

# ASSESSMENT LITERACY ANALYSIS ON DESIGNING CLASSROOM LANGUAGE TEST

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**Abstract** - Assessment has been widely discussed by many researchers. There were some researches had found that practices of assessment are different among language teachers. One of it was conducted by Lopez and Bernal (2009) which showed that administration of assessment depended on the knowledge and information got by the teachers (those who joined the assessment training and those who did not). This study aims at knowing whether the assessment literacy of the EFL teachers who teach at secondary schools in Central Java Indonesia influences its practices in the classroom. The study was conducted in qualitative paradigm in the context of observing the EFL teachers activities in developing classroom language test. There were more than 10 teachers who were observed. The checklist questionnaires were used to gather the data. The findings showed that the teachers did not comprehend the information of steps in designing the classroom assessment. They had already known how to relate the purposes of instructional process and objectives of the assessment. However, they had not got enough information how to set up the test specification, and how to devise the appropriate test types. Hence, EFL teachers have to improve their assessment literacy since high quality assessment needs planning, designing, appropriate implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

**Keywords** – Assessment Literacy, Designing Classroom Language Test, EFL Teachers

## I. INTRODUCTION

Assessment as part of teaching and learning process needs more attention when it will indeed influence the learners' improvement either in their proficiency and achievement. However, some teachers seem to neglect the assessment design for their classroom teaching. Some facts can be seen from the results of lesson plan written by some teachers. They seem to avoid the term assessment which they have to develop in their lesson plan.

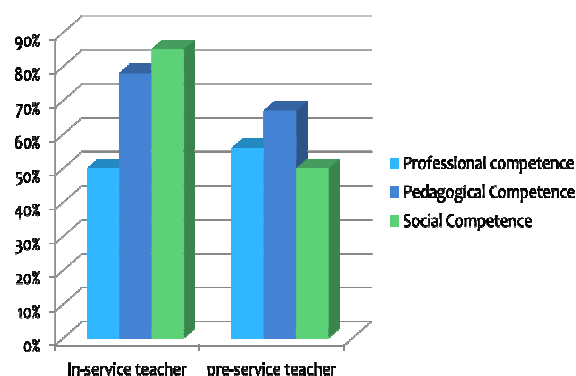
In some secondary schools which had been observed in this study, EFL teachers also had difficulty in designing the assessment as their part of teaching planning tasks. Some needs to do with the problems of designing classroom language assessment, especially how to devise the tasks and construct good language assessment. This dilemma can be said that it has relation with the teacher's information of assessment. Although they have knowledge related to the terms of assessment, most of the time they did not realize

that the assessment activities had been done while they were teaching. Their understanding of having assessment activities need to be more skilled and achieved based on the instructional purposes that they have already set up.

This study tried to investigate the teacher's knowledge of assessment information and tools and related to designing the language assessment. The results of this study then could be used as the further steps to provide the teachers with the needs of developing their assessment literacy and practices as their parts of their tasks.

As it was found by Lopez and Bernal (2009) that the practices of assessment, in fact, different one another in the schools. However, teachers should have knowledge that the focus or the important point of assessment actually is to help pupils to improve learning. This study also concerns on the competencies of pre- service and in-service teachers. From the need analysis done by the researchers, the following is the result of the analysis:

Table 1: Previous analysis of Pre and In- Service teachers competencies



From the table above, it can be seen that pedagogical competence was at the middle high result for in- service teachers, it was about 75% at that time. However, when it came to the practice of designing lesson plan, some teachers had difficulties in the assessment literacy. They did not understand some terms related to the terms of assessment. While for the pre-service teachers, they had understanding but they were lack of experiences in designing. It could be seen when they had teaching at the

school to be used as its practices. Thus, the assessment practices had not been used optimally.

Both teaching and assessment cannot be separated, since they have the same purpose for learners. In this case, if the teachers have limited knowledge related to the current assessment practices that are used in a nation, they will be misled by themselves and it will give bad impact on the students (negative washback may occur). Talking of assessment knowledge for teachers, this study uses the term assessment literacy which has meaning of the teacher's assessment knowledge related to the terminology, methodology, designing and its practices. Thus, in this paper, the researcher also focuses on the term of assessment information and its tools.

The term assessment information here relates to the comprehension of the teachers to the types and purposes of assessment, how to design both formal and informal assessment, and the standards of assessment administration. All the information related to assessment are important to be understood by teachers since its feature is mostly widespread used in educational system (Newsfield, 2006). Another reason why AL is considered important is in teaching, teachers are estimated to practice assessment approximately around 20% to 50% in the assessment related activities. It can be considered that their activities in teaching are interrelated with assessing students' performance based on the competences that have to be achieved in students' learning.

Xu and Brown (2016) mention that discussion in the AL can be traced into the standards that can prescribe 7 domains of competency, they are:

1. *Choosing assessment method appropriate to instructional decisions;*
2. *Developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decision*
3. *Administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods*
4. *Using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement*
5. *Developing valid pupils procedures*
6. *Communicating assessment results to various stakeholders*
7. *Recognizing unethical, illegal, and inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.*

From those standards, based on Brookhart (2011) as cited by Xu and Brown (2016), there is one missing that is formative assessment which include the way of self and peer assessment done by learners. Some previous studies which relate to assessment literacy to teachers were done. Knowing the AL from teachers, there were some measures to be developed. This is kind of objective test in knowing the AL of the teachers. However, in this study, the researcher used qualitative ways in knowing the AL of the teachers. Not using the objective test.

In addition, another point which is considered to be specific is the knowledge of AL which include reliability and its threat to it, content validity, design open-ended and closed-ended task, use of alternative assessment, and students test preparation.

Scarino (2013) as cited by Giraldo (2018) argues that

*In addition to knowledge, skills, and principles in LAL, it is pertinent to include teachers' interpretive frameworks. That is, discussions in LAL need to acknowledge that language teachers have particular teaching contexts, practices, beliefs, attitudes, and theories, all of which shape their own LAL. Recognition of language teachers' interpretive frameworks is particularly important in fostering professional development. Knowledge, skills, and principles in language assessment coexist with teachers' ways of thinking and acting upon the act of assessment.*

From what Scarino (2013) has mentioned above, LAL which means language assessment literacy, it can be shaped by teacher's practices, beliefs and attitudes in their teaching. It is no doubt that the way language teachers in teaching can influence all activities including assessment in the classroom. The varieties of assessment activities can be done and practiced in the classroom whenever the teachers have creative ideas to be developed in their teaching activities. For examples, in devising assessment tasks, teachers can apply interesting and challenging tasks. This study actually also concerns on the teachers' interpretive frameworks on assessment. So, it can be said that when it comes to the quality of instruction in the classroom it will relate to the quality of the learning process. As many educators know that the learning process itself has components inside, they are teachers, learners, materials, assessment and context. Thus, teacher is one of the important component in the learning process. The reason is because teacher can be said as decision maker in choosing the suitable and best materials, teaching plan, and the most necessary is he/she has to be able to investigate the learners ability and competence before deciding the best instructional process in the classroom. It is proven when the achievement of the learners is improved. So, thus, assessment plays important role to be applied and administered by the teachers since it can detect the learners performance and lead to the improvement of the competence.

Yamtim and Wongwanich (2014) categorized the classroom assessment into the following: (1) designing the assessment in order to meet the specific needs, (2) the assessment should be based on the concrete and achievement goals, (3) the assessment should be accurate in evaluating, (4) yielding assessment outcomes that communicate to the users, (5) involving students participants in self- assessment, goal setting, self monitoring, reflection, and sharing of learning among students.

## II. METHOD OF THE STUDY

### A. Research Method

The qualitative method paradigm was used in this study. As Denzin and Lincon (1994) mentioned that a qualitative research concerns on interpretation of phenomena in the natural settings to make sense of terms of the meanings people bring to these settings. In this study, the qualitative method was used to investigate the experiences of EFL teachers in assessment practices, in this case is designing the classroom assessment. The case study was also used to see the phenomenon happened related to the teachers' practices in assessing.

### B. Study Sample

The group of teachers were investigated in this study. The researcher took 10 of the teachers to be interviewed and given questionnaire. They were asked to answer questions related to assessment literacy which focused on how to design good language assessment. The teachers were divided into two groups, from the pre-service teachers and in-service ones. The in-service teachers (5 teachers) were teaching at secondary schools and they were classroom teachers who teach English lesson. While the pre-service teachers (5 persons) were those who joined the teachers development training program. They were graduated from bachelor degree, with the assumption that they had got the theory of language assessment before.

### C. Instrument of the Study

The questionnaire in the form of checklist answers was used in this study to gather the data from both pre-service and in-service teachers. The questionnaire contained some checklist questions related to the language assessment literacy which were important to be known and understood by the sample of the study. There were some ingredients of language assessment literacy after being modified by the writer from the previous studies taken which were concerned in this study, they were:

- Knowledge of assessment
- Mastering of language acquisition related to language assessment process
- Matching Assessment with language teaching
- Awareness of the dilemma in the process of assessment

While for the checklist questions related to the design of language assessment literacy (Brown, 2004) are as follows:

- What are the purposes of the test?
- What are the objective of the test?
- How will the test specification reflect both the purpose and the objective?
- How will the test task be selected and the separate items arranged?
- What kind of scoring, grading, and/or feedback is expected?

### D. Data Analysis

All the data were analysed using the descriptive analysis concerning the language assessment literacy and few simple quantification using percentage.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are divided into two parts, the first is the checklist result of Language Assessment Literacy, and the second part is the checklist result of how the teachers understand to design language assessment.

### A. The Checklist Results of Language Assessment Literacy

The following is the diagram of percentage of the checklist questionnaire results.

Table 2. Results of Checklist questionnaire of Language Assessment Literacy

LAL INGREDIENTS	In Service Teachers	Pre service Teachers
Knowledge of Assessment	61	48
Mastering of Lang Acquisition	45	50
Matching Assessment with language teaching	65	52
Awareness of the dilemmas	60	45

From the table 2 above, the ingredients mastery of language assessment literacy between the pre-service and in-service teachers have different amount in percentage. The in-service teachers have more understanding on the theory and practices of language assessment. They also can match the instructional purposes and assessment practices in the classroom to meet with the competencies achieved by the learners. It is indeed true that knowing the language assessment literacy of EFL teachers is particularly important in fostering profesional development. Between knowledge, skill, and principles of language assessment coexist in the way of teacher's thinking and the teachers' practices of assessment in the classroom. Thus, there was difference between pre-service and in-service teachers that can be considered as related to the experiences got by those subjects of the study.

Knowing the aspect of language acquisition mastery, surprisingly, the pre-service teachers got more amount in percentage. They could predict some activities of assessment that can influence the learners' improvement in learning. The fact could be seen from the lesson plan designed by them, which relate the specific indicator based on the purposes and the various types of assessment activities for the EFL learners. However, the awareness of assessment literacy was lower than in-service teachers. All pre-service teachers only designed good language assessment by considering their way of fulfilling the task when joining the teacher's professional development

program. So, it can be said that experiences will play important role in continuing the step of being literate in language assessment.

From the subjects of pre-service and in-service teachers, both were realized more on the practices of formative assessment rather than summative ones. However, the practices of the second ones are more given attention since they have specific schedule of administration.

Based on the result table of LAL ingredients above also shows that the in-service teachers have more score on “awareness of the dilemmas”. The point has meaning that the teachers who had more experiences in this study had realized that the work of assessment practices need more attention since they have beliefs that those can improve the learner’s learning in the classroom. Started with the planning of assessment and come to the real practices need more efforts to see the learners process of enhancing their performances and abilities in all language skills. Those seem sometimes to be dilemma that have to be realized by every classroom teachers. In one time, they need more energy to prepare and think the best ways of facilitating the learners, on the other one, they also have to consider the learner’s improvement in their performance and achievement.

#### B. Checklist of Assessment Literacy on the Designing of Language Assessment

The following is the checklist analysis result of questions related to designing language assessment.

Table 3. Checklist analysis results of designing language assessment literacy

Knowledge Aspects of designing language assessment	In Service Teachers	Pre Service Teachers
1. What are the purposes of the test?	78%	65%
2. What are the objective of the test?	75%	72%
3. How will the test specifications reflect both the purpose and the objective?	56%	50%
4. How will the test tasks be selected and the separate items arranged?	50%	40%
5. What kind of scoring, grading, and/or feedback is expected?	65%	65%

From the table above, it can be seen that there are slight differences between the in-service and pre-service teachers in the knowledge aspects of designing language assessment.

The participant of in-service teachers as always got the higher amount in percentage than the pre-service teachers. They have known better in comprehending of how to design language assessment.

The aspects that were answered by the participants were derived from Brown (2004). The questions to be

considered when designing the language assessment were comprised from the purposes and ended with how the scoring criteria will be used in the assessment. They are about the assessment purpose, objective of tasks, test specification, types of task selected and how to construct them, and the last is the scoring criteria. From those questions or aspects of designing language assessment, the most difficult for the teachers to comprehend and practice is how to construct good selected test types. Both pre-service and in-service teachers have admitted that they need more being accustomed with some terms and knowledge of test types and how to construct them.

It is indeed that the language assessment literacy which deals with how to devise the test specification and to construct the appropriate good language test types need process of experiencing as it is included as the knowledge, skill and principles of EFL teachers. The followings are some examples of answers from the unstructured interview:

*“It needs more energy to design and practice various types of formative assessment in the classroom”*

*“I don’t need to think difficulty to give score because I know them better”*

*“I don’t know much about types of assessment applied in the classroom, giving quiz is enough”*

By looking at the examples of the in-service teachers answers above, it can be concluded that the assessment literacy on the assessment types selected and how to construct them is still neglected sometimes. Again, it needs process of being accustomed to get better administration implanted in their principles. However, they understand and know better the summative test than the informal ones (formative) for classroom evaluation.

Related to the last question is the scoring criteria. That aspect also needs concern since although some in-service teachers have been able to create rubric for their scoring criteria, but they realized that some aspects to be evaluated from their students need to be revised based on the skill taught in the classroom.

Finally, from two parts of results related to language assessment literacy, the participants who were pre-service and in-service teachers have middle standard of literacy looking at the four aspects of assessment literacy and at the questions of designing language assessment.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

From the results and discussion, it can be concluded that language assessment literacy for either pre-service and in-service teachers have already been standard for classroom assessment. Teachers have already understood some terms related to assessment practices. However, the participant of pre-service teachers need more effort and

experiences by being accustomed to the knowledge, skill, and principles of language assessment in the classroom.

The findings of this study, thus, can contribute the pedagogical dimension on the assessment. Once, the assessment seems to be considered as the only summative ones that can decide the students or learners success or failure in their study. That view is considered narrow perspective with only understanding the formal assessment. So, this study provides perspective that assessment literacy is needed by either pre-service and in-service teachers to maintain their professional development. As it has already mentioned that knowledge, skill and principles of the teachers influence the way teachers do assessment practice. The three components include the assessment knowledge, so that it cannot be denied that teachers need to enhance their assessment literacy for their professional development.

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