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Practices, policies and tensions in classroom-based assessment

Despite the importance placed on 'classroom-based assessment' (Leung, 2004, Rea-Dickins, 2007; Tsagari, 2008), the area is still not well-defined and relatively under-researched. For instance, we know very little about how language teachers create their own assessment instruments for monitoring, recording, and assessing learners' progress and achievement in the classroom. We also know little about how teachers' day-to-day assessment decisions and practices are influenced by government assessment policies, the tensions created and teachers' assessment training needs.

This presentation will report findings of a large-scale research conducted in state schools in Cyprus aiming at investigating EFL teachers' assessment practices, needs and intervening factors. The paper will first discuss recent research into the complex roles of classroom assessment. Then it will provide an overview of the educational language system where the present study was carried out, and present research results delineating the language assessment landscape of state school education, tensions created and training opportunities of the EFL teachers. It will conclude by discussing ways of how teachers can become 'assessment literate' (Hasselgren, 2008; Reckase, 2008; Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Kaftandjieva, 2008; Tsagari, 2008; Newfields, 2006) and how testing experts and teacher trainers can help in this direction.

It is hoped that the present paper will stimulate discussion among participants and will be a springboard for future research in the area in other contexts too.