



A Systematic Review and Annotated Bibliography of Second Language Learning Formative Assessment: An Overview

Skevi Vassiliou¹, Salomi-Papadima-Sophocleous²

The Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus¹
The Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus²

Abstract

This paper is a summative overview of a Systematic Review and a descriptive and evaluative Annotated Bibliography (AB) of Second Language (L2) Formative Assessment (FA) covering the period from the very first published work on the subject in 2000 to 2017. The aim of the SR was to systematically research and examine work published over the 17-year period mentioned, describe and analyse the data and derive some conclusions. The SR synthesised different studies which were related to L2 Learning FA. From an initial search resulting in 2284 sources, only 108 met the predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria set. These studies were then systematically reviewed. The qualitative design findings gave insights into information such as the types of FA in L2 Learning research publications, the type of study designs, research tools, methods used in the studies, the research location, the level of educational institutions the research was carried out, the languages and the language skills researched and the role of technology in L2 FA. The SR was complemented and reinforced by an AB of L2 FA. The content of the AB was arranged chronologically from 2000 to 2017. The AB followed the same source research and inclusion/exclusion criteria processes. The AB consisted of a series of bibliographical entries and citations. According to the findings of this research, there is no AB in L2 FA for this particular period. This AB aimed to fill in this gap. The combination of the SR and the AB aimed to obtain more unbiased conclusions and give a more rounded overview of the research conducted during the designated period of time. It also aimed to enhance the validity and reliability of the research. The findings also identified some aspects of L2 FA of concern that could serve as topics for future research.

Keywords: *systematic review, annotated bibliography, formative assessment, second/foreign language.*

1. Introduction - Rationale of the study

Despite the increased popularity of F2 in L2 over the last 20 years, further systematic research is still of great importance (Rea-Dickins, & Gardner, 2000; Tsagari & Michaeloudes, 2013; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Ismael, 2017). Therefore, an initial search aimed to identify the existence of any systematic annotated bibliographical reviews in FA in L2 Learning. The results revealed that there is no Systematic Review or Annotated Bibliography that is dedicated to the recording, describing and evaluating of the historical background of implementations of Formative Assessment in Second/Foreign Language Learning. The combination of these two research designs increases the validity and reliability of the research and provides a first systematic and detailed overview of the current L2FA studies in almost the last 20 years to fill in this gap.

The main purposes of this paper are: (a) to provide researchers and practitioners interested in L2/FL Formative Assessment a substantial background in the area, and more particularly how this topic has been treated by other researchers over the 17 years under review; (b) to contribute to the development of critical thinking about the topic.

These SR and AB aimed to offer qualitative analysis of the specific L2FA research conducted from 2000 to 2017 by answering the following research questions:

1. What were the major publication types, research purposes, research types, methodologies, and outcomes?
2. What were the languages, educational levels studied and participants involved in the studies?
3. Which types of L2FA and technologies were used in studies?
4. Which language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) or language aspects (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation) were formatively assessed?
5. What learning theories were used to support L2FA learning?
6. What were the geographical distribution of L2FA studies?



2. Formative Assessment in L2

Assessment can be considered as an essential part of the educational system and it can occur with two types of assessment, Formative and Summative Assessment. FA occurs during the learning process by giving instant feedback. On the other hand, SA is an evaluative process with tests and scores (Perera-Diltz, & Moe, 2014).

FA is a neglected type of assessment since language teachers pay more attention to Summative Assessment that includes tests and scores than to FA (Fakeye, 2016). In 2000, Rea-Dickins and Gardner put emphasis on the characteristics of FA and focused on FA and ESL/EFL. They concluded that if teachers' decisions are made with responsibility during classroom, this will increase students' performance (Rea Dickins & Gardner, 2000).

3. Systematic Review

The main purpose of a SR is to synthesise different studies which are related to a specific research area in a qualitative, quantitative or mixed method (Sampaio, & Mancini, 2007). Moreover, a SR includes a specific structure body: To present one or more research questions, to define criteria for inclusion/exclusion of the relevant studies, to systematically evaluate relevant studies and then to synthesise, analyse and interpret all the data by making comparisons, associations or identifying new research areas (Hanley & Cutts, 2013). This SR aims to present a critical synthesis of L2FA studies from 2000-2017 and to encourage researchers to continue investigating the potentials of L2FA implementations.

4. Annotated Bibliography

An Annotated Bibliography provides an overview of the available research sources on a specific topic. It consists of a series of bibliographical entries and citations, organised chronologically or alphabetically (Engle, 2017).

This descriptive and evaluative L2FA Annotated Bibliography was organised in chronological order to illustrate the progress in Formative Assessment Language Learning during the specific period under study (2000-2017). Each entry consists of a citation in APA style, and a 300-word evaluative annotation. The aim was to give more information of each entry, contribute to the development of critical thinking about the topic, and to the degree each entry is considered reliable and academically respected as a source.

5. Methodology

Both the Systematic Review and Annotated Bibliography follow a Qualitative research design. They both use the same search strategy/database method and inclusion/exclusion criteria, and a coding process.

5.1 Study Selection and Inclusion Criteria

The following search strings were chosen: a) Formative Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language and only abstracts were accessed; b) (Classroom Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning), c) (Alternative Assessment) AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning), d) Portfolio Assessment AND (Second Language Teaching) OR (Second Language Learning).

The review included papers dated from 2000 to 2017, which included an abstract and at least two of the search terms. A total number of 2,284 research articles were identified. The number was considerably decreased to 108 after applying a set of inclusion/exclusion criteria. These were:

Inclusion Criteria:

Publications that...

- 1) suit the research questions;
- 2) are reviewed: article, conference proceedings paper, short paper, reviewed book chapter, or book; PhD theses published in English language
- 3) report the application of FA in L2 or FL Learning;
- 4) present FA in L2 Learning in a primary, secondary or tertiary context;
- 5) present quantitative, qualitative or mixed evaluation of FA in L2 Learning.

Exclusion Criteria:

Publications that...



- 1) were not published between 2000-2017
- 2) did not suit the research questions;
- 3) hosted in web pages which are not freely accessed through the account of the university and only abstracts were accessed;
- 4) composed of only one page (abstract papers), posters, scientific events programmes and tutorial slides;
- 5) did not duplicate other publications by the same author (similar title, abstract, results, or text). In such a case, only one is included in this review;
- 6) were written in languages other than English.

5.2 Coding

Coding is considered as a qualitative inquiry, as a problem-solving technique. Usually researchers use coding tactics such as cycling, highlighting or bolding (Saldaña, 2015). In this research study, highlighted and coded data included type of publication, type of research design, research methods, research tools, location, participants, level of educational studies, language skills and languages.

6. Results-Discussion

The following are the results deriving from research question 1:

- 1) Article was the major type of publication was used by researchers (73.40%).
- 2) Many studies (96%) investigated the advantages of FA in learning and teaching a L2 (Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Leung & Rea-Dickins, 2007).
- 3) The major research type is study either as just study or comparative study, case study or pilot study.(49.5%)
- 4) The dominant research method was Qualitative (42.4%).
- 5) A total of 96.3% reported a positive impact of L2FA implementations on students' motivation and progress.

Based on research question 2, the following three outcomes were identified:

- 1) The dominant language that L2FA implementations were carried out was EFL/ESL (64 research papers).
- 2) The majority of the studies were carried out with participants as students (31.4%.)
- 3) Most L2FA studies were carried out at tertiary level (55/108), followed by 15 research papers at college level.

Based on research question 3 results revealed that:

- 1) the most common L2FA types researched were provision of feedback with 29.1 portfolio, self-assessment, peer-assessment, reflections, rubrics, questioning, tutorials, discussions and artifacts.
- 2) Also, 25.65% of the L2FA types were digital tools or applications (Socrative, Kahoot, Edmodo, Padlet, Storify, Quizlet, digital voice recordings, digital tools, ipods and ipads).

Research question 4 findings showed that:

- 1) 60.5% FA implementations were carried out for writing skills. Moreover, 76.4% of the research for writing skills was implemented in an academic writing environment and 23.6% at secondary educational level.

Based on research question 5:

- 1) Only 6.48% of studies mentioned the learning theories that support L2FA implementations in teaching and learning. The dominant learning theory mentioned is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of learning.

Based on research question 6:

A total number of 31 countries detected in this SR for L2FA implementations. Studies took place in all continents except Antarctica. The following figure indicates the geographical distribution of the countries that indicated interest in L2FA implementations.

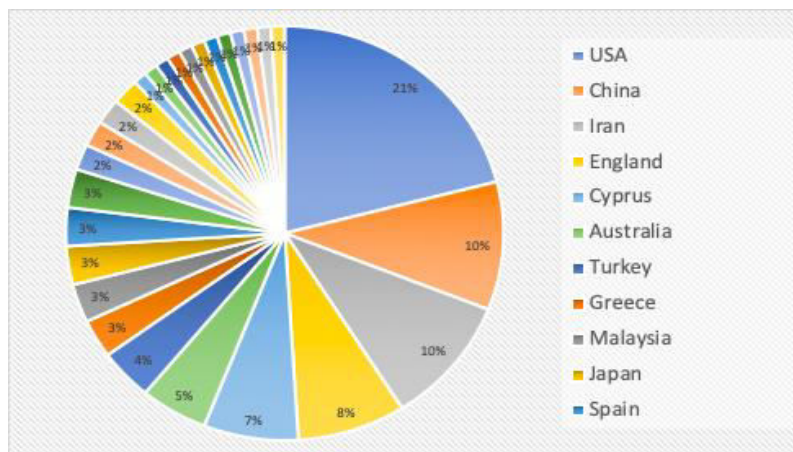


Fig.1 Geographical distribution of L2FA in countries

Moreover, some additional interesting issues were also identified:

- 1) In most recent years, FA is gaining more ground in L2. It seems that after 2011, there is a bigger interest from researchers to explore the potentials of L2FA. In 2016 and 2017, we had the biggest number of publications.
- 2) The dominance of L2FA implementations is in higher education.
- 3) The significant role of technology in L2FA practices. Some examples include online quizzes (Socrative, Kahoot, Edmodo, Padlet, Storify, Quizlet), online portfolios, digital tools (ipods and ipads), online feedback and Google applications.
- 4) The data showed that Asia is being the most active continent than the others with China and Iran presenting 10% of the total amount of papers.
- 5) The necessity of L2 pre-service or in-service teacher training in Language Assessment Literacy.

7. Conclusions

The SR and the AB presented in this research paper gave an overview of the research conducted in the area of L2FA from 2000 to 2017. The inclusion/exclusion criteria used helped in systematising the process and in drawing some concrete conclusions. Both the SR and the AB provide considerable background information to researchers, practitioners and L2 educators regarding research in the area. It also draws the attention for further research in the area and calls for research in some additional aspects such as teacher training and the use of new technologies in L2FA, which were noted during this research.

References

- [1] Engle, M. "What is an annotated bibliography?" Retrieved from <https://ustpaul.libguides.com/htpwinter2017,2017>
- [2] Fakeye, D. "Secondary School Teachers' and Students' Attitudes Towards Formative Assessment and Corrective Feedback in English Language in Ibadan Metropolis", *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 2016, 6 (2), 141.
- [3] Ketabi, S. & Ketabi, S. "Classroom and formative assessment in second/foreign language teaching and learning", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2014, 4 (2), 435.
- [4] Perera-Diltz, D., & Moe, J. "Formative and summative assessment in online education", *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching*, 7(1), 2014, 130-142.
- [5] Rea-Dickins, P. & Gardner, Sh. "Snares and silver bullets: disentangling the construct of formative assessment". *Language Testing*. 2000, 17(2), 215-243.
- [6] Saldana, P. "The coding manual for qualitative researchers". Sage, 2015.
- [7] Tsagari, D., & Michaeloudes, G. "Formative assessment practices in private language schools in Cyprus", *Research on English as a Foreign Language in Cyprus*, 2, 2012, 246-265.
- [8] Vogt, K, & Tsagari, D. "Assessment literacy of foreign language teachers: Findings of a European study. *Language Assessment Quarterly*", 2014 11 (4), 374-402.