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MEDIATING MULTILINGUALISM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

Revitalizing the Importance of Language Assessment Literacy

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Abstract

Assessment is still generally viewed as a summative evaluation that informs instructors of the success or failure of student learning on a quantitative basis. This limited approach could be partially attributable to insufficient preparation and instruction in programs for teacher education and professional development. Consequently, assessment literacy is crucial for teachers. It is essential because it enables teachers to assess, analyse, and utilize student performance data to enhance instruction. The language test affects stakeholders; therefore, it is more vital for them to be literate in the assessment because illiteracy in the assessment leads to wrong assessments and impedes attainment of the assessment's objectives. To avoid unfavourable outcomes for instructors and students, it is crucial for teachers to be literate in language assessment. The purpose of this study is to promote awareness of the importance of assessment literacy (henceforth AL) in the field of English language instruction by examining multiple definitions of language assessment literacy (LAL), evaluating numerous pieces of research in the field, and proposing some strategies to revitalize LAL. The article ends with some conclusions and suggestions for how future and current teachers can improve their AL skills so that AL can become an important part of teaching English.

Keywords: assessment literacy; language assessment; teaching English; language test; professional development

Introduction

Language assessment literacy (LAL) is becoming greatly significant in language teaching and is an important component of language instructors' professional competence (Popham, 2009; Kremmel and Harding, 2020). Teachers who are proficient in language assessment can create and manage successful assessment activities, effectively evaluate student grades, construct appropriate teaching plans, and make informed educational decisions. Poor LAL from teachers, on the other hand, can lead to poorly made language tests, wrong test interpretations, and bad educational decisions, all of which can hurt students.

Stiggins (1991) provided a fundamental work on assessment literacy, which was followed in the early 2000s by Brindley's emergence of the importance of language assessment literacy (henceforth LAL) (2001). Instructors who are assessment-literate have the resources they need to be critical consumers of assessment data (Stiggins, 1991). According to Inbar-Lourie (2008), someone who is literate in language assessment may ask and answer critical questions about the assessment's purpose, the tool's suitability, testing circumstances, and the use of the assessment's result. There is a large body

of knowledge concerning LAL studies that are focused on some aspects, such as the contribution of teachers' LAL to students' performance and achievement (Elshawa et al., 2016; Vogt et al., 2020) and teachers' reflection of their assessment literacy, which has interrelationships with various components (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; Coombe et al., 2020; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021). LAL also encourages pupils to learn more effectively and motivates them (Alderson et al., 2017; Fulcher, 2021; Gan et al., 2019).

Teachers' LAL is insufficient, despite its importance in language instruction and evaluation (Berry et al., 2017; Xu and Brown, 2017). Language evaluation information was lacking in the TESOL curriculum for pre-service instructors (Jeong, 2013), and in-service teachers had few opportunities for language assessment training (Crusan et al., 2016). Furthermore, education officials and university or school administrators must be held accountable for failing to ensure that instructors receive proper training before commencing their teaching careers (Coombe et al., 2012). When these factors interact, they limit the development of instructors' LAL.

Recognizing the relevance of LAL for language instructors and the necessity for teacher development, a number of studies have been performed to create LAL, researching teacher LAL and supporting materials in a range of situations and viewpoints. However, the pertinent research is "still in its infancy" (Fulcher, 2012, p. 117), and further study in this area is required to advance LAL scholarship. This review will first look at how LAL is thought of and how it is studied in the real world by teachers. It will then talk about implications and future directions to give a full picture of the existing research and set the stage for future LAL studies.

There are two reasons why this matter should be investigated. To begin, not every language instructor is proficient in language assessment. This is mostly certainly due to their educational background. Many language instructors lack relevant teaching and assessment competence. They may be capable of teaching, but they may not be able to write a suitable test or efficiently evaluate their students. Previous research has shown that instructors lack assessment knowledge (Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2014), and many teachers are assessment illiterate, as indicated by their classroom activities (Djoub, 2017). Second, LAL research is still limited, particularly in terms of developing a questionnaire or inventory of language assessment literacy for university language instructors, which includes two components: teachers' assessment knowledge and teachers' perspectives on assessment knowledge. Knowing how literate university language instructors are in language assessment enables them to realize their potential as professional language teachers who can not only teach effectively but also examine their students' performance professionally. The goal of this paper, as the title implies, is to investigate how university language instructors assess the dimensions, indicators, and propositions/items of the designed evaluation literacy questionnaire for university language teachers.

This article advocates for awareness of the relevance of LAL in foreign language instruction. I will first define language assessment literacy, and then provide some strategies to revitalize LAL. Following that, I will quickly discuss some of the research that has been undertaken in the domain of assessment literacy in general and LAL in particular, as well as what comprises the knowledge base that

language instructors, especially EFL teachers, need to build. Finally, we will provide some findings and recommendations for the development of LAL among EFL instructors so that they may solve assessment-related concerns more effectively.

Definition of Language Assessment Literature (LAL)

Literacy in its original definition is still commonly defined, but teaching professionals prefer to think of it as a term that integrates knowledge and competences in a certain subject of study. We're all becoming more familiar with terms like Digital Literacy and Research Literacy, as well as Assessment Literacy, which will now be the subject of a series of articles we'll be sharing with you in the coming months, all of which will be centered on the issue of Language Assessment Literacy, or LAL. Many attempts have been made to define LAL since its inception in the early 1990s, but we will use Pill and Harding's simple yet concise definition from 2013, which defines LAL as a set of "competences that enable the individual to understand, evaluate, and, in some cases, create language tests and analyze test data."

Language assessment literacy is widely characterized as a collection of competences, understanding of assessment procedures, and appropriate use of relevant resources that allows a person to grasp, evaluate, construct language tests, and analyze test findings (Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Pill & Harding, 2013; Stiggins, 1999). Davies (2008) presented a literacy assessment technique based on "skills plus knowledge." The term "skills" relates to actual know-how in assessment and construction, while "knowledge" refers to "essential background in measurement and linguistic description" (p. 328). According to the study, there has been a shift from a componential to a developmental approach in language assessment literacy (e.g., Brindley, 2001; Davies, 2008; Inbar-Lourie, 2008). According to Fulcher (2012), language assessment literacy should be divided into three categories: (a) practical knowledge, (b) theoretical and procedural knowledge, and (c) socio-historical understanding. According to Fulcher, practical knowledge is the basis and most important component of language assessment literacy. Language assessment literacy was classified by Pill and Harding (2013) as "illiteracy," "nominal literate," "functional literacy," and "procedural and conceptual literacy" until achieving an expert level of knowledge: "multidimensional language assessment literacy." LAL refers to language teachers' expertise with assessment procedures and their ability to utilize this knowledge to evaluate students' language outcome measures (Malone, 2013; Stiggins, 1991).

Assessment literacy is defined as educators' comprehension of successful assessment principles (Popham, 2004; Stiggins, 2002) in order to properly build tests that convert learning goals into assessment activities that exactly reflect student understanding and completion (Mertler and Campbell, 2005; Stiggins, 2002). It necessitates that educators "understand the fundamental principles of sound assessment practice, including terminology, the development and application of assessment methodologies and techniques, familiarity with assessment quality standards, and familiarity with alternatives to traditional measures of learning" (Paterno, 2001).

According to Davies (2008), language assessment literacy consists of three major components: skills, knowledge, and ideas. Fulcher (2012) defines language assessment literacy based on a research that sought to evaluate language teachers' assessment training requirements. He says that evaluation literacy consists of three parts. The first are the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to design, develop, maintain, or evaluate large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests; the second are familiarity with test processes as well as awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, such as ethics and codes of practice. The ability to contextualize knowledge, skills, processes, principles, and concepts within larger historical, social, political, and philosophical frameworks to understand why practices have evolved as they have and to assess the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals is the final one.

Taking a look at Inbar- (2013) One way for visualizing the vast range of LAL is Lourie's aspects of LAL for language educators. She describes LAL as a "one-of-a-kind difficult thing" that is connected to but separate from general assessment literacy for educators. The following are the components of LAL for language instructors, according to the author: 1. Understanding of the social role of assessment and the obligations of the language tester. Understanding the political and social variables at play, as well as power and consequences. 2. Knowledge of how to design, run, and assess tests, as well as how to report test results and ensure test quality. 3. Understanding of large-scale test data. (p. 33) 4. Assessment of Language Proficiency in the Classroom 5. Understanding and applying theories of language acquisition and learning in the assessment process. 184 Facultad de Ciencias Humanas, Giraldo Department of Foreign Languages, Universidad Nacional de Colombia 6. Aligning evaluation with language teaching approaches Knowledge of current language teaching approaches and pedagogies. 7. Understanding assessment quandaries: formative vs. summative; internal vs. external; and problems about validity and dependability, especially with reference to real language use. 8. LAL is tailored as a consequence of the skills, experience, viewpoints, and attitudes contributed to the teaching and assessment process by language teachers (based on Scarino, 2013).

Why LAL important?

LAL is crucial for language educators and other stakeholders to appreciate the scope of this profession (Taylor, 2009). (Taylor, 2009). According to Scarino (2013), language teachers are the most important stakeholders since they are the direct test users. Regrettably, some seasoned instructors lack evaluation skills (Crusana et al., 2016). Tsagari and Vogt (2017) revealed that the sample instructors were unprepared to carry out assessment-related tasks because teacher education programs did not provide them with enough intellectual support. As a consequence, they adopted the evaluation practices of their mentors or

coworkers. Tsagari and Vogt discovered that procedures like "test as you were tested" or "learning on the job" restrict teacher growth and increase the danger of not employing "public information" in this regard (p. 54). Melone's (2013) study in the context of foreign language in the United States discovered that language instructors were more interested in developing the ability to use assessment tools than language testers, who were more concerned with accurately understanding the theoretical aspects of assessment. Jeong's (2013) research found, in a different setting, that professors with no testing experience lay less emphasis on test theory than instructors with testing experience. Jeong's study found that the teaching results of the courses differed depending on whether the instructors had testing or non-testing backgrounds. These findings highlight the need of assessment-related training for language instructors.

Strategies to Revitalize LAL

Some academics have concentrated on training assessment (Boyles, 2005), the development of language testing textbooks (Davies, 2008; Fulcher, 2012; Taylor, 2009), and the development of online teaching resources (Malone, 2013). Lam (2019) explored classroom-based writing assessment knowledge, concepts, and practices in a study of 66 Hong Kong secondary school teachers. He discovered that the majority of teachers had related assessment knowledge and positive attitudes toward alternative writing assessments; however, some teachers only had a partial understanding of assessment of learning and assessment for learning, but not assessment as learning, because they could only follow the procedures without internalizing them. Mendoza (2009) discovered that teachers frequently and inappropriately use summative rather than formative assessments; that they use test scores to facilitate the learning process; that they lack knowledge of different types of language assessments and what information each type provides; that they lack knowledge of how to give more effective feedback to students; that they lack knowledge of how to empower students to take charge of their learning; and that they lack knowledge of ethical issues related to test and assessment. The authors concluded that teachers do not get enough language assessment training.

Training might help language teachers improve their assessment literacy. Appropriate assessment teacher training is critical for equipping teachers to be assessment literate in their classroom teaching (Jeong, 2013). To raise the quality of English language teaching by providing instructors with the requisite assessment knowledge, all pre-service and in-service English language training should incorporate LAL opportunities (Herrera & Macas, 2015). In a recent research, Giraldo (2018) said that language instructors must be able to perform high-quality assessments for students' language competence progress, which is only possible if they have knowledge, skills, and practices in language testing. This attitude was replicated in Koh et al. (2018)'s study of Chinese language instructors in Singapore, which discovered that

participating teachers were unaware of the learning objectives associated with the exam questions prior to enrolling in a professional development program. According to the study's findings, instructors' "skill to identify and recognize higher-order learning objectives is likely to give a significant enhancement in the quality of the assessment tasks developed." Similarly, a recent Iranian research found that boosting teachers' grasp of assessment literacy can help them evaluate learners' performance (Esfandiari & Nouri, 2016). The same research found that instructors' teaching approaches, methods of evaluating students, and goals varied substantially depending on the amount of training they had received in different forms. Assessment identities greatly impact how teachers approach and value evaluations (Looney et al., 2017). When it comes to putting such information into practice, instructors' knowledge is dependent on their previous experiences, attitudes, and feelings towards assessment, according to Looney et al. (2017). Recognizing these factors, DeLuca, LaPointe-McEwan, and Luhanga (2016) advocated for diversified and targeted professional development to assist teachers in developing assessment literacy. DeLuca et al. (2016) and Looney et al. (2017) argued for tailored training programs to satisfy the specific requirements of instructors doing assessment tasks.

There is a large and growing body of literature on how to improve teacher assessment knowledge through course work, professional development events, on-the-job training, and self-study (Harding & Kremmel, 2016), assessment textbooks (Brown & Bailey, 2008), university-based coursework (DeLuca, Chavez, & Cao, 2013), and curriculum-related assessment (Brindley, 2001). Despite a large body of research on training, teachers believe that assessment knowledge is theoretical and pedagogically irrelevant to everyday classroom assessment practices (Popham, 2009; Yan et al., 2018); the knowledge is not contextualized, and they typically learn about related assessment knowledge with a cookie-cutter approach (Leung, 2014); and most training programs only include a generic assessment course that provides insufficient det

According to the literature, considerable research has been done on teachers' perspectives of evaluation. Assessment is thought to diagnose and improve learners' performance and teaching quality (Crooks, 1988), account for quality instruction provided by schools and teachers (Hershberg, 2002), hold students individually accountable for their learning through assessment (Guthrie, 2002), and show that teachers do not use assessment as a formal, organized process of evaluating student performance (Guthrie, 2002). (Airasian, 1997). Cizek, Fitzgerald, and Rachor (1995) conducted research on primary school teachers and found that many teachers' assessment systems are based on their conceptions of teaching. Kahn (2000) conducted research in high school English classes and found that teachers employed a range of evaluation approaches because they held and practiced transmission-oriented and constructivist ideas of teaching and learning. Nonetheless, since ideas are cognitive experiences that are shared socially and culturally, they may be personalized (van den Berg,

2002). In their research, Looney, Cumming, van Der Kleij, and Harris (2018) focused on a notion of Teacher Assessment Identity. They contended that professional identities of language teachers, beliefs about language assessment, practice and performance in language assessment-related tasks, and cognition of their perceived role as language assessors all play important roles in determining their effectiveness in the field of language assessment.

Stiggins (1999) offers a number of approaches for improving assessment literacy. A unit or multiple units on assessment in various courses (e.g., methods courses, educational psychology courses, curriculum design, introduction to teaching), a separate course or set of courses on assessment methods, independent assessment study, an assessment training program taught by professors who model various methods, and student teaching instruction provided by an assessment-literate master teacher are examples of assessment-literate master teachers.

According to Malone (2008), more training alone is inadequate to meet the language assessment training requirement. Such training should "give language teachers with the necessary knowledge to utilize what they have learned in the classroom and understand the available resources to strengthen their official training when they enter the classroom." It is critical to stress that EFL teacher education and professional development programs provide teachers with appropriate LAL training. Such initial preparation, however, should be supported by continuous training that keeps in-service instructors up to date on current LAL advances and promotes their incorporation into their own teaching approaches.

Being language assessment literate is having or creating a link between what instructors do, how they think about what they do, and how they evaluate pupils in a relevant, meaningful, and ethical manner. Furthermore, to be assessment literate, a language instructor must be able to make appropriate modifications in his or her assessment methods in order for language learners to benefit (i.e., learn more successfully) from such changes.

More qualitative research is required to study and appreciate the function of teaching practice in the development of language assessment literacy in student-teachers. Many data collection tools (interview, lesson plans, assessment materials, video-recorded teaching performances, observers, reflective diaries, and so on) and a longitudinal study must be employed to provide a more complete picture of what is occurring in the teaching practice program. More study is required in this area since teacher candidates' field experiences may influence their perception of assessment and assessment judgements, as well as many other instructional choices (Clark, 2015; Heafner, 2004).

Conclusion

The assessment literacy studies analyzed also imply that instructors require assessment expertise. Teachers' credentials and criteria should include assessment course programs. Furthermore, the assessment knowledge base's material must be kept up to date with the most recent research and policy advances. Teacher assessment training must become extensive and durable enough to engage

teachers in profound assessment learning, which may help them enhance and extend assessment conceptions and practices. Furthermore, assessment training must include both the knowledge base and the environment of practice and draw links between them. In other words, assessment literacy should be cultivated by taking into account diverse educational contexts as well as the needs of the periods and circumstances. Different stakeholders must also help with assessment literacy. Teachers must be addressed as persons and professionals since their perceptions, emotions, needs, and past experiences with assessment may serve to increase the efficacy of teacher training, assessment knowledge, and abilities. Teacher assessment literacy growth include not only expanding assessment knowledge, but also broadening contextual-related information and inter-related abilities. In accordance with teacher professionalization in assessment, it necessitates the examination of several interconnected aspects such as teacher independence, assessor identity, and critical viewpoints. Teachers must participate in learning networks where they may interact, communicate with one another, and decide on assessment procedures. Finally, this evaluation of assessment literacy issues offers researchers with both general predictions and demands for more relevant study in building assessment literacy and viable answers to such challenges. Furthermore, the current data may assist instructors, policymakers, stakeholders, and researchers in determining where they are, where they need to go, and how to best proceed with their developmental work and research.

There are several unresolved issues surrounding assessment literacy, and further research is required to give a more comprehensive knowledge of linguistic assessment literacy and to broaden this ongoing conversation. More research might also be used to analyze and verify current issues in assessment literacy, as well as to challenge them. More research is required to assist policymakers in formulating standards that reflect both the present level of assessment research and assessment's cultural elements. Furthermore, extra research might reveal specific issues in pre- or in-service assessment education in certain situations and provide new techniques to enable better execution of professional norms or regulations. Because the assessment knowledge base is ever-changing, further research may provide teachers with insights from the most current assessment research results. Furthermore, since teacher ideas are so crucial in developing teacher assessment literacy, further study into their assessment conceptions and practices might provide greater insight. Language assessment literacy must be learned, unlearned, and relearned in order to improve the quality of language training.

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