Classroom Assessment Toolkit: Literacy to CLB 8

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Introduction

Classroom Assessment Toolkit

The *Classroom Assessment Toolkit* is designed to help LINC classroom instructors embed assessment into their everyday teaching practices. It provides ideas about how to articulate and align informal assessment, how to provide appropriate feedback to learners, and how to adjust future teaching to revisit CLB tasks that have been taught, but are not yet mastered by the students.

What is assessment and why do we need it?

In the English language classroom, assessment is used in three ways: to place students in the appropriate class, to monitor on-going progress, and to inform classroom teaching.

Many English language learners in Canada, including British Columbia, are assessed according to the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and given a benchmark. But what are the CLB?

What is LINC? What are the CLB?

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) provides basic and intermediate level English training for adult newcomers to Canada. LINC is government funded and there are no costs for learners.

The **Canadian Language Benchmarks** (CLB) are a national descriptive framework of communicative language for adult ESL programs in Canada. The CLB span three stages; twelve benchmarks; the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; and cover four competencies per skill across the levels.

In the settlement English language classroom, a topic is taught in conjunction with the CLB. The CLB are used because they are task-based and focused on what the students **can do** in the real-world.

The CLB fit the LINC classroom because one of the main objectives of the program is to get students functioning in the community and participating in Canadian society.

LINC programs require the use of the CLB as it is the national standard. It provides individuals, programs, and provinces the ability to speak the same language. If a learner moves from Prince Edward Island to Manitoba and says, "I am a CLB 4", the instructor, administrator, or assessor will have an idea of the student's language ability, regardless of the program he or she attended or the province he or she came from.

The LINC Levels are aligned to the CLB. A learner coming into a Level should have mastered at least 70% of the competencies of that benchmark. For example, a LINC 2 student will have mastered 70% or more of the Benchmark 1 competencies.

In order to progress to the next level, the student will need to solidify and complete their current Benchmark competencies, and achieve 70% of the competencies in the next Benchmark. So that LINC 2 student will need to solidify the remaining Benchmark 1 competencies, and work on achieving 70% of the Benchmark 2 competencies in order to successfully progress to LINC 3. (For more information, refer to the *National Language Placement and Progression Guidelines,* CIC, 2013.)

What assessment processes do students experience in the LINC program?

In LINC, all students are assessed at an Assessment Centre – usually using the CLBPT (*Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test*). Based on their scores in the 4 skill areas, their LINC Level is determined and they are recommended for a particular class.

Once in class, students are taught thematic units based on **settlement and integration topics** (e.g., the law, health & safety, consumerism, etc.) that are of immediate relevance to the students. As students' language abilities improve, they progress to the next level, and eventually leave the program.

In the past, student progression in the ELSA program was determined through progress tests and exit tests that are aligned to the CLB. These tests were developed for ELSA levels 1 to 3 in 2003 and for levels 4 and 5 in 2008. When the ELSA 6/7 curriculum was introduced in 2011, the CLB 7-10 Exit Assessment Tasks were used for progress and exit purposes. These assessment tasks will be used in the LINC program until Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) is launched province-wide in 2015.

The ELSA and CLB progress and exit tests/tasks could be considered *Summative Assessments*. They are administered at the "end" of study of a particular level, taking snapshots of students' skills at a point in time. The main challenge for teachers is knowing *when* students are ready for the tests. As test security and reliability are important considerations, the tests must not be administered too often. Additionally, students should not write the test too many times.

Some teachers—knowingly or not—may "teach to the test". Each test has certain thematic topics with very specific tasks. Some teachers might think that if such content has not been covered in the class, the students will not achieve a desirable test score. However, the progress and exits test are measuring the ability to achieve a certain CLB competency, not to demonstrate knowledge of a particular topic.

Students that join the LINC program as new immigrants or refugees, come from diverse cultural, educational, and professional backgrounds. Many LINC students are neither used to nor comfortable with formal testing processes. In such cases, after taking standardized, formal tests, the students' results may not reflect the abilities demonstrated in class. Conversely, other students may have extensive experience taking formal tests, and their test results may indicate stronger abilities than were shown in class.

In sum, in LINC programs there is diagnostic assessment with placement testing of students using the CLBPT, and there has been summative (or achievement) assessment, such as the standardized ELSA or CLB tests/tasks to determine students' progress through the program levels or to exit the program. However, there was a gap in assessing students' abilities as they progress through to the completion of their ELSA classes: that is, *Formative Assessment*. While the advent of PBLA will certainly address this gap, there are other tasks and tools that teachers can introduce to the classroom to integrate formative assessment into their practice. The *Classroom Assessment Toolkit* aims to provide teachers with the tools and suggestions to include formative assessment practices.

What is Formative Assessment and what are its benefits?

Formative Assessment is an on-going, informative process. It is "assessment *for* learning versus assessment *of* learning." (Integrating Assessment in the CLB classroom & Manitoba on-line "Language Assessment" video). It provides immediate feedback and information to both the student and the teacher. This feedback allows students to correct mistakes and improve; focus on their strengths; build their self-confidence; and empower them to self-assess, self-correct, and become stewards of their own learning.

For teachers, Formative Assessment allows them to adjust their lessons and the pace of their teaching. It helps teachers make adjustments to determine the effectiveness of their instruction and whether the students' needs are being met.
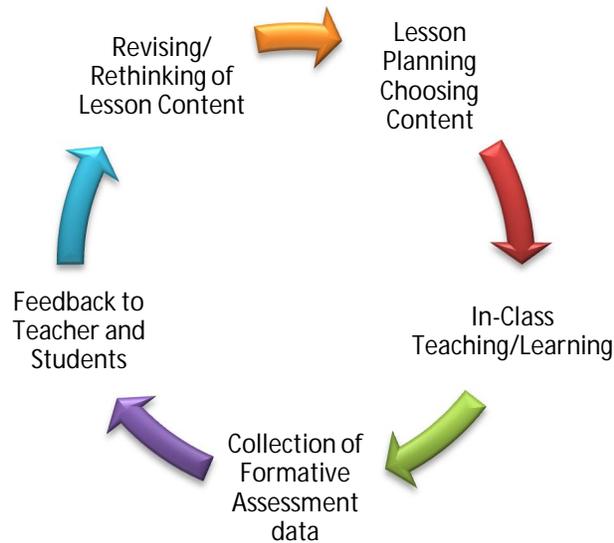
This assessment information can give teachers a clearer idea of what CLB competencies need to be covered and areas of teaching/learning that need to be covered again. It can also provide teachers with a clear picture of when students are ready to write the progress/exit test or, in the case of PBLA, engage in an assessment task

Most teachers engage in ongoing *informal assessment.* They may be unaware of it, or they may not have had the opportunity to articulate this type of assessment in their teaching practice. By focusing more acutely on classroom assessment, the teacher will know whether it focused on the CLBs, the themes being taught in class, or the students' ability to complete real-world tasks.

Given the LINC context and the diversity of students in our classrooms, this toolkit presents teachers with tasks and tools that are both aligned to CLB competencies, and yet generic enough to be adapted for any thematic topic. This allows teachers' creativity and teaching styles to be incorporated. The toolkit also takes into consideration the constantly changing demographics of LINC students, particularly those in programs with continuous intake, as assessments are conducted in an ongoing manner, not just for summative purposes. Teachers in the LINC context must continually adapt and revise their materials, teaching approach, *and* assessment practices.

What do I need to know about my class?

When students are placed into LINC classes, we have enough information about their abilities as a starting point. However, having a bigger, better, and more informed picture is much more useful. Teachers need to know who their students are in order to inform their teaching choices in class; this is called **Needs Assessment**.

Information about students can be gathered by framing the needs assessment around questions such as the following: what abilities do students have? What can they do? What do they know? What is most important for them right now? Teachers can create a profile for each student to get a sense of their needs and wants. Other things to take into consideration include gender, age, number of children, marital status, educational background, employment status, as well as knowing if they drive or take transit, if they rent or own their homes.

As trust is built within the classroom, and the students begin to open up, the teacher may be able to elicit information to further inform the topics that should be covered, the CLB competencies required, and performance outcomes that could be expected.

Part of this process could also incorporate **Goal Setting**. With the teacher's help, students set learning goals for themselves that might have set time limits; e.g., this month, in 6 months, 1 year, 5 years, etc. Questions that can guide goal setting might include the following: Where do they want to end up? What is important for them? What steps will they need to make to get there? Through goal setting, students will feel more in control of their own learning and have realistic expectations of what needs to be done to get there.

Which tools to choose for my class? What are the steps to use the Toolkit?

For each assessment, you need to choose a Benchmark, a skill area (listening/speaking/reading/writing), and the competency you are addressing in class (interacting with others, instructions, getting things done, information). Refer to the chart above

The toolkit will have ideas and methods of formative assessment at each of the CLBs. The toolkit allows the flexibility of calibrating tools up and down; e.g., a CLB 3 tool can easily be scaled down for CLB 2 learners or ramped up for CLB 4.

Step 1 – identify the CLB level

Step 2 – choose a skill area (listening, speaking, reading, writing)

Step 3 – choose a CLB competency (interacting with others, instructions, getting things done, information).

Step 4 – locate the appropriate formative assessment tool

Step 5 – adapt the tool for the context of your classroom (topic, students, content)

How often should I be doing Formative Assessment in my class?

This is a difficult question to answer because it really depends on the needs of the class and the circumstances of the particular teacher. Formative Assessment is an on-going process and is usually

done informally by teachers every day. To actually record and keep track of that assessment data is probably different. Some sources indicated that formative assessments could happen twice a week, or maybe four times within a unit. This would vary depending on the number of classes per week and the number of hours per class. Incorporate this type of assessment as much into your class as is appropriate for your situation.

How should I keep track of the data I collect?

Generally, most learners will have individual portfolios. The list below offers additional suggestions for how an instructor may choose to track assessment data:

1. Keep an **Assessment Log**. This log could be for the entire class and/or for individual students. The log allows you to keep track of completed assessment as well as plan for future assessments.
2. Keep a **binder** with individual pages for each student. Affix labels or sticky notes to the leaners' pages. Alternatively, write thoughts and comments directly on the pages as you think about each student.
3. Keep a class set of **file folders** – one for each student. As you collect data, file it into the student's folder. This allows for quick organization and reference when looking at student's performance.
4. Keep a **wall chart** with pockets for the students. Place collected data in the pockets as you collect it. This option also allows students easy access to their information so they can remind themselves about their own progress.

Best Practices in Formative Assessment

As instructors strive to incorporate formative assessment into their teaching practice, they will find that *The Classroom Assessment Toolkit* a useful resource.

When choosing tasks, preparing assessment tools, and implementing an assessment plan, instructors need to remind themselves that formative assessment is an on-going informative process whereby it is assessment *for* learning (see page iii).

While it is important that best practices in formative assessment be reinforced, instructors should also understand the importance of using authentic, task-based activities for assessment, how to implement assessment for specific tasks, and ways to incorporate formative assessment into their overall classroom practice.

Using Authentic, Task-based Activities in Assessment

The framework of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) is the foundation that informs both language instruction and the development of assessment tools within the LINC program (*Canadian Language Benchmarks,* 2012).

From a communicative language teaching point of view, "the elements of grammatical knowledge that learners need to master are determined by the specific requirements of individual real-life tasks" (*Canadian Language Benchmarks,* 2012, p. VI). The CLB fit the LINC classroom because one of the main objectives of the LINC program is for learners to function in the community and participate in Canadian society. Thus, the CLB are used because they are **task-based** and focused on what the learners **can do** in the real-world.

It is clear that since the CLB focus on real world tasks and competencies, assessments should also focus on learners' completion of meaningful, authentic tasks, which are likely to be encountered in the real world (see also *The Program Planner: A Companion to the Adult ESL Guidelines CLB 5-7,* 2007).

Further, assessment tasks and in-class communicative tasks should look *exactly the same*. The only difference is that instructors measure how successfully the learners complete the assessed task.

In determining both in-class communicative tasks and assessment tasks, instructors should consider the learners' learning goals and needs. Furthermore, instructors should aim for learners to practice the CLB competencies in various contexts (e.g., the various themes explored in the settlement curriculum). The competencies should then be assessed in similar ways in order to verify the achievement of the classroom learning goals—like mastering a CLB competency of the next level.

Below are considerations for designing specific assessment tools used for formative assessment purposes.

Implementing Assessment for Specific Tasks

When planning for assessment, instructors should first identify the purpose of the assessment and what learning is to be assessed. In terms of formative assessment, instructors and learners need the assessment data to see how the learners are progressing and how instructors are teaching. Also, since

the CLB are incorporated into the LINC classroom, instructors should assess the CLB competencies that learners are working towards.

In addition to selecting an assessment tool, instructors also need to consider the criteria for successful completion of the task. These criteria include the following:

- what learners should be able to do in order to demonstrate the target CLB competency; and
- what learners need to do to successfully complete the task .

Additionally, according to Holmes (2005), "the number of analytic criteria you select will depend on the level of the task. Generally, the lower the benchmark level, the fewer the criteria" (p. 108).

To help them feel more comfortable with assessment, instructors need to inform students of the performance conditions beforehand. These include the following:

- the time to complete a task;
- the number of times a listening passage will be heard;
- the length of the text to be produced; and
- the length of a passage to be read.

Instructors should share these assessment criteria with the learners. If they know what instructors are assessing, then they have a better chance of demonstrating what they can do. In addition, it is beneficial for instructors to share a sample of a speaking or writing task that demonstrates the expectations, or to have a level appropriate sample listening or reading task.

Assessing the receptive skills of listening and reading can be challenging as comprehension is based on the learners' responses to questions, commands, or instructions. If comprehension questions are used, the instructor needs to ensure that they are designed to match the language demands at that level. The questions can be neither too easy nor too difficult for what is being assessed. A good resource for question design and complexity is *Controlling Complexity: An Introduction to Question Structure* by Lew and Hardt (2011) available through SkillPlan.

Since LINC classes are learner-centered, the instructor should strive to engage the learners not just in the results of formative assessment, but when possible, in the process as well. As the learners become more familiar with the CLB competencies, the learners can be involved in establishing the criteria for assessment, the performance conditions, and the procedures that should be followed. When learners are involved in the process, they will feel more confident in assessment situations and will likely perform better.

It is also good practice for the instructor to provide learners with comments about their performance that are specific and useful for their growth. When writing comments, the instructor should adapt the language from the CLB, the rubric, or the checklist, and should link comments to the learning outcomes for the target CLB competency.

Implementing Formative Assessment into Classroom Practice

As previously noted, informal assessment happens in the classroom all the time.

Instructors can work to turn informal assessments into formal assessments by making adjustments to their teaching practice. According to O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce (1996), "to turn your observations into assessments, you need to record observations systematically over time to note changes in student performance" (p. 14). Ideally, formative assessment is an integrated and on-going process—a regular classroom routine—that becomes an integral part of instruction.

Ad hoc, undocumented assessment occurs in every class, but with formative assessment, there should be a shift to incorporate some documented assessments approximately once a week. With frequent documented assessments, it is important to find ways that engage all learners; for example, set up learning centres, working in small groups, [or] staggering cycles ..." (O'Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996, p. 52).

Documented assessments can be easily tracked. By tracking assessments, the instructor can ensure that all skill areas and competencies are covered and can demonstrate what the learners have mastered. Tracking learner progress through each unit allows the instructor to identify when learners have achieved enough of the CLB competencies in order to progress to the next level (or, in some contexts, to write progress/exit tests). The structure of PBLA incorporates this kind of tracking.

The instructor who employs multiple assessment measures gains a better understanding of their learners and is better able to address different learning styles. Indeed, the instructor should use different methods, tools, or tasks to encourage learners from diverse backgrounds to fully demonstrate their competencies.

In sum, when the instructor incorporates formative assessment into classroom practice, learners benefit by seeing their progress over time. As stated in *Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA): Best Practices Guide for Programs and Teachers* (2010):

> Good teaching practices ensure a consistency between assessment and instruction so that the ***most optimal conditions exist to elicit the learner's best communicative performance*** (p. 73, emphasis added).

Learner Self-Assessment Guidelines

What are the Learner Self-Assessment Tools?

The learner self-assessment Tools are companion tools to the other formative assessment tools found in the **Classroom Assessment Toolkit**. All the tools in the *Toolkit* help instructors to conduct assessment *for* learning, monitor learner progress, and make decisions about future learning objectives. These guidelines and the accompanying tools help instructors introduce or develop learner self-assessment activities. The self-assessment tools will help encourage learners as they take greater responsibility for their own learning.

The tools will also help learners understand and track the Canadian Language Benchmark competencies that they acquire over time. For example, an instructor can use the toolkit to develop a tool for measuring learner proficiency at a specific task, such as filling in a simple form with personal information.

The instructor can use this tool to gauge each learner's ability to complete the task and use this data to evaluate each learner's overall progress, and help the instructor with planning future lessons. The instructor may also wish to provide learners with a tool for measuring their own proficiency at filling in the same form. The instructor can refer to the *Toolkit* to develop this tool, resulting in a more balanced assessment process that includes instructor and learner input.

What is self-assessment?

Self-assessment is a process in which learners make judgments about their own performance and abilities. Through a variety of activities, learners can gather information about their own learning, reflect on this information, and make decisions about their language learning goals. This process "involves learners in discovering what they know and what they feel as well as what they can do" (Cram, 1995, p. 271).

As with other kinds of formative assessment, self-assessment can come at any time in a lesson - before, during or after a task. A self-assessment activity can be an extension of a formative assessment activity, providing both the instructor and the learner with information about the learning process, or it can be more independent, for the learner's benefit only. In either situation, self-assessment can serve as:

- a measure or description of language proficiency and accomplishments, such as the achievement of CLB outcomes;
- an awareness-raising activity (of culture, learning strategies, language-learning needs, linguistic strengths and weaknesses);
- a foundation for setting goals; and
- a record of classroom and real-world activities and achievements.

What are the benefits of doing self-assessment?

According to Cram (1995), some of the benefits of incorporating self-assessment in the teaching-learning process include:

- the potential increase in self-awareness and self-confidence among learners;
- the potential for learners to take more control over their learning, reducing their dependence on the instructor and directing their learning towards specific goals; and
- the development of each learner's ability to judge the appropriateness and accuracy of their performance using a set of criteria.

David Nunan (1998) summarizes the advantages for learners as follows: "In a learner-centred system, learners can be sensitized to their role as learner, and can also be assisted to develop as autonomous learners by the systematic use of self-assessment" (p. 130). Instructors, by creating opportunities and establishing routines for self-assessment, can emphasize to learners the overall importance of assessment and the mutual responsibility for evaluating and using one's learning.

How do I introduce self-assessment into my classroom?

While the concept of self-assessment may be unfamiliar to many learners, most of them are probably already doing it. Rolheiser and Ross (2011) write: "The choice for [instructors] is not whether [learners] evaluate their own work (they will regardless of [instructor] input) but whether [instructors] will attempt to teach them how to do so effectively" (p. 6). Learners are making judgments about their English ability all the time. Proficient language learners are more often able to quickly identify their weaknesses and exploit their strengths while less confident learners can quite easily fall into the trap of repeating judgments such as, "My English is no good."

How can instructors guide and support learners at various stages of proficiency in this process of self-evaluation? In fact, many instructors already include learner self-assessment in their classrooms, some deliberately and others in a more intuitive way. Some of these techniques and routines include:

- asking the learners a simple question at the end of a task to get feedback;
- providing a checklist of things to include in a poster presentation;
- asking learners to copy down the lesson agenda in their notebooks;
- asking learners to rank the lesson activities from most to least useful;
- instructing learners to look at their written work again for something they might have missed;
- giving written and oral feedback, especially in the form of a question that prompts learners to think about why they wrote or said something in a particular way;
- guiding learners in how they organize, display, and talk about their in-class work; and
- having learners mark their own tests, quizzes and worksheets using an answer key.

Self-assessment practices that are already part of the teaching-learning process provide a strong foundation for choosing, adapting, and implementing additional self-assessment tools.

Although there are many options for introducing self-assessment in the LINC classroom, here are some possible starting points (adapted from the Ontario Ministry of Education's Capacity Building Series Pamphlet, 2007):

Raise awareness

For LINC levels 2 and up, it is possible to teach self-assessment explicitly. A simple lesson could be based on illustrations depicting a learner and instructor. With the help of plain English, a few arrows and some planned facial expressions and gestures, the instructor can highlight the role of both instructor and learner in assessment. The main point to emphasize is that ultimately it is the learners who decide how they learn and use English.

Instructors can talk with learners about what they think self-assessment means and how it can help them. Introducing self-assessment does not mean that instructors are giving up their responsibility of assessing learner performance; responsibility is shared.

Allow time for learners to get used to self-assessment

Start with short self-assessment activities and questions (such as the ones listed at the beginning of this section) before moving on to the longer checklists and goal-planning charts. Expect that learners will respond differently to self-assessment activities.

Provide opportunities to practice self-assessment

Try a variety of self-assessment activities, using them as extensions of other activities. Try making a routine out of one or more of them. Plan for task repetition, feedback sessions, and peer discussions that involve some aspect of self-assessment that is appropriate for a particular level and group of learners.

How can I ensure that self-assessment is successful?

Identify the criteria

Self-assessment is most effective when learners are aware of the criteria as well as the outcomes, and have been informed about the process. The criteria that the instructor uses to assess learners can be the same criteria the learners use to assess themselves. It is also possible that the criteria will have been agreed upon by both parties.

Provide a model

When including a self-assessment activity for a specific task, it is important to provide a model of what is expected. Depending on the level, instructors and learners can identify aspects of the model that are interesting, noticeable and desirable, providing learners with a point of reference as they attempt their own versions of the model.

Get feedback

In addition to providing the more traditional feedback to learners in the form of encouragement, error correction, and suggestions for improvement, instructors can invite learners to give feedback of their own. Jim Scrivener writes: "The essential engine of a richer, more productive learning environment is communication, two-way feedback from learners to [instructors] and vice versa" (Scrivener, 2011, p. 95).

Practice self-assessment of your own teaching

By engaging in self-reflection and action research, instructors can gain a deeper understanding of how self-assessment works and what its benefits are.

How might learners' cultural backgrounds impact self-assessment?

Due to varying cultural or educational backgrounds and expectations, some learners and instructors will be unfamiliar with the concept of self-assessment in the language classroom. Those learners who normally expect correction, approval or a grade from the instructor may be surprised when their LINC instructor asks them to self-correct and self-evaluate. It is important to recognize that many LINC classroom procedures, with their emphasis on communicative fluency, learner-centred interaction, and task-based outcomes, are new for many learners who are more accustomed to learning language through programs that may place more emphasis on grammar-translation, textbooks and tests. This is not to suggest these are illegitimate or inferior methods. Jeremy Harmer (2007) writes:

> If […] learning is conditioned both by the [learner's] educational culture and also by his or her individual learning styles and preferences, then the idea that all [learners] should be forced to become autonomous seems unnecessarily prescriptive. Why should [learners] who are, for whatever reason, reluctant to become autonomous, have autonomy thrust upon them? (p. 403).

Harmer's answer to this dilemma is to provide learners with a variety of opportunities for taking control of their own learning, and to do so often, with the knowledge that not all learners will embrace such opportunities with the same enthusiasm.

What if I encounter resistance from learners?

Like many activities, learners may not accept or understand the reason for self-assessment. Some ways of responding to learners' resistance include the following:

- informing learners of the reasons for doing something;
- showing them the benefits of the activity;
- giving them some say in how the activity is conducted;
- teaching them how to do the activity, presenting it in an engaging way; and, above all,
- listening to learners' concerns.

Forcing learners to do something that they have not in some way agreed to do will only create greater resistance.

What if there is a mismatch between the instructor's assessment and the learner's self-assessment?

Without adequate guidance, learners may rate themselves higher or lower than their actual abilities. If a learner's self-assessment is part of a dialogue with the instructor, meaning the instructor can read it or respond to it in some way, the instructor may be able to guide the learner to a more realistic evidence-based assessment.

For learners who judge themselves too harshly, the instructor can emphasize the learner's accomplishments, such as a recent presentation, piece of writing or completion of a task. Instructors can show this evidence to learners or remind them of it; even better is if learners have learning portfolios or samples of recent work to document their progress and success.

Learners might also rate themselves higher than they actually are. Again, instructors can turn to the evidence, acknowledge achievements and point out areas that can be adjusted for even greater achievements: *This is a good email. It's very neat and clear. Can you make it even better? Is there a more suitable word that you can use here?* In this way, the instructor can encourage a confident learner while highlighting areas for improvement.

A third possibility is that a learner's self-assessment is in tune with the instructor's. It is important to point this out to learners through written and oral feedback. A learner's level of confidence can be raised if she knows that her self-assessment is accurate and in line with the instructor's assessment.

What does self-assessment look like for lower-level learners?

In lower levels, the majority of self-assessment activities should focus on highlighting learners' strengths and accomplishments. Instructors will want to encourage learners to recognize, use and build on what they do well. Therefore, self-assessment at the lower levels is best directed at getting learners to see their successful attempts at using English rather than their weaknesses.

What role does the CLB play in self-assessment?

LINC levels are aligned with the CLB, and LINC providers use curriculum guidelines that reflect this. Many instructors already use the CLB "Can Do" checklists (available at www.language.ca), which include *needs assessment, goal-setting,* and *self-assessment* as options. These checklists can serve as a general reference of language competencies that have already been successfully attained or provide the basis for future teaching and learning. Many of the self-assessment tools presented here incorporate these "Can Do" statements. As learners progress through the levels, the instructor can make more explicit reference to the CLBs and help learners understand how the CLB relates to their learning.

How can I make self-assessment an on-going activity, especially in a program with continuous intake?

Since many LINC programs involve continuous intake of learners, many class routines that have become familiar with current learners will be new for learners entering the program. This can be challenging if the instructor has established some routines involving self-assessment in class, only to have to introduce them to a new group. However, the same can be said of all classroom routines, and there are simple things the instructor can do to assist new learners as they adapt to their learning environment:

- **Allow time for new learners to adjust to their new environment** before asking them to do activities that require both background knowledge and the learners' trust.

- **Write the main points of the lesson on board before each class.** This could include the name of the task or task type, the CLB competency, or the main learning aims. Use the same "task language" and put the plan in the same place every day.

- **As much as possible, include a demonstration of an activity.** Instructors can do this themselves or can ask learners to show the class what to do.

- **Provide clear signals to learners when something is a routine.** Present a routine task in a similar manner each time, using the same words to describe it, announce it, assign it, etc. This includes the kinds of instructions you give and the manner in which you give them (e.g., "Copy," spoken with the same intonation, with visual support, without extra words).

- **Ask the same types of post-task feedback questions**, such as "What was the most difficult part of this task?" for higher levels or use pictures or symbols for lower levels.

- **Pair up learners strategically,** such as higher-level learners with lower-level ones or more confident with slightly less confident. Monolingual pairs are also an option.

- **Regularly devote the last 5-10 minutes of class to discussing the day's activities.** Ask the learners if they found a particular activity useful. Ask learners why they think you chose a particular activity. Generally, encourage learners to think about what they have done, why they have done it, and whether or not it was useful.

When introducing a routine self-assessment activity, such as a learning log or journal, it may be possible to instruct the new learners how to do the activity separately while the other learners do the task they are already familiar with. Another possibility, provided you have the trust of the learners as well as their permission, is to ask a few willing learners to share their last entries from their assessment log, using a learner-generated model for new learners to refer to.

Using the Learner Self-Assessment Tools

LINC instructors can choose from the collection of tools to help their learners engage in self-assessment. An introductory grid prefaces each tool, summarizing the following:

- the intended CLB level, competency area,
- the competency statement,
- the task type, and
- the tool.

This is followed by a description of a procedure and an example of how the tool is used or simply the tool itself. For the sake of consistency, some tools are complementary to other formative assessment tools in the toolkit. This encourages greater integration of self-assessment activities into the overall assessment process.

For example, the rubric tool scenario for Writing CLB 3-I (Interacting with Others)can be followed (or preceded) by the learners completing a plain language self-assessment checklist using the same task criteria: inclusion of salutation, name, date, future tense, etc.

The overall process will generate evidence that both an instructor and a learner can use to measure the learner's proficiency at a language task and make informed decisions based on that information, such as which areas to focus on in future lessons or which goals have been reached.

The learner self-assessment tools are presented through level-specific examples. However, all of the tools in the toolkit can be adapted for higher or lower levels by changing the language to suit the learner, or by grading the task so that the language demands are greater or lesser. Here are some examples:

- The goal planner for CLB 4 could be used at higher levels, with the expectation that a learner working at CLB 6 will be able to draw upon a wider range of language and competencies and may finish the worksheet more quickly.

- The envelope template for Writing CLB 1-II (Reproducing Information), although intended for low levels, might be used as is for those CLB 3 learners who have gaps in their writing skills.

- The Action Plan tool for Writing CLB 4-IV (Sharing Information) could be simplified by removing one or more sections and used for learners working on CLB 1 and 2 outcomes.

A quick survey of the tools will give instructors an idea of what can be done at each level and across the skills. The tool overview that follows provides another possible starting point. While many of these tools are ready to be used without any adaptation, instructors always have the option to make the tools their own. This can be done in several ways including:

- changing the way in which a tool is introduced (before or after the main task, in small chunks or all at once);

- changing the way the tool looks on paper, screen, or board;

- changing the criteria to be assessed;

- changing the follow-up to the self-assessment activity (class or peer discussion, one-to-one conferences, journal entries, or a simple reminder).

To facilitate adaptation, templates have been provided alongside each tool (and Word documents are posted online). In fact, some adaptation is inevitable given the diversity of learners instructors work with

in the LINC program and the variety of approaches instructors use in the classroom. The more the instructor deliberately chooses and plans an activity, the greater chance it has of success in the classroom. Whether the tools presented here are used as is, or they inspire the creation of new tools better suited to a specific learning context, the overarching goal is to highlight the possibilities of self-assessment in the classroom and its value as a form of assessment and as a learning-aid.

Chart of Classroom Assessment Tools

The following is a list of different tools that can be used when implementing classroom assessment (e.g., formative assessment, self-assessment, peer-assessment, etc.). Examples of many of these tools can be found throughout the toolkit. See the CATK Tools Chart for specific examples.

Tool	What it is…
Action Plan	• A goal-setting tool composed of a combination of sentence stems, questions, and prompts designed to help Ss identify specific language learning targets and timelines based on collected assessment data
Anecdotal Record	• Informal written notes on Ss' performance • Based on T's observations as the Ss engage in classroom activities • Can be used with labels, sticky notes, or comments charts. • See "Observations"
Buddy Journal	• Ss share insights, thoughts, and learning via journals which they share with one another • See "Learning Log"
'Can Do' Statements	• Lists competencies for each skill area at each Benchmark level • Can be used for self-assessment, needs assessment, and observational assessment • T can check off each competency as the student demonstrates it in class
Checklist	• A list to identify characteristics or behaviours that are present or not present • Scored as yes/no • Can be used to track CLB competencies and outcomes, task-specific criteria, learning preferences and strategies, etc.
Chart	• A graphic organizer for representing Ss' goals and achievements, performance criteria for tasks, and Ss' opinions and preferences • Can be used for reviewing lessons, target language, content, etc.
Comments Chart	• Keeps track of behaviours that are present or not present or notes areas for improvement • A combination of a "Checklist" and an "Anecdotal Record"
Exemplar	• A model that Ss can refer to when making their own attempts at a language task
Journal	• Ss record their understanding of the topic or lesson in a journal • T reviews/responds to entry to check Ss' understanding • See "Learning Log"
Learning Log	• Ss write journal entries summarizing what they have learned • Ss comment on strategies used successfully • Ss record English use outside of class • See "Journal"

Tool	What it is…
Observations	• T walks around the class and observes/checks Ss working • Can be used in combination with Comments Charts, Anecdotal Records, Checklists
Peer Assessment	• Ss give feedback to classmate(s) on their performance of a particular task • T models and guides feedback so that Ss know what to look for and how to present their feedback • Gives Ss some idea of how their language performance is perceived by other Ss • Can be done in conjunction with many other tools
Performance Sample	• A form of "authentic assessment" where Ss are observed in the process of doing tasks and are evaluated on how the tasks are done • Focus is on Ss' ability to perform the task
Questionnaire	• A set of questions for conducting needs analysis, getting information on learning style preferences, or gathering feedback on classroom activities and materials
Quiz	• To assess Ss' "discreet skills" • Examples include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, paper & pencil, matching, cloze exercises, extended response, etc.
Rating Scale	• Ss work is marked on a continuum • Two end points assigned a meaning and performance is rated in relation to two extremes; e.g., 0=never and 5=always
Rubric (Marking Guide)	• A fixed scale with a list of characteristics that describe each score for a particular outcome (or task) • A set of descriptors aligned with a rating scale or scoring guide
Self-Observation	• An activity in which Ss, using a clear set of criteria, assess their own performance of a task using audio or video recordings

CATK Tools Chart

The CATK contains many examples of how tools can be used across skills, across CLB levels, and adapted for teacher-assessment, self-assessment, and peer-assessment purposes. The table below plots the tools in the toolkit as a means to quickly find a particular tool and to see how it can be used in varying ways.

	Teacher Assessment		Self-Assessment Self-Reflection	Peer Assessment
Anecdotal Record (incl. sticky notes, labels, notes, comments)	👂 CLB 1-II 👂 CLB 2-IV 👂 CLB 3-I 🗣CLB 2-IV 🗣CLB 4-II	📖CLB 2L-III 📖CLB 4L-III 📖CLB 5-IV 📖CLB 6-II 📖CLB 8-II	👂 CLB 5-IV (a)	🗣CLB 6-III
Checklist (incl. simple rubric)	👂 CLB 2-II 👂 CLB 5-II 🗣CLB 1-I 🗣CLB 2-II 🗣CLB 5-I (b)	📖Foundation L-II 📖Foundation L-IV 📖CLB 1-I ✍Foundation L-III ✍CLB 1-I ✍CLB 6-III	👂 CLB 7-II 👂 CLB 8-I ✍CLB 1-II	🗣CLB 7-I ✍CLB 1-II
Journal / Learning Log (incl. guiding questions)			👂 CLB 4-I 🗣CLB 5-I (a) ✍CLB 2-IV ✍CLB 2L-II	
Labels / Stickers	📖CLB 1-IV (a)		✍Foundation L-II	✍CLB 1L-IV
Questionnaire			👂 CLB 6-IV 🗣CLB 3-III-a	
Rating Scale			👂 CLB 6-IV 🗣CLB 8-I 🗣CLB 8-III 📖CLB 1-IV (b) 📖CLB 6-III	🗣CLB 8-II
Score Sheet / Record Sheet (incl. Grid, sheet, single-point rubric)	👂 CLB 5-IV (b) 👂 CLB 8-IV 📖CLB 1L-II 📖CLB 6-I 🗣CLB 3-III (b) 🗣CLB 7-IV	📖CLB 2L-III 📖CLB 3L-III 📖CLB 4L-III ✍Foundation L-III ✍CLB 1L-IV ✍CLB 3-I (a) ✍CLB 5-I ✍CLB 7-IV	🗣CLB 4-IV (a)	
Survey	👂 CLB 1-IV 👂 CLB 6-I	📖CLB 2L-III	🗣CLB 5-IV	

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