

Measuring Teachers' Writing Assessment Literacy: a Case Study of Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang

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Abstract. Considerable amounts of students and graduates of universities were found to be deficient in writing English. To this end, several researchers have focused so far exclusively on investigating teaching and learning methodologies in the classroom, while teachers have remained untouched in their capacity for evaluation and assessment. Empirical evidence suggested that assessment activities affect students' performance. As assessment literacy should begin with an examination of its knowledge domain, this study attempts to gauge the teacher's level of writing assessment literacy by distributing a questionnaire adopted from the Language Assessment Knowledge Scale (LAKS). The findings suggested that most of the teachers have a low level of literacy in writing assessment.

Key words: language assessment literacy; writing skill.

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INTRODUCTION

Writing has become one of the credentials required for the advancement of English learning. Harmer (1999) affirms that "the reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right" (p.79). Not only does writing provide students with skills to lift ideas and thoughts in their academic tasks, but it also helps them carry out jobs in the future. Writing furthermore offers students insight into how to relate and enhance their capacity to think and understand other people. Due to the fact, writing has been so essential in the curriculum of the English Department at Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang that puts coursework writing in four consecutive semesters. The courses are primarily designed to develop students writing proficiency, leading them to produce good compositions which are logical and practical.

Around the same time, though, writing often leads to students getting their problems. Writing is even considered one of the toughest to learn (Azis & Husnawadi 2020; Pyo, 2020). To address the issue, several researchers in Indonesia and overseas have conducted researches. Unfortunately, the studies appear to focus solely on teaching and learning methodology without impacting the assessment of learning practices. Nonetheless, the literature notes that assessment is one of the critical aspects in the learning

process that also defines the degree of performance of the students in the classroom. As a consequence, assessment literacy is necessary.

Hildén & Fröjdendahl (2018) asserts that "the role of assessment literacy in the field of teachers' pedagogical knowledge is focal and in various ways acknowledged in prominent models of teacher cognition" (p.1). Having assessment literacy enables teachers to comprehend, analyze, and use data on student performance to enhance education (Falsgraf, 2005). Mertler (2002) even claims that teachers' assessment literacy is critical in determining the quality of assessment and its relation to student accomplishment.

From this standpoint, it is evident that assessment literacy has become a vital ability for the language teacher to have, and as Xu and Brown (2017) asserted, "assessment literacy should start with the investigation of its knowledge base; thus, the assessment knowledge lies at the heart of assessment literacy" (p. 134). With this in mind, the current study investigates the writing assessment knowledge of EFL teachers in Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term "assessment literacy" was firstly exposed by Richard Stiggins in 1991. It refers to teachers' awareness with testing definitions and their ability to apply this knowledge to classroom procedures (Malone, 2013). In other words, teachers that are assessment literate understand what they are assessing, why they are assessing,

how they are assessing, the potential pitfalls associated with assessment, and how to avoid them. Additionally, they are aware of the negative repercussions of insufficient or wrong assessment (Stiggins in Bayat & Rezaei, 2015)

Assessment literacy plays an influential role in the teaching and learning process. According to Marzano (2000), understanding and executing effective classroom assessments are vital to raising student achievement levels. It is further explained that by employing proper assessment procedures, strategies, and practices, teachers can improve their instruction, increase learners' motivation to study, and raise learners' level of achievement (Mellati & Khademi, 2018; Umer, Zakaria, Alshara, 2018; Amirian, Pourfarhad, and Nafchi, 2016; Smith, Worsfold, Davies, Fisher, McPhail, 2013). Empirical evidence shows that assessment tasks affect how students learn. Tests consistent with learning results usually lead to high-profile learning research, synthesis, and evaluation. A study by Munoz & Álvarez (2010) proved that a strong correlation between learning outcomes and assessment methods improves student learning.

Thus, to effectively assess students' performance, teachers must be familiar with, understand, and apply the fundamental principles of language assessment in their daily classroom practices, including the ability to decide on proper assessment methods, draw up valid assessment tasks, give feedback to students on their performance, and evaluate the teaching and learning process. Referring to the *Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students* (American Federation of Teachers, National Council on Measurement in Education and the National Education Association, 1990), teachers should be proficient in the following seven different competency domains: selecting assessment methods that are appropriate for instructional decisions; establishing assessment methods that are suitable for instructional decisions; administering, scoring, and analyzing the findings of both externally and teacher-developed assessment methods; utilizing assessment information to make judgments regarding individual students, lesson planning, curriculum development, and school improvement; developing effective grading systems; conveying assessment results to various stakeholders; and detecting unethical, illegal, and improper assessment techniques and uses of assessment data.

An extensive literature has developed on the

level of assessment literacy of EFL teachers. Employing various language assessment measurement tools, a series of studies (Buyukkarci, 2016; Koksall & Ulum, 2018; Fard & Tabatabaei, 2018; Kalajahi & Abdullah, 2016; Genç Çalışkan and Yüksel, 2020) has indicated that the most of the teachers were at the low level of assessment literacy. Other studies reported more specific "pictures" about inadequate assessment literacy among English teachers. Zhang & Yan (2018) investigated the quality of test items of English examinations made by teachers. The findings indicate that though most questions are accurate, items with an erroneous key or numerous keys were still discovered. Dunlai & You (2015) have also relied on item analysis. The results suggested that teachers have a weak comprehension of statistics, particularly with item analysis and distractor efficiency analysis. Ahmadi & Mirshojaee (2016) and Lees & Anderson (2015) examined teachers' knowledge on formative and summative assessment. The study revealed that the teachers have poor awareness of the issues.

METHODS

Research Goal

Because of the importance of assessment literacy in determining students' accomplishments, this study examines EFL teachers' understanding of writing assessment.

Sample and Data Collection

This current study was conducted in the Department of English Education at a state University in Karawang, and it involved five EFL teachers teaching writing composition as participants. Two of the teachers had a master of education, and three are PhD candidates. All the teachers had at least three years of teaching writing experience. The instruments used to reveal the teachers' knowledge and skills of writing assessment was a test comprising fifteen assessing writing questions adopted from Language Assessment Knowledge Scale (LAKS) developed by Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2018).

Analyzing of Data

Participants' answer sheets were scored based on the correct number of responses and were analyzed using criterion-referenced test interpretation, in which the participants' results were set against a specified level of performance. The scores of LAKS were subsequently categorized based on the three-level division,

namely: (1) poor or needs improvement (lower than 60%), (2) fair (60-79%), and (3) good (80% and higher).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results reported in this section provide evidence about teachers' understanding of writing assessment based on LAKS (Language Assessment Knowledge Scale) of Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2018). The findings derived from the test are presented in the following chart.

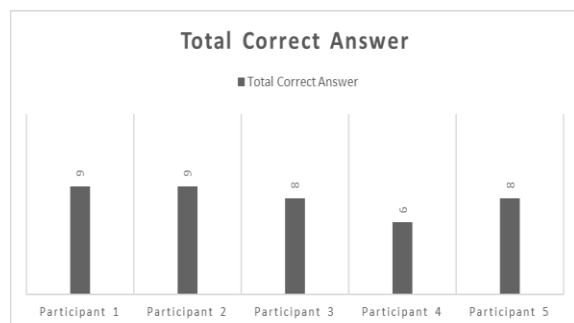


Figure 1. Participants' Test Responses

The chart displays the raw score of participants' responses to the test items of writing assessment knowledge. The data indicate that the entire sample accurately responded to less than ten numbers. The first and second participants had the most outstanding scores by correctly answering nine questions, while the third and fourth individuals correctly answered eight questions. The final participant received the lowest score by correctly answering six questions.

In percentage terms, the first and second participants answered as much as 60%, the third and fifth participants 53%, and the fourth participant only 40%. According to the three-tiered classification, the first and second participants are deemed to have a fair understanding of writing assessment, while the rest are thought to have poor knowledge.

Following data analysis, it was discovered that the majority of teachers possess inadequate assessment literacy. This finding is consistent with the previous studies (Buyukkarci, 2016; Koksall & Ulum, 2018; Fard & Tabatabaei, 2018; Kalajahi & Abdullah, 2016). Despite using various measurement tools, including Metler's Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory, the study indicated that most teachers lacked assessment literacy. This finding also gains support from a study conducted by Genç Çalişkan and Yüksel (2020). Using the same instrument, i.e. Language Assessment

Knowledge Scale (LAKS), the study discovered that participants' mean score in LAK-writing is 7.33 out of 15, which means respondents correctly answered about half of all items. It implies that the participants' rating of their writing knowledge was lower than the average.

In addition, collecting data with tally marks the test results demonstrates that all participants accurately answered just one statement, which pertains to the purpose of analytic scoring. This is precisely analogous to Genç Çalişkan and Yüksel (2020). In their study, item 2, "Analytic scoring is used to see the strengths and weaknesses of learners," was determined to be the highest score mean. It illustrates that writing teachers are conversant with the underlying concept of analytic scoring, which aims to provide more specific information about a writer's performance in numerous aspects of writing (Weigle, 2002).

Moreover, the data surprisingly show that there are five statements to which just one participant correctly responded. Three are concerning scoring, while the others are on the appropriate principles of the assessment method. This argument establishes a distinction from a study by Genç Çalişkan and Yüksel (2020) discovering the item seven stating "Giving learners an opinion and asking them to discuss it is a valid way of assessing their writing skills" had the lowest score. This current study unveils that the teachers have limited knowledge of the scoring writing system, which is one of the *Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students* that the teacher should be skilled. According to the standard (1990), teachers who meet these criteria will be able to examine informal and formal teacher-produced assessment findings, score essays and projects, score multiple-choice questions, and rate performance, and they can employ them consistently. Conversely, when a teacher lacks sufficient expertise in the subject, they will have difficulty making judgements and drawing inferences about writers (Weigle, 2002).

The results of the study, therefore should serve as a stark warning to the department. When teachers are unfamiliar with assessment concepts, they have a restricted opportunity to improve instruction and students' writing achievement. Muhammad & Bardakçi (2019) confirm that the dearth of teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practice in the area of assessment has negative effects for student achievement and educational outcomes in general.

CONCLUSION

The study attempts to ascertain the teachers' writing assessment literacy level. The findings of this study demonstrated that two of the teachers have a fair knowledge of writing assessment, while three are regarded as inadequate. It can be concluded that the majority of the teachers are illiterate in writing assessments. The study, therefore, suggests that there is an urgent need to improve the assessment literacy of university lecturers. Finally, and perhaps crucially, assessment literacy training should become an integrated and practical component of EFL teachers' professional development.

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