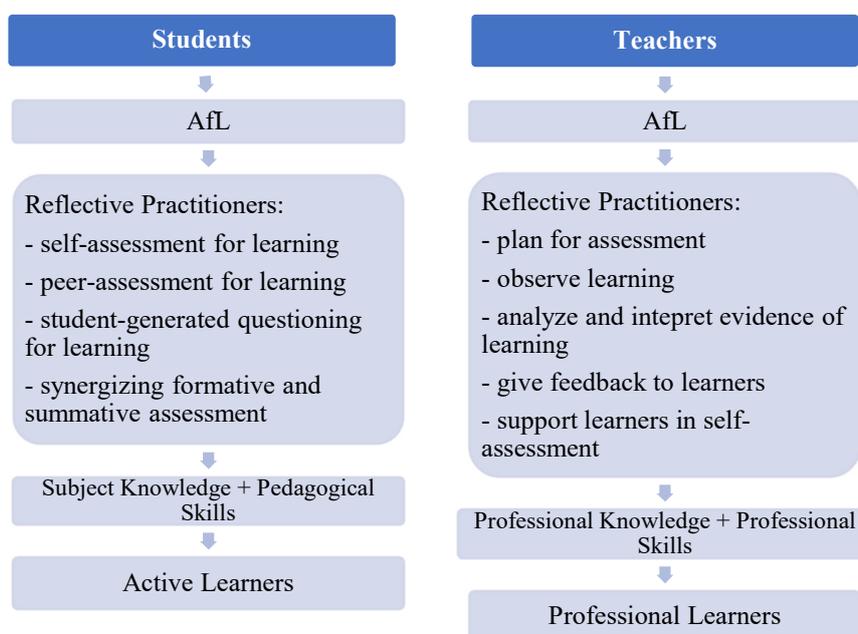


Figure 3 The Roles of Students and Teachers in the EFL Pedagogical Context with the Implementation of AfL

Figure 3 reveals the roles of students and teachers in the EFL higher academic context where assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into. As you can see, when this kind of

assessment is used in the classroom, both students and teachers are considered as reflective practitioners. With a valuable experience of assessment for learning (AfL), students themselves eventually become active learners who are responsible for their own language learning and skill development whereas teachers are able to improve themselves as professional learners who share the mutual learning goals with their students and continually figure out more effective instructions to beneficially facilitate their students' learning. As a practitioner in such a context, however, it takes some time for both of them to get used to this new role. One thing that can possibly guarantee its usefulness is a careful start with a well-planned preparation of both parties.

The integration of assessment for learning (AfL) into the L2 writing pedagogy is how we link assessment to the course objectives (Spendlove, 2009). In so doing, both students and teachers should fully understand what and when they will be teaching and learning, how their teaching and learning will be assessed, and how assessment can have a marked effect on learning support. Hence, when this concept of instruction is adapted, introduced, and developed in the L2 writing pedagogical contexts, particularly in the EFL academic settings, the roles of both students and teachers can be displayed in Figure 4.

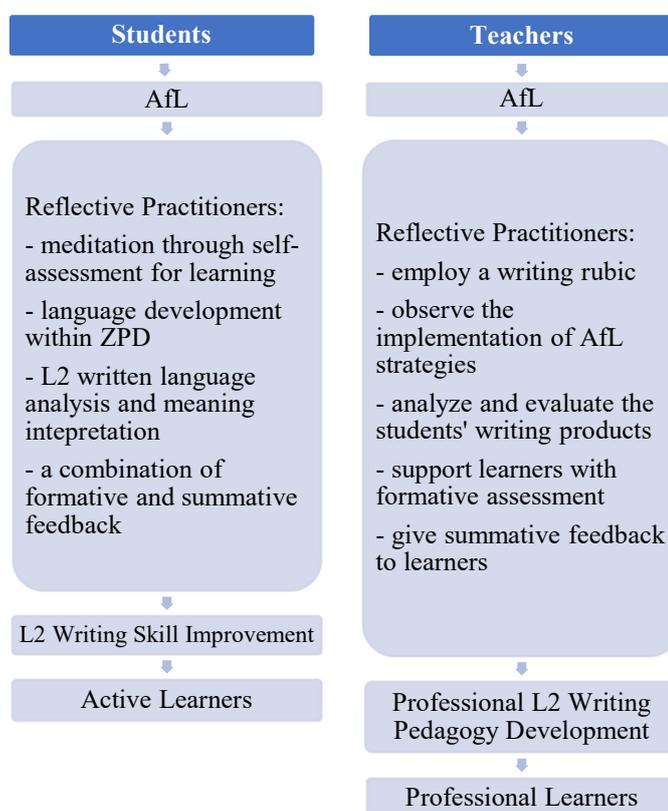


Figure 4 The Roles of Students and Teachers in L2 the Writing Pedagogy with the Implementation of AfL in the EFL Academic Contexts

In the L2 writing classrooms in the EFL academic contexts where assessment for learning (AfL) is integrated into, students and teachers are active and professional learners respectively. As reflective practitioners, students develop their language skill through meditation from self-assessment and within their ZPD from peer-assessment for their L2 learning. In those activities, students are able to analyze their own L2 written language performance and skill and their peers' and interpret the ideas both they and their peers would like to express in the written form of L2. In so doing, they receive formative feedback to polish

their writing products and to foster their L2 writing skill development. Besides, formative feedback from teachers as a facilitator along the way of their learning can also be a valuable resource of feedback influencing their L2 writing improvement. Concerning teachers' role in this new concept of L2 writing pedagogy, they are perceived as professional learners who use a writing rubric, an assessment tool for learning, to nurture the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) in L2 writing pedagogy. Apart from observing assessment for learning (AfL) strategies being employed, teachers are able to evaluate their students' writing products in order to use not only formative feedback but also summative feedback to bridge the gaps between their learning goals and their current writing performance.

Impacts of Assessment for Learning (AFL) on L2 Writing Pedagogy in the EFL Contexts

The profound impact of assessment for learning (AfL) on learning and teaching can possibly be perceived either immediately (a short-term impact), or it probably takes longer time than that (a long-term impact) (Spendlove, 2009). Since it is multifaceted, assessment for learning (AfL) calls for multiple distinctive parts like feedback, time, energy, culture of the classroom, relationships, effective two-way communication, and etc. in order to have a considerable influence on L2 writing pedagogy. When this kind of assessment is adopted in the EFL writing contexts, certain effects on either practitioners, writing pedagogy itself, or even the learning atmosphere can be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The most influential effect of the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) into the L2 writing classrooms in the EFL academic settings is definitely on the practitioners themselves: teachers and students. When a certain approach is newly applied to the classroom, this inevitably affects the roles of those who are involved in the new practice. When the roles shift, self-adjustment and unfamiliar teaching and learning behaviors are something they have to cope with. This is a fundamental requirement at the start of the implementation. If these practitioners are not able to adopt these new roles, and their mindsets are restricted to the old convention, it is hard to promise the success of the integration of the new approach. That is why it is very important to make sure that the practitioners are ready to challenge themselves with the new concept and adopt the new teaching and learning styles. On the part of the teachers, if they do not study this concept carefully, a misconception probably leads to a negative attitude toward any changes that are possibly involved when a new concept of assessment is integrated into their L2 writing instructions and finally establish a mental block of the development. For students, if they are not well prepared for the implementation of the new concept of assessment, they will discouragingly participate in any activities related to the new approach which eventually results in failure of the new practice.

Applying assessment for learning (AfL) to the L2 writing classrooms, teachers can support three facets of students' learning: depth, transfer, and autonomy as stated by Laveault and Allal (2016). Regarding the first aspect, teachers have information of students' learning progress from assessment for learning (AfL) based on various levels of difficulty of the interactive tasks they carry out, so they are able to realize how much each student has learnt and in what level each student's language proficiency is in. Next, with their experience in assessment for learning (AfL) in the L2 writing class, students have a great opportunity to develop other skills than that previously mentioned such as problem-solving skill, judgmental skill, collaborative learning skill, and so on. These are the significant skills they need to be able to transfer their knowledge and generate their learning outcomes in diverse contexts or even in more challenging and complicated situations in not only the learning contexts but also the general and broader contexts in their daily life. The ultimate outcome of an integration of assessment for learning (AfL) into L2 writing pedagogy is that the students are promoted to become independent learners for their lifelong learning. Since assessment for learning (AfL)

mainly involves students' engagement in learning, this, thus, emphasizes how teachers can develop their students to learn autonomously with their instructional guidance and support. That means students are regarded as active learners in the L2 writing classrooms where assessment for learning (AfL) is applied to. With that key role, they take charge of their own L2 learning and skill development, and they themselves are considered to be another resource of their own L2 skill improvement. With formative feedback derived from this kind of assessment together with effective classroom interactions and collaborations, students' L2 learning and skill development can be enhanced. It is, hence, how we use assessment, specifically assessment for learning (AfL) to empower the role of learners to know where they stand along the continuum of L2 learning and skill development, what kind of L2 gaps they have to fill, and what and how they should do to bridge the gaps for more effective learning improvement instead of simply acknowledging their grades or scores of the subject they are learning (Gadsby, 2012).

Regarding writing pedagogy, writing products together with their scores or grades are generally what both teachers and students value in the traditional L2 writing pedagogy through the product-based approach, specifically in the EFL academic contexts where assessment like summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) plays the key role in the L2 writing instructions. Through this product-oriented instruction, it does not matter what both of them go through in the writing process through the writing instructions as long as the students' writing products are well-polished as the writing models in terms of grammar and sentence structures, for example. (Farrell, 2006). Through summative assessment, teachers and students themselves rarely pay attention to the progress of students' L2 learning and skill development. The high quality of the writing products is what they take for granted. Therefore, it is undeniable to claim that the major advantage of this writing approach is that the students can potentially be good writers as long as they are able to replicate different types of writing products based on the models or structures they have learned and memorized. Unfortunately, since this approach emphasizes grammar and structures in the L2 writing instructions, the writing process is ignored. That means the students are not exposed to writing strategies which they can adopt to learn to produce their writing products on their own because they are taught to replicate the writing models of each genre through this approach.

On the other end of the writing pedagogy continuum, the process-oriented approach is employed in order to tackle this issue. As its name denotes, this writing instruction approach focuses on the writing process of how a piece of writing is developed through different stages: brainstorming, drafting, writing, reviewing, and editing. The original idea of their writing is the significant notion. That is the reason why it is considered as a hard practice to take at first since there are no writing models for students, particularly L2 students to replicate. However, when this approach is adopted in L2 writing pedagogy, especially in the EFL academic contexts, assessment for learning (AfL) is also integrated. In so doing, it steers both teachers and students' attention back on the right track; that is, from scores or grades to their language learning goals they truly want to achieve. That means teachers and students focus on learning tools in order to drive them to their mutual aims: L2 learning and skill improvement. In this case, one of those learning tools is assessment. Assessment which is regarded as a judgement in summative assessment or assessment of learning (AoL) turns out to be another effective learning tool in assessment for learning (AfL) that fosters learning how to write in L2. Particularly, feedback derived from this source of assessment is one of the significant L2 learning sources being emphasized in this kind of assessment. Through the feedback process, students learn more about L2 in the areas where they do not even master and how to polish their drafts. During this activity, students' L2 writing skill is developed when they are either a reviewer or a writer. Nonetheless, although a variety of benefits of feedback from this assessment can be easily witnessed, it is considered as a huge and ongoing challenge for both

teachers and students in the EFL writing classrooms. Since the concept of assessment for learning (AfL) is rather fresh to these practitioners and the only feedback both of them are familiar with is teacher feedback where the teachers know how to polish their students' drafts but the students themselves do not, yet they do as being instructed. Nevertheless, it is even remarked as students' favorite as Deluca, Chapman-Chin, LaPointe-McEwan, and Klinger (2018) point out in their study. Regarding this issue, Lee (2007) remarks that teacher feedback is basically used as summative assessment, so it is not beneficial to students' learning though it is what students appreciate. It is, therefore, a stone step at first for them to take. Apart from that, peer feedback, which is another useful and valuable source of feedback derived from assessment for learning (AfL) to help enhance students' L2 writing, is somewhat hard to convince students to carry out. Even though they can do, they themselves still question their own L2 proficiency to do so. For them, it is rarely regarded as a remarkable tool in the assessment for learning (AfL) approach (Deluca et al. 2018). Another significant issue is that teachers should be aware of the fact that no matter what kind of feedback students receive, they prefer the direct constructive one (Zhang & Zheng, 2018). Particularly, for non-native students, it is interesting to note that feedback on accuracy is their preference because it helps them produce more well-polished writing products. All of these issues, consequently, need to be addressed in the first place. To ensure that the implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) is highly beneficial to the practitioners, the practitioners themselves are required to open their minds to welcome the new classroom practice and any activities they engage in. In order to reach its full potential, a well-planned feedback training or orientation before the real practice needs to be launched, so its value can be recognized and cherished. In so doing, students should be asked to focus on a particular L2 writing aspect to give feedback because it is easier for them to tackle one language issue at a time instead of embracing all aspects defined as good writing. However, it is important to realize that whenever a new approach is adopted, it definitely takes some time for practitioners to get used to it before they are able to reap the benefits.

Finally, in the new L2 learning atmosphere where assessment for learning (AfL) is employed in writing pedagogy, social activities are promoted in the language classrooms in order to stimulate the growth of interactive participation and collaborative L2 learning and skill development. This new environment calls for teachers to design the writing classroom activities in pairs or groups in the EFL academic settings. This, as a result, relies on the activity management skill of teachers to design the activities that encourage students to take part in since learning by doing becomes a key concept in this sort of L2 learning atmosphere. In this case, cultural issues are, however, unavoidable to take into account, especially in the Asian EFL academic context. To illustrate this notion, a concept of face is given an example. In my writing class, this is considered as a cultural issue, and the teacher has to ask the students which learning style they prefer like if they prefer to work in groups or in pairs. Moreover, the teacher has to ask the students first if they want the teacher to set their pairs or groups for them or they can manage on their own. This depends on the nature of each group of students, however. In my case, the students take this matter seriously since it means productiveness of each student that collaborates in each writing task. Besides, social respect in pair work or group work is also significant in this case. It means they can enjoy participating in the class activities and help each other learn and achieve certain level of their L2 writing skill if they are treated with respect by their peers. This is a good thing that the students take this as a serious issue as it means they focus on their L2 learning goals, not only the high scores or grades. Nevertheless, this unfamiliar scene is sometimes an alien to teaching and learning styles of not only teachers who prefer an authority to control and drive the L2 writing class but also students who fancy learning in a solitary atmosphere. Thus, the ready-to-change attitude toward this new practice in L2

writing pedagogy, particularly in the EFL contexts, is basically required on the parts of the practitioners.

Conclusion

Due to its merits, it is heartily recommended that this is a golden opportunity to effectively implement assessment for learning (AfL) in L2 writing classrooms in the EFL academic contexts with a better understanding, as it is remarked that this form of assessment is currently integrated and practiced into several East Asian countries' academic contexts (Leong, Ismail, Costa, & Tan, 2018). However, as William (2013, pp. 20) indicates, there is no "optimal model" to guarantee that the use of formative assessment will effectively work everywhere. It depends on different variables in each context and how teachers in such contexts adopt and adapt the concept in their practice as each specific academic context where assessment for learning (AfL) is implemented into requires distinctive instructional strategies (Lee, 2007). With its implementation, specifically in the EFL writing academic contexts as being guided above, we can hopefully reach the full potential of assessment as a learning tool to foster L2 writing pedagogy.

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