

EFL Teachers' Assessment Literacy: Impact of Experience and Academic Attainment

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Abstract— Assessment plays key role in teaching process; therefore, it receives academic consideration more and more. This paper uses a survey to test how knowledgeable are the EFL teachers about the fundamentals of assessment. The questionnaire, Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory [CALI], based on the seven standards of assessment competence for educational assessment of students, which was recognized by the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education and National Education Association [1990]. The paper tries to investigate whether years of teaching experience and academic achievement affects assessment literacy level. The data were collected among 61 teachers of English as a foreign Language in Sulaimani, Iraq. The findings shows that perform inadequately and neither academic attainment nor classroom experience grant significant difference in EFL teachers' assessment literacy in the context of this research. However, more studies with using various methods in the field are required to find out more about teachers' knowledge and practice level of assessment.

Index Terms— EFL teachers, Assessment literacy, Teacher knowledge, Testing, student assessment.

1 INTRODUCTION

Assessment was basically defined as “the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths, and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy.” [AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990]

1.1 Assessment literacy

Assessment Literacy can be defined as the awareness of methods for evaluating students, interpretation of the results of the evaluation, application of the results to improve students' achievement and curriculum development [Webb, 2007]

The knowledge of assessment was previously known as assessment competence; later the term assessment literacy was used by Stiggins [1991]. Scholars have had several definitions for the term so far; Assessment literacy is defined as “individuals understanding of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures” [Popham, 2011]. Similarly, it is identified as “understanding principles of sound assessment” [Stiggins, 2002]. The term assessment literacy can be more Precisely defined as the knowledge, skill and ability to form and improve all types of assessment for different purposes, knowing the procedures, principles and concepts to serve further performance and learning, familiarity with the role of assessment and its effect on individuals, institutions and society [Fulcher, 2012].

Assessment literacy includes the knowledge of the concept, principle and procedures of all types of assessment for different purposes and in different context. Assessment literacy needs skills, knowledge and principles [Davies, 2008] to be applied properly. It is also known as teachers' ability to use assessment as a feedback to improve teaching and learning

[Rogier, 2014].

Assessment literate instructors on one hand should have the awareness about the objectives they want to assess, their purpose, and the application of the process. On the other hand, assessment literacy distinguishing features can be regarded as the familiarity of the possible obstacles that may happen in assessment process and the skill of preventing those problems. Another important feature of assessment literacy is being conscious about the negative consequences of unsound assessment [Stiggins, 1995].

Professional organizations, education and assessment reformists and scholars have tried to set standards for assessment literacy. These attempts to make clear criteria for assessment literacy need to be identified and applied by teacher preparation programs, professional training courses, institutions and teachers. The result of these attempts is the joined work of American Federation of Teachers [AFT], National Council of Measurement in Education [NCME] and National Education Association [NEA]. These professional organizations have set seven Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students [AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990].

The standards are as follows:

1. Teachers should be expert in selecting assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
2. Teachers have to be knowledgeable in evolving assessment right methods for educational decisions.
3. The teacher should have ability to administer, score and interpret the results of both commercially produced and teacher-produced assessment methods.
4. Teachers should be skillful enough to use the results for making decisions about students, teaching plan, curriculum improvement, and school development.
5. Teachers should be skilled in developing valid pu-

pil grading procedures that use pupil assessments.

6. Teachers should have the ability to communicate assessment results to students, parents, other unqualified audiences, and other instructors.
7. Teachers need to be aware of unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment data.

These principles are considered the requirements for teachers' assessment literacy scales.

Stiggins [1999] has similarly asserted seven standards for classroom assessment literacy. The assessment literacy competences for teachers by Stiggins are:

1. Relating assessments to clear goals
2. Clarifying attainment anticipation
3. Applying proper assessment approaches
4. Improving quality assessment, exercises, scoring criteria and sampling properly
5. Sidestepping prejudice in assessment
6. Using student achievement effectively.
7. Using assessment as an instructional interference

Mertler & Campbell [2005] compared The Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students [1990] with Stiggins Classroom Assessment Competence [1999]. Table 1 shows the relationship between them:

Table 1.

The alignments of Stiggins' [1999] competence with the seven standards set by AFT, NCME, & NEA [1990]

Classroom assessment Competence [1999]	The Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students [1990]
Connecting assessments to clear purposes	Standard [1, 2 & 4] choosing, developing assessment method properly. Using assessment results in decision-making.
Clarifying achievement expectations	Standard [4] using assessment results in decision making
Applying proper assessment methods	Standard [1 & 2] choosing and developing assessment methods properly
Developing quality assessment exercises and scoring criteria and sampling appropriately	Standard [2 & 5] developing assessment method appropriately. Developing valid grading procedure.
Avoiding bias in assessment	Standard [5 & 7] developing valid grading procedure. Recognizing unethical, illegal and in appropriate assessment method.
Communicating effectively about student achievement	Standard [6] communicating assessment results.
Using assessment as an instructional intervention	Standard [3 & 7] administering, scoring and interpreting. Recognizing unethical, illegal and in appropriate assessment method.

[Mertler & Campbell, 2005, p.8]

The standards of Assessment literacy and principles can be generally applied to language assessment literacy. Language assessment literacy consists of skills, knowledge and principles. Assessment literacy in language and the related textbooks has improved from covering only skills and knowledge to skills, knowledge and principles [Davies, 2008]. Through perceiving these three components, language assessment literacy can be realized. One of the problems of assessment literacy is the lack of ability to translate knowledge into practice, therefore clear, relevant and practical guide with detailed activities and exercises as a model for language assessment literacy in the textbooks are definitely needed [Fulcher, 2012].

Assessment knowledge is of great importance for language teachers. Teachers should constantly update the assessment awareness through in-service development training courses. It is not only enough for assessment to be a part of pre-service teacher preparation programs [Malone, 2013].

1.2 The impact of assessment on learning

Assessment has a controlling power on teaching learning process. It is a decisive part of education. The impact of assessment on learning could be various depending on the types, or purpose of assessment and the influence is far more than study patterns, teaching methods and course books [White, 2004]. Assessment is closely tied to student achievement and could have either positive or negative wash back on learning [Marzano et al, 1993; Crooks, 1988]. Psychological or emotional response of the students, who are in charge of learning, towards assessment results make them eagerly or hopelessly decide about their success opportunity [Stiggins, 2005, 2008].

Assessment of learning, as a success/failure measurement for judging students, increase learners' anxiety and influence negatively on students' learning. Assessment for grading purpose leads students to focus on marks rather than learning [Boud & Falchikov, 2006]. Thus, students who get low grades will be demotivated and lose confidence in their ability [Stiggins, 2005]. Education and schooling system does not have the right direction of serving community; because of failure to provide assessment balance in classroom.

On the other hand, there is plenty of evidence that assessment for learning has a positive impact on learning and raise standards of student achievement [Black & Wiliam, 1998a; Brown, 2004; Campbell & Collins, 2007; Wiliam, 2004, 2007, 2011]. Assessment affects both learning and teaching methods, procedures that taken into account for educational objectives and goals [Black & Wiliam, 2003; Marzano et al, 1993; Popham, 2007, 2011; Scarino, 2013; Stiggins, 2002, 2008; Valencia, 2002; Zhang & Burrey-Stock, 2003]. It has been reported that teachers use more than one third of their professional time on assessment [Stiggins, 2005] and students use a lot of time reviewing what has been assessed and will be assessed [Crooks, 1988; Shepard, 1990]. Formative assessment raises achievement if it is applied properly [Shepard, 2000] and can double the learning achievement [Wiliam, 2007].

Literature review about the impact of assessment on learning gives evidence to state that assessment shapes learning and teaching; the influence could be constructive and destructive to instructional objectives and educational goals. The impact

of assessment on students and teachers make alteration in view and practice of learning/ teaching process. Any attempt for education reform need to cover assessment reform due to the assessment power on learning achievement [Arter, 2001].

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this research, quantitative method was used to describe whether academic achievement or classroom experience affect EFL teachers’ assessment literacy. The research questions investigated by applying a questionnaire for reaching an answer for the proposed questions.

The purpose of using survey questionnaire is explained by Creswell [2009] as “provides a qualitative data or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of population” [p.145]. He also mentions that through studying samples of the population of the study, the findings could be generalized to the whole population.

Teachers of English as a foreign language reported about their own assessment level, by responding a close-ended multi-choice questionnaire; researchers’ bias issue could be easily addressed in the questionnaire survey besides the objective data collection, which makes the responses credible for the investigation.

3 DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of variance [ANOVA] was done to explore if there were any statistically significant differences among variables, such as level of academic attainment, years of experience in relation to the assessment literacy level. The statistical calculations were done by using SPSS [v.20] to examine the research questions of this.

Analyses were calculated for the personal information of the participants. The number of participants and the percentages of the respondents for each variable was presented. The variables mainly include years of experience and academic achievement. All the statistical computations were calculated by using SPSS [v.20] to test

4 FINDINGS

Participants were required to answer all the questions in the survey to obtain data about their assessment literacy level. They were also asked to provide information about the educational level they have attained and years of classroom experience.

Descriptive analysis was done to investigate EFL teachers’ assessment literacy level according to the standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students [AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990]. Table 1 below shows the descriptive statistics of their assessment literacy levels.

TABLE 1
TEACHERS’ ASSESSMENT LITERACY

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Correct response	61	9.00	28.00	16.2951	3.70290
Valid N [list wise]	61				

The average performance of teachers [N=61] was lower than the findings of other studies in the same field. Teachers answered less than half of the questions correctly [M=16.29, SD= 3.7] out of 35 questions. The minimum correct response was 9 and the maximum correct response was 28. The statistics showed that EFL teachers’ assessment literacy level in the current study was found to be less than almost all the previous studies around the world.

Table 2 describes the frequency of classroom experience that EFL teachers have had in their teaching career.

TABLE 2
PARTICIPANTS’ CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1-5	32	52.5	52.5
	6-10	21	34.4	34.4
	11-15	3	4.9	4.9
	16-20	3	4.9	4.9
	21-30	1	1.6	1.6
	more than 30	1	1.6	1.6
	Total	61	100.0	100.0

Table 2 explains that 52.5% of participants have 1-5 years of teaching experience [n= 32], 34.4% of teachers have 6-10 experience [n= 21]. 4.9% of teachers have 11-15 years of teaching experience [n= 3], 4.9% of participants have teaching experi-

ence 16-20 years [n= 3] and 3.2 % of participant have above 21years of classroom experience [n= 2]. This calculation shows that most of the teachers in this study have less than 11 years of teaching experience.

Table 3 shows a descriptive frequency of the academic attainment of the participant teachers of English.

TABLE 3

PARTICIPANTS' ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT

		FREQUENCY	PERCENT	VALID PERCENT
VALID	B.A	35	57.4	57.4
	M.A	26	42.6	42.6
	TOTAL	61	100.0	100.0

Table 3 clarifies that 42.6% English teachers hold Master degree [n=26]. 57.4% of the respondents accomplished Bachelor degree [n= 35].

Research question 1: Does years of classroom experience make difference in teachers' assessment literacy level?

Analysis of variance ANOVA was done for all the correct responses as dependent variable, and years of classroom experience as a factor. Table 4 shows the detail of total correct answers and years of classroom experience.

TABLE 4

TOTAL CORRECT ANSWERS WITH CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
BETWEEN GROUPS	97.528	5	19.506	1.479	.211
WITHIN GROUPS	725.161	55	13.185		
TOTAL	822.689	60			

The result presented in table 4 showed no statistically significant difference for the variables [p>.05]. Thus, we can say that years of classroom experience in the current study make no significant difference in teachers' assessment literacy.

Research question 2: Does academic attainment make difference in teachers' assessment literacy level?

Analysis of variance ANOVA was also calculated for all the standards as dependent variable, and academic attainment as a factor. The detail presented in table 5.

TABLE 5

ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT WITH TOTAL CORRECT ANSWERS

	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
BETWEEN GROUPS	.742	1	.742	.053	.818
WITHIN GROUPS	821.946	59	13.931		
TOTAL	822.689	60			

Inferential analysis showed that no statistically significant difference was found in terms of teachers academic attainments [p>.05]. The findings of the current study showed that academic attainment makes no statistically significant difference in teachers' assessment literacy.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 EFL teachers' assessment literacy level

The results of the current study indicate that the standard of literacy assessment of EFL teachers was far less than adequate. Out of 35 items, teachers replied fewer than 17 items correctly. The correct answer of teachers is more than the findings of a previous research done by [Muhammad and Bardacki, 2019]. The result showed that teachers' [N= 101] performance level was [M=14.34, SD= 4.45]. However, other study results varied from more than 17 to 24 in previous studies.[Campbell, Murphy, & Holt, 2002; Davidheiser, 2013; Mertler, 2003; Perry, 2013; Plake, 1993; Plake, Impara, & Fager, 1993; Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2013]. A survey was done by [Campbell, Murphy, & Holt, 2002] in the united stated found that pre service teachers [M = 21] and In-service teachers' performance [M=23]. Another research was conducted by Plake [1993] found [M=23] in assessment literacy performance. Plake, Impara, & Fager [1993] initially found assessment literacy level of teachers [M= 22].

Another study by Mertler [2003] showed assessment literacy level [N= 197] for in-service teachers [M = 21, 96, SD = 3.44], while pre-service teachers [N= 67] performance was less than in-service teachers were [M= 18.96, SD=4.67]. In addition another research, offered to Drexel University participants teach different core subjects, explored [N= 102]; [Davidheiser, 2013], assessment literacy level was found higher than all the previous studies and there was a big difference with the current study findings [M= 24.51, SD= 4.99]. Further a study presented to the university of Montana by Perry [2013] investigated teachers assessment literacy [N= 14], the result show [M=21.93, SD= 3.27]. The performance of teacher evaluation literacy in all of the above-mentioned studies, mostly in the United States of America, was higher than the results of the current report. In an analysis carried out, on the other hand, by Yamtim & Wongwanich [2013] in Taiwan, teachers' assessment literacy level [N= 19] was shown to be [M= 17.11, SD= 3.62]. Teachers' assessment literacy performance. In the comparison of the findings of this study with the other studies about teachers' assessment literacy, conclusion can be drawn

that EFL teachers show to be underprivileged in assessment awareness.

The low performance of EFL teachers in assessment literacy can result from a poor preparation program and a lack of in-service development training courses. Given the limited evaluation tools and the dominant role of national assessments in the teaching/learning process.

Various outcomes may be due to differences in courses related to assessment in the preparation of programs, curriculum differences and education policy. Another reason may arise from the fact that teachers learn from colleagues. [Stiggins, 1988] Moreover, to revise their own samples as a result, strong and weak points can be shared between them in similar contexts. Therefore, teachers from same context perform closely.

5.2 Assessment literacy, Teaching Experience and Academic Attainment

Scholars are constantly claiming the importance of the assessment. Improvement in learning is inevitably linked to teacher assessment literacy [Arter, 2001]. In the context of this study, at least for the last 10 years, teachers have not received any in-service assessment training. Even in-service teacher quality improvement courses usually occur, while the teaching profession is one of the most crucial components for learning achievement. [Lee & Wiliam, 2005].

This weak level of assessment literacy may have been the by-product of a false assumption of authentic assessment and its involvement in education. Teachers have performed less than almost all studies that have been conducted in assessment literacy so far. The results showed that teachers in the context of this study are not entirely aware of the principles of assessment literacy. Therefore, the preparation program is to be held responsible for not ensuring that teachers are aware and knowledgeable about they need before starting work.. [Mertler, 2004].

Teachers may not even have based their response on a scientific assessment background, as most teachers have learned the strategies they use in peer review and their own experience. [Stiggins, 1988]. If teachers do not base their knowledge on scientific procedures for evaluating students, they mislead themselves and the students.[Stiggins, 2012].

Despite the limitations of the present study, in which collection of data was a one-stage survey and only English teachers engaged in the research process, there is sufficient evidence in hand to suggest that the literacy assessment of teachers is much less than expected. Teachers need in-service training courses for career development. Teachers are not well aware of the principles of assessment literacy.

In conclusion, the assessment literacy level of English language teachers is not pleasing that could be due to several reasons. First, the misinterpretation of assessment practice and its impact on student's achievement that may be the result of improper preparation program for teacher education. Secondly, teachers' classroom experience does not help improving awareness of classroom assessment because of insufficient or lack of contribution to continuous learning process. For instance, they may have not participated in academic events such as; conferences, workshop and seminars in the field. Thirdly, academic attainment does not contribute to improve

teachers' knowledge in assessment in the current research. This might be interpreted that even postgraduate study have insufficient established methods for teaching assessment principles in teacher education program.

6 CONCLUSION

It is completely obvious that assessment is amongst the most important factors in the promotion of learning and has attracted significant attention from professional associations and academics. Teachers' assessment is indeed a necessary characteristic of an educator and has conclusively demonstrated to become one of the factors influence academic performance. The current research has been part of the international effort to raise awareness of the levels of information about assessment for teachers and to give some insight on what needs to be changed. The study was an effort to assess EFL teachers' assessment literacy level. Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory [Mertler, 2003] was used to test the research questions of this study. In the descriptive research a qualitative method used to collect data to test teachers' assessment literacy; population and sampling were restricted to Sulaimani governorate. The conclusions provide practical indication in hand supported by 61 survey samples to infer that EFL teachers' level of assessment knowledge can be regarded lower than in most parts of the world and needs improving. The findings show EFL teachers have not reached passing level according to Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students [AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990]. As compared to all the previous research in this field teachers were rather not accurately aware [Campbell, Murphy, & Holt, 2002; Davidheiser, 2013; Mertler, 2003; Perry, 2013; Plake, 1993; Plake, Impara, & Fager, 1993; Yamtim & Wongwanich, 2013. They underestimate or misunderstand the role of assessment and their own potential need for improvement. Inferential analysis revealed no statistically significant difference for teachers' academic attainment and years of classroom experience. The findings illustrated that years of classroom experience and academic attainment have not positively affected teachers' level of assessment literacy as expected.

Teachers need to improve their assessment knowledge through participating in training programs and courses. This research could have impacts for increasing interest in the assessment reform and its influence on the teaching practice.

Suggestions

The result show that preparation programs are not sufficient to prepare teachers for classroom assessment. Therefore undergraduate preparation program should be extended to cover assessment for learning. Furthermore, appropriate in-service training courses for teachers' professional development are needed.

Curriculum reforms need to cover, in addition to other aspects, assessment perception and practice. Therefore, sufficient attention should be paid to the crucial role of assessment in education

Teachers, on the other hand, should consider a balance between formative and summative assessment. They need to involve students in assessment make it a part of teaching process to enhance learning. It is better for teachers to use multi

methods of assessment in collecting evidence about students learning progression constantly to provide a fair opportunity for all students and address individual differences.

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