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Analyze the Language Assessment Test Literacy: A Case Study of the Pre-Service English Language Teachers of Iraq

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Abstract

The aim and capabilities of assessment have expanded in modern educational systems, and teachers are required to be well-versed in the fundamentals of contemporary assessment. In light of this, the current study examined the Language Assessment Test Literacy of English language teachers of Iraq using the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI), which was developed using the American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education's, and National Education Association's seven standards of teachers' Language Assessment Test Literacy expertise for the instructional assessment of students. The data has been collected using the qualitative and quantitative methodology. The results showed that out of 35 questions, Iraq's English language teachers only provided less than 15 right answers. Findings show that standard seven scores for instructors were the lowest. The standard four students received the highest grade. Despite the fact that 77% of teachers claimed to have had enough assessment training, the findings showed that they had small amounts of assessment literacy. It is advised that teacher preparation programs be revised and that in-service teachers be given professional development courses.

Introduction

One of the most important aspects of instructors' professionalism and quality standards is their assessment literacy. The educational process and student progress can be improved or hindered by teachers' assessment of literacy. According to academics, instructors' assessment practices and views have a negative impact on student learning and accomplishment. Studies on this subject have shown that training programs for teachers are not set up to meet teachers' requirements for classroom assessment [Hamza,2016].

Language assessment literacy (LAL) has come to be seen as one of a language teacher's core competencies in recent years. Their opinions of sound assessment procedures and their understanding of the key assessment ideas are vital to high-quality education. Language teachers must stay current with educational innovations in order to improve their assessment literacy, even though research in the field of language testing and assessment (LTA) has enhanced instruction in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) (Razagah and Karim,2022), (Giraldo and Frank, 2022).

LAL is essential for evaluating instruction-associated activities and decision-making about language proficiency. Instructors must understand how to employ assessment principles to enhance, use, and evaluate assessment processes and outcomes. They ought to be able to critique their own assessment procedures in terms of context, purpose, and a variety of other assessment-related factors. Therefore, in university departments that teach English as a second language, emphasis should be placed on training teachers about assessment. Unfortunately, a lot of future teachers claim that the practical aspects of assessment are not given enough attention in these courses, which are primarily focused on testing and evaluation methodologies (Giraldo and Frank, 2022),(Rutti and Olivia, 2019).

In reality, using theoretical knowledge is crucial for helping teachers assess their pupils in the real world. To deliver quality instruction, it should be a top focus to improve student teachers' assessment literacy. Identification of real issues and requirements in education is aided by research. Stakeholders can then use these data to raise educational standards. This study discusses research on LAL and examines how it has been developed and applied throughout the years. This will enable the essential actions to be made in order to revamp assessment processes and raise educational quality. There is a broad recommendation on how EFL teachers might increase their assessment literacy.

Assessment literacy has indeed been investigated, however when the pertinent literature is looked at, we can claim that the research has been provided in three stages: (1) The notion of Language Assessment Test Literacy; (2) Skills and Knowledge; and (3) Assessment Exercise in the Classroom by Teachers (Sadeeq,2020).

The most important component in interpreting and making decisions about assessments is teachers' concepts and values of assessment. The incorrect belief that assessment is unrelated to the teaching process, the traditional conception of scientific measurement, and instructors' misunderstanding of the importance of assessment are some of the misconceptions about assessment that limit teachers' assessment literacy. Teachers' knowledge is another component of their literacy assessment. Most instructors and principals conduct performance assessments without having faith in their students' knowledge and skills. (Alaa et al.,2019).

Poor assessment practice is a result of teachers' incorrect assumptions and ignorance. Teachers that lack explicit opinions on students' presentation base their instruction strategies and goals on ambiguous standards, which results in subpar evaluation procedures.

According to research, assessment practice is lacking in a number of crucial ideas and techniques. Through classroom evaluation, teachers gather a lot of data without using it to guide their instruction.

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The fact that evidence is solely utilized to report learning achievement is another issue.(Premier et al.,2010)

Because they frequently misinterpret assessment outcomes and simply place a focus on manufactured answers rather than critical thinking, most instructors do not use assessments to improve student learning. Most of the time, teachers do not consult authorities; the advice of specialists and the results of the research are rarely used in classroom activities. Teachers' ability to put knowledge and concepts into practice for classroom assessment purposes may also be a difficulty.

The issue with assessment literacy may be that while numerous assertions and proposals have been made by academics, very few of them have empirical backing. To support the theories and suggestions of academics, there is a clear necessity for developing experimental study on teachers' assessment expertise and its effect on learning accomplishment.

The Contribution of Classroom Assessment

One of the most difficult facets of a teacher's job is classroom assessment, which also has a significant effect on learning and teaching. As activities are created, graded, and evaluated by teachers, classroom assessment requires time and effort.

The argument that the existing state of practice is unsatisfactory is supported by the literature despite the difficulty and significance of classroom evaluation. External examinations, teachers'

assessment literacy, and classroom realities are some of the factors that affect how well students are assessed in the classroom. External tests have a significant influence on national lesson planning, learning objectives, and assessment results. Teachers' plans are affected by these tests in such a way that they all but disregard classroom assessment (Najib et al., 2019).

The misunderstanding that assessment is a general, accurate, and objective scientific measurement given at specific times that has nothing to do with instruction is another barrier. This misperception exists among teachers, students, and the education community. Students' motivation and belief in their ability to learn are not supported by this traditional perspective of assessment. Because teacher preparation programs and professional training do not adequately prepare instructors to challenge classroom assessment, teachers' lack of understanding is another barrier to the appropriate practice of quality assessment within classroom education (Gan et al.,2022).

Inappropriate student behavior, the diversity of learners' skills, packed classrooms, and a lack of adequate class time, particularly in public schools, are some classroom conditions and education settings that adversely touch classroom assessment training.

Movements should be conducted to increase the caliber of classroom assessment in order to improve learning outcomes and raise students' academic standards. To

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adequately prepare teachers for the problem of classroom assessment, training programs must offer courses that are more extensive on assessment literacy. Assessment should be done for learning rather than for the purpose of achieving learning objectives in classrooms. Students achieve more with any enhancement in the standard of learning assessments. It's important to close the gap between outside influences on assessment in the classroom and assessment literacy principles (Hamza,2016), (Sadeeq,2020).

The goal of the current study is to determine instructors' perceptions of their degree of

assessment literacy while also examining whether teachers are capable of assessing students' performance. Additionally, this study aims to shed light on teachers' opinions on the courses they took while still being teacher candidates in their preliminary teacher education programs. In relation to the kinds of talents or abilities that instructors have or are likely to acquire, it also seeks to determine the strengths and weaknesses of their understanding of classroom evaluation.

The research aims to ascertain the Language Assessment Test Literacy of Iraq's English teachers in the governorate of Bagdad, Iraq. The following research inquiries will be looked at in order to achieve this goal:

1. What are assessment test literacy levels in Iraq's English teachers?

2. What are the assessment literacy strengths and weaknesses of Iraq's English teachers in comparison to the requirements of teacher competence?

Research design

   In order to describe Iraqi EFL instructors' Language Assessment Test Literacy in the context of seven standards of teachers' assessment competency projected by the AFT, NCME, and NEA, this study combined a qualitative and quantitative methodology with a descriptive approach.

   Teacher educators in Iraq, particularly from the governorates of Bagdad(first Rassafa) made up the participants in this study. All of the instructors are native Arabic speakers. Some of them lack the training necessary to educate and evaluate students because they are not degree holders of education faculties or teaching departments.

    The data collection includes both basic school and preparation school teachers in the private

and government education sectors. Convenience sampling was used for the sample. 101 teachers participated in the survey, despite the fact that 150 were given out.

Data Analysis

In accordance with the seven standards of teachers' assessment literacy, a descriptive analysis was done to investigate the instructors' assessment levels. The strong and weak points of teachers' assessments of literacy were examined for each subscale separately. Each standard's mean and standard deviation, as

well as the instrument as a whole, were analyzed. To obtain answers to the research questions, SPSS was used for all statistical analyses.

Findings

Frequency		*Percent*	*Valid Percent*	
	Yes	43	42.6	42.6
Valid	No	58	57.4	57.4
	Total	101	100.0	11.0

In contrast, 57.4% of partakers (n=58) did not take a separate course on classroom evaluation, according to Table 1, which indicates that 42.6% of the instructors (n=43) did.

The frequency points of teachers' opinions about undergraduate preparation programmes are described in Table 2.

Table 2 Observations of Student Training for Classroom Education

	Frequency		percentage	valid percent
	very unprepared	6		6.4
	somewhat prepared	11	5/9	6.4
	fairly unprepared very	47	10.9	11.7
	prepared	30	46.5	50.0
Valid	Total	94	29.7	31.9
	System	7	93.1	100.0
Missing		101	6.9	
Total			100.0	

Table 2 shows that 76.2% of instructors (n = 77) feel that their undergraduate training program helped them become better instructors in general whereas only 16.8% of instructors (n = 17) think that their bachelor training programme did not effectively prepare them for classroom teaching.

The teachers' perceptions of undergraduate programmes that educate them to evaluate students in the classroom are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3 Observations of Student Training for Classroom Assessment Frequency percent valid percent

			percent	valid percent
Valid	very unprepared for evaluating student performance		7.9	8.2
	fairly unprepared for measuring student performance slightly prepared for evaluating student performance very prepared for assessing Total System	15	14.9	15.5
Missing Total		42	41.6	43.3
		32	31.7	33.0
		97	4.0	100.0
		101	100.0	

Table 3's frequency analysis reveals that 7.9% of instructors (n= 8) said they were very uneducated, while 14.9% (n= 15) said they were just slightly prepared. In contrast, 31.7% of teachers (n=33) and 41.6% of teachers (n=42) respectively reported feeling extremely prepared for evaluating students' performance. According to the descriptive frequency statistics, 73.3% of English teachers (n=74) believe they are ready to evaluate students' performance.

Investigation of Teachers' Assessment Literacy

Research question 1: What is the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory's assessment literacy score for English as an English Language teachers in Iraq?

Using descriptive analysis, the assessment literacy levels of Iraq's teachers were examined. Table 4 displays the qualitative information on the assessment's literacy levels.

Table 4 Vivid Data of Teachers Language Assessment Test Literacy   Minimum   Maximum   Mean Std. Deviatio

		Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviatio
Total correct	101	5.00	28.00	14.3465	4.45968

The average instructor score (N=101) was below average, as shown in Table 4. Out of 35 questions, teachers properly answered just 15 (M=14.34, SD=4.45).

Five was the bare minimum and 28 was the maximum number of valid answers. According to the figures, Iraqi EFL teachers' evaluation literacy level was lower than that of all other studies conducted globally in the past.

Research Question 2: What components of Iraq's English language instructors' assessments of their students' literacy score poorly or well in comparison to the requirements for teacher competence?

To investigate the strengths and weaknesses of instructors' assessment literacy, descriptive data was gathered using the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory. Table 5 details the strengths and weaknesses of instructors' assessments of literacy [Albaharey,2021], [Najib et al.,2019].

Table 5 *Numerical examination of teachers' scores for each standard*

Standard	1- Selecting suitable approaches of assessment		
Standard	2- Creating proper procedures of assessment	2.2475	1.12611
Standard	3- Managing, scoring and taking assessment results	2.3465	1.12637
Standard	4- Consuming assessment outcomes for decision making	2.3366	1.07030
		2.4059	1.12408
Standard	5- Creating valid grading exercise		
Standard	6-Interactive assessment outcomes		
Standard	7- Identifying unethical or unlawful assessment exercises Total precise reaction		

1.8317

1.6931

1.4851

14.3465

Each standard has a maximum score of five. According to the data, instructors scored the highest on standard four, "Using assessment results for decision-

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making" (M=2.41, SD=1.12), while standard two, "Developing appropriate methods of assessment," established the second-highest score (M=2.34, SD=1.13). Standard seven, "Recognizing illegal or unethical assessment practice," had the lowest grade (M=1.48, SD=1.01). Standard six, "Communicating assessment outcomes," was the second-lowest standard (M=1.69, SD=.99).

Discussion

Iraqi EFL Teachers' Assessment Literacy Level

The results of the present study indicated that Iraqi EFL teachers' assessments of literacy were far from adequate. Out of 35 questions, teachers properly answered less than 15 of them. However, in the earlier trials, instructors' accurate responses ranged between 17 to 24.

Strong and weak features of Iraqi English teachers' Language Assessment Test Literacy

In this study, standard seven, which states that instructors "should be knowledgeable in spotting immoral, unlawful, and other inappropriate assessment procedures and applications of assessment information," was found to be the least strong indicator of teachers' assessment literacy. With regard to standard 4, which states that "teachers should be adept in using assessment data when making judgements about individual students, organizing instruction, establishing curriculum, and school improvement," the results showed that instructors scored the best on this criterion (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990).

The literacy assessment of teachers' students reveals considerable variation in both its best and weakest areas across the pertinent literature. The different outcomes could be a result of different assessment-related courses offered by teacher preparation programmes, different curricula,

and different educational policies. Another reason could be that teachers share their strengths and weaknesses in similar circumstances since they revise their own examples and learn from their peers.

Iraqi EFL teachers' conception on assessment

According to the study's results, more than 57% of respondents said their undergraduate education did not include a course on evaluation. Learning gains are inextricably linked to instructors' assessment literacy. In the context of the present study, teachers haven't taken an in-service assessment training course in at least 10 years. There are very few courses for in-service teachers' quality enhancement in the Iraqi setting, despite the fact that instructors' quality is one of the most important elements in learning performance. [Najib et al.,2019], [Alaa et al., 2019].

This low degree of assessment literacy could be brought on by misunderstandings of the nature and practice of assessment. In contrast to all previous research on assessment literacy, teachers received the lowest average

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score; yet, more than 73% of instructors felt that their bachelor's degree had adequately prepared them for teaching assessment. Instructors' claims that they are prepared can be viewed as misleading statements because there may be a miscommunication between teachers' observations of classroom assessment and the discrepancy between their claims and assessment literacy   results. In line with earlier research, the majority of the instructors who fared substantially better stated that they were not well prepared for evaluation. The findings indicated that instructors in the current study's environment are not familiar with assessment literacy's guiding concepts.

Despite the study's limitations—the data was gathered through a single stage survey, and only English teachers took part—there is adequate data at hand to conclude that teachers'

assessments of students' literacy are far from adequate. In-service training programmes are necessary for teachers' professional growth.

Even teachers are unaware of the fundamentals of evaluation literacy and the need for improvement. More than other topics, teachers are essential to be educated about the immoral and unlawful exercise of classroom evaluation.

Conclusion

This study sought to ascertain the evaluation literacy level of Iraq's English teachers. Only the northern region of Iraq—more specifically, the governorates of Bagdad—was used for population and sampling. The findings support the assertion that Iraq's English teachers' Language Assessment Test Literacy is too small in comparison to the Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students with empirical data from 101 survey samples (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990). The findings showed that, in comparison to all prior studies in this area, Iraqi teachers had the lowest degree of understanding. The ability of teachers to "recognize illegal or unethical assessment procedure" was found to be their weakest perception, while they fared somewhat better "in applying assessment outcomes for decision-making." Despite the fact that the majority of Iraqi teachers claimed to be prepared, the results showed otherwise. They misjudge or undervalue the importance of assessment as well as the potential need for development inside themselves.

It is possible to conclude that English teachers had a low degree of assessment literacy when all the research results are considered. According to a literature analysis, preservice training was inadequate for English teachers to learn and implement assessment procedures, but the experience helped them improve their ability to strike a balance between theory and practice. Although instructors had a solid understanding of assessment principles and methods, they were

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primarily concerned with achieving the demands of the national education system, which caused them to overuse summative assessment. However, all facets of education should place a high priority on learners' improvement.

It is obvious that new rules must be implemented in order to increase the assessment literacy of English teachers. Regarding recommendations, both the current educational environment and pre-service training for language teachers require improvements. There should be more evaluation courses in the course of language teacher training for pre-service teachers, and the curriculum should balance theory with practice. Additionally, all pre-service and in-service English teachers must conduct self-evaluations. Regarding the requirement that language teachers use portfolios.

It has been demonstrably shown that Iraq's English teachers lack the necessary training to accurately assess students' performance and ascertain their genuine level of achievement. Through changes to teacher education plans and training courses, teachers in Iraq need to improve their assessment skills.

Recommendations

According to our findings, teacher education programs in Iraq need to be revised and improved, as many studies for other situations have advised. Reforming pedagogy and course materials alone should not be the sole goal of education policy. Along with other areas, curriculum improvements must address assessment ideas, principles, and processes. The educational system needs to give assessment due consideration given its significant role in education.

The requirement for suitable in-service training programs for teachers' qualified progress is equally vital. The training sessions must cover every aspect of sound assessment ideas and practices. To increase the quality of education and learning, there must be a criterion for the caliber of teachers and a defined recruitment strategy.

The methodological considerations might be one area for additional research. This research used a review research approach, which provides broad data on teachers' opinions. Though, future studies that incorporate classroom observation or assessment interpretation may provide a deeper knowledge of instructors' perceptions of and practices with regard to assessment.

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تحليل اختبار تقييم اللغة معرفة القراءة والكتابة: دراسة حالة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية قبل الخدمة في العراق

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الملخص

لقد توسع هدف وقدرات التقييم في النظم التعليمية الحديثة ، ويتعين على المعلمين أن يكونوا على دراية جيدة بأساسيات التقييم المعاصر. في ضوء ذلك ، فحصت الدراسة الحالية اختبار محو الأمية في اختبار تقييم اللغة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق باستخدام مخزون معرفة القراءة والكتابة للتقييم الصفي (CALI) ، والذي تم تطويره باستخدام الاتحاد الأمريكي للمعلمين ، والمجلس الوطني للقياس في التعليم ، والتعليم الوطني. معايير الرابطة السبعة لخبرة معرفة القراءة والكتابة في اختبار تقييم اللغة للمعلمين من أجل التقييم التعليمي للطلاب. تم جمع البيانات باستخدام المنهجية النوعية والكمية. أظهرت النتائج أنه من بين ٣٥ سؤالاً ، قدم مدرسو اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق أقل من ١٥ إجابة صحيحة. تظهر النتائج أن الدرجات السبع القياسية للمعلمين كانت الأقل. حصل الطلاب الأربعة القياسيون على أعلى درجة. على الرغم من حقيقة أن ٧٧٪ من المعلمين زعموا أن لديهم تدريبًا كافيًا على التقييم ، فقد أظهرت النتائج أن لديهم قدرًا ضئيلًا من معرفة القراءة والكتابة التقييمية. يُنصح بمراجعة برامج إعداد المعلمين وإعطاء المعلمين أثناء الخدمة دورات للتطوير المهني.

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