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An Investigation of Assessment Literacy Among Native and Non-Native English Teachers*

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Abstract

The current study aimed at examining the relationship between English language teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. In other words, it intended to inspect the relationship between native and non-native English language teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. To achieve such goals, 100 native and non-native English teachers from ESL and EFL contexts were picked out on the basis of a combination of availability sampling and snowball sampling procedures. They were asked to take part in the study by filling out Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Cynthia Campbell and Craig Mertler (2004). The results revealed that there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Besides, 32 percent of shared variances between native teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experiences. However, there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience.

Keywords: Assessment Literacy, Native Teachers, Non- Native Teachers, Teaching Experience

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Introduction

Language testing as an inevitable aspect of any pedagogical instruction has a very long history. During this long period, different methods, approaches, formats, and frameworks have been offered for assessing the intended language testees. Each of these methods of testing was criticized for a range of reasons by different researchers. The history of language testing is now at a time and period in which teachers' awareness of assessment procedures (assessment literacy) has attracted researchers, teachers, and testers' attention. In other words, recently there has been an increasing attention on developing the professional knowledge and understanding of teachers as they are the most important factor influencing student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Generally, in educational system, there has been a growing interest in developing the professional knowledge and understanding of teachers. This is due to the strong line of evidence which revealed that the teachers are the most important factor influencing students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In the field of second language education, which arguably relies in a distinctive way on the assessment of student achievements, teacher knowledge, understanding and practices of assessment, that is, language assessment literacy on the part of teachers, are crucial. In fact, in the area of second and foreign language education, language assessment literacy plays an important role in establishing such development.

Hence, it becomes clear that assessment literacy is and, in fact, should be an unavoidable component of any educational program at any context and any level. By considering these vital points, this study tries to investigate the relationship between English language teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is there any statistically significant relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their teaching experience?

- Is there any statistically significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their teaching experience?

Background on the Assessment Literacy

The term assessment literacy was first coined by Stiggins (1991) as an understanding of the principles of sound assessment. According to Stiggins (1991), teachers who are assessment literates for the twenty-first century classroom should know how to meet the following five standards of high-quality classroom assessment:

- Starting with clear purposes of assessment,
- Understanding the importance of assessing different kinds of interrelated achievement targets (i.e., mastering of content knowledge, developing reasoning proficiencies, attaining performance skills, and developing high-quality products),
- Selecting proper assessment methods for the different kinds of achievement targets,
- Sampling and collecting student achievement based on representative performance tasks, and
- Avoiding assessment bias and distortion that arise from technical and practical problems (p. 257).

In addition, Newfields (2006) believed that assessment literacy has different meaning for different educational persons. According to Newfields (2006), one way of operationalizing assessment literacy in terms of what it might mean for university undergraduates majoring in education is as follow:

- An ability to interpret statistical raw data in terms of common measures of centrality (mean, mode, median) and deviation (SD, quartiles).
- A basic understanding of the concept of measurement error and confidence intervals.

- An ability to discern whether or not the difference between two or more data sets is significant.
- A capacity to logically distinguish between correlation and causation.
- An understanding of what constitutes ethical assessment – and what should be done if encountering unethical testing practices.

In addition to the aforementioned points, Newfields (2006) further suggested operationalization of six further criteria for assessment literacy for foreign language teachers working in high schools. These criteria are as follow:

- An ability to use a broad variety of assessment measures to assess students with minimal bias.
- An ability to construct, administer, and score tests within a given field of expertise.
- An ability to evaluate the reliability, item difficulty, item facility, and content validity of tests within one field of teaching.
- The ability to statistically determine where the cutoff point of a CRT examination should be.
- The ability to intervene appropriately if students engage in unethical behavior during a test.
- Skill in communicating assessment results effectively to parents, peers, and students.

Furthermore, as Newfields (2006) claimed, professional test developers, who have the most authority in directly shaping testing outcomes, also need the highest-level skills in order to promote fair testing practices. In addition to having all of the abilities mentioned previously, professional test developers should have at least six additional skills as outlined below:

- The ability to provide clear evidence of what a specific test does and does not measure.

- A commitment to indicating what the appropriate/inappropriate uses of a given test are.
- A demonstrated concern for client confidentiality and test security.
- Knowledge of how to detect poorly performing test items and how to factor out those items from the test scores.
- An ability to detect various factors unrelated to a target skill are confounding
- examinee test performance.
- An ongoing commitment to test improvement and cyclic validation.

Based on the different perspectives of defining assessment literacy, it can be concluded that there exists no definite definition for assessment literacy as it can be viewed from different perspectives. A university professor's view of assessment literacy is not usually the same as the view of a professional test developer, a school teacher or an expert in educational assessment. It might probably involve vastly different skills and knowledge. In a simple word, the assessment literacy embodies a wide matrix of skills and knowledge which vary significantly from population to population. Nevertheless, the competence with respect to the selecting of assessment methods becomes one of the most important dimensions in their definitions of the assessment literacy concept.

Literature Review

A great deal of researchers conducted studies on assessment literacy. For example, Alkharusi (2011) aimed at investigating teachers' self-perceived assessment skills as a function of gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training. Participants were 213 Omani teachers from Muscat public schools. A 25-item Self-Perceived Assessment Skills Scale was developed and used in the study. Results indicated statistically significant differences on the self-perceived assessment skills with respect to teachers' gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training.

Hailaya (2014) examined teachers' assessment literacy and its probable impact on student achievement and aptitude (the outcome variables) through the intervening variables at the teacher and student levels. It likewise explored the effects of demographic variables on factors at the two levels and on the outcome variables. The study had 582 teacher samples and 2,077 student samples taken from Grade Six, Second Year and Third Year high school classes in the province of Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. It employed a mixed methods design using quantitative method as a primary approach and qualitative method as a supporting approach. The results revealed that the elementary and secondary school teachers possessed relatively low assessment literacy. In terms of the specific assessment areas, the teachers performed highest on "choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions" and lowest on "developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions". Moreover, teachers generally indicated that they practiced "assessment purpose", "assessment design", and "assessment communication" frequently, and "direct transmission method" and "alternative approach" of teaching in more than half of their lessons. Furthermore, the Grade Six, Second Year, and Fourth Year high school students generally exhibited positive "perceptions of assessment" and positive "attitude towards assessment". Besides, the Grade Six and Second Year high school students obtained below average "academic achievement", and Fourth Year high school students obtained below average "aptitude". Besides, some demographic factors had moderating effects on the variables tested. Teachers' age range (60 years and above), school type, and gender appeared to moderate effects on "academic achievement" while teachers' age range (below 25 years), academic qualification, and years of teaching experience (16- 20 years) had moderating effects on "aptitude".

Additionally, Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015) attempted to shed light on the relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy, their teaching experience, and age. To this end, 658 EFL teachers were selected to fill out a researcher made assessment literacy inventory which has gone through the validation and reliability processes. The

obtained data were analyzed using SPSS program (version21). The results of data analysis indicated that there is a highly significant positive relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy and teaching experience. There also found a positive relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy and their age.

Xu and Brown (2017) examined the assessment literacy level of Chinese university English teachers and the effects of their demographic characteristics on assessment literacy performance. Findings revealed a basic level of assessment literacy in certain dimensions. Besides, no single demographic characteristic had a significant impact on teachers' assessment literacy performance. In contrast, statistically significant results were found only for two interaction effects (i.e., region by university and qualification by university).

Methodology

Sample

In order to gather the required data, 100 native and non-native English teachers from ESL and EFL contexts were picked out on the basis of a combination of availability sampling and snowball sampling procedures. Moreover, the sample consisted of both male and female teachers with at least about 5 years of teaching and assessment experience. The main reason for the five-years teaching experience precondition was that the researcher ensured that they were adequately familiar with different assessment procedures and their plus and minus points so that the gathered data and results findings would be approached more reliably.

Instrument

The instrument of the present study was Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Cynthia Campbell and Craig Mertler (2004) which consisted of five Scenarios, each followed by seven questions. The items of this questionnaire were related to seven Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students. In other words, it consisted of 35 multiple-choice items that are given under the five classroom-based scenarios. Each scenario has

seven items which are aligned to the used standards. Each item has four options containing one correct answer and three distracters.

Moreover, as the Assessment Literacy Inventory was applied to the new group of samples and in a different context, it was necessary to modify its scenarios and items to make it appropriate and useful. However, in modifying the scenarios and the items, only some names and irrelevant situations were changed or rephrased to contextualize the Assessment Literacy Inventory. Besides, in rephrasing the inappropriate situations, a care was taken to ensure that rephrased situations were parallel to the original scenarios to preserve the integrity of the instrument. Furthermore, some of the items were intended to measure general concepts related to testing and assessment, including the use of assessment activities for assigning students grades and communicating the results of assessments to students and their parents. Besides, some items were related to knowledge of standardized testing, and the remaining items are concerned with classroom assessment.

Moreover, to validate the instrument, the researcher first consulted a specialist in TEFL regarding the statements constructed in the questionnaire so that these statements would be concise statements. Then, to check the internal reliability of the questionnaire concerning classroom assessment literacy, the questionnaire was piloted on fifty participants, and their reliability which were estimated based on Cronbach's Alpha Level were ($\alpha = .79$) which indicated a good level of conceptual relatedness among items. Also, according to Campbell and Mertler (2004), the reliability of the original instrument was (KR20) of .74.

Results

Is there any statistically significant relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their teaching experience?

In order to check the statistically significant relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience, the researcher calculated the Pearson correlation

coefficient. Table 1 exhibited the results, and descriptions related to the results are presented in following.

Table 1. *Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Native Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience*

| | | Total | Experience |
|------------|---------------------|--------|------------|
| Total | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .572** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 50 | 50 |
| Experience | Pearson Correlation | .572** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 50 | 50 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Nativity = Native

Based on the results of Table 1, there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. In fact, the correlation coefficient was .57 and the significant value was less than 0.01. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience, $r = .57$, $n = 50$, $P < 0.0001$ with an effect size of .32, indicating that 32 percent of shared variances between native teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experiences.

Then, to demonstrated it graphically, scatterplot was used to display the nature of the relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Figure 1 presented the results of scatterplot.

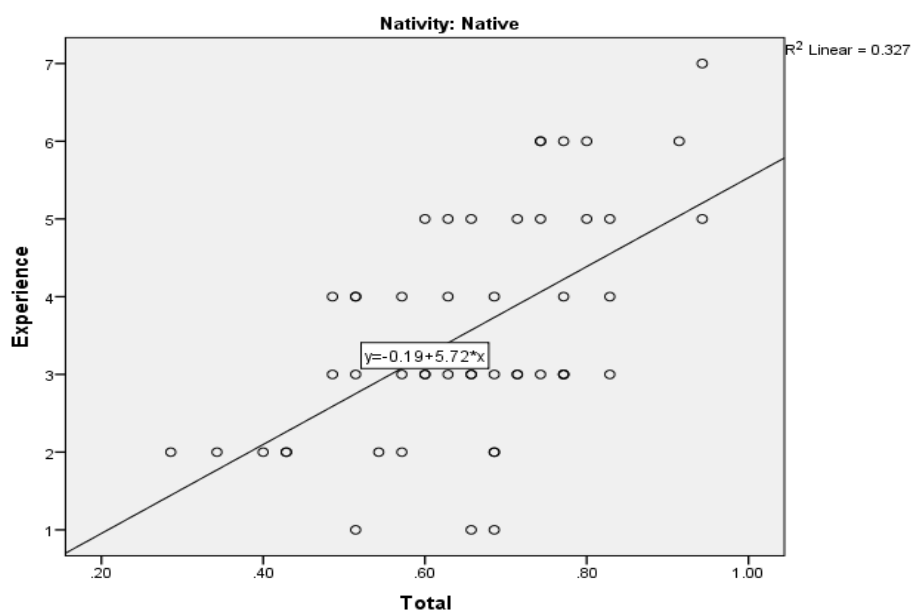


Figure 1. *The Relationship Between Native English Language Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience*

Is there any statistically significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their teaching experience?

The second research hypothesis specified that there is not any statistically significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. To reject or retain this hypothesis, the researcher employed Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 2 unveiled the results, and descriptions related to the results are offered in following.

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پرتال جامع علوم انسانی

Table 2. *Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Non-Native Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience*

| | | Total | Experience |
|------------|---------------------|-------|------------|
| Total | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .023 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .876 |
| | N | 50 | 50 |
| Experience | Pearson Correlation | .023 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .876 | |
| | N | 50 | 50 |

Nativeity = Non-Native

As demonstrated in Table 2, the correlation coefficient was 0.023 and the p-value (0.87) which was far above 0.0001 indicating that there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience.

Discussion

The current study aimed at examining the relationship between English language teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. In other words, it intended to inspect the relationship between native and non-native English language teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. To achieve such goals, 100 native and non-native English teachers from ESL and EFL contexts were picked out on the basis of a combination of availability sampling and snowball sampling procedures. They were asked to take part in the study by filling out Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Cynthia Campbell and Craig Mertler (2004).

Based on the results, there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Besides, 32 percent of shared variances between native teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experiences. In fact, native English language teachers'

perceptions towards assessment literacy could be affected by their years of experience since teachers' prior language teaching experience influence teachers' beliefs about assessment literacy. In other words, by the increase of teaching experience of native English language teachers, their knowledge of assessment literacy increases, too.

The findings of this study were in line with Alkharusi (2011) who inspecting teachers' self-perceived assessment skills as a function of gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training. He found that there was statistically significant difference on the self-perceived assessment skills with respect to teachers' teaching experience. Similarly, Hailaya (2014) investigated teacher assessment literacy and student outcomes in the province of Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. He found that longer teaching service/experience as determined by the number of years positively influenced teaching practices, including those related to structuring and student-oriented activities and assessments.

Additionally, based on the findings, there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. In fact, the results also claimed that teaching experience could not affect on the non-native teachers' point of view on assessment literacy. Indeed, the level of non-native teachers' years of experience was not an indicator of their perspectives towards assessment literacy. In fact, it was expected that older teachers, who had more experiences than younger teachers, had some different perspectives toward assessment literacy; however, they had the same perspectives.

The findings of this study were not in an agreement with Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015) who scrutinized the relationship between Iranian (Non-native) EFL teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. They found that there was a highly significant positive relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy and teaching experience. Likewise, Xu and Brown (2017) investigated the assessment literacy level of Chinese university English teachers and the effects of their demographic characteristics on assessment literacy

performance. They found that teaching experience had not any effect on assessment literacy performance of Chinese university English teachers.

Conclusion

In keeping with the native and non-native teachers' perspectives, assessment literacy has different meaning for different educational persons as the results highlighted that there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience whereas there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. In fact, native English language teachers' perceptions towards assessment literacy could be affected by their years of experience since teachers' prior language teaching experience influence teachers' beliefs about assessment literacy while the level of non-native teachers' years of experience was not an indicator of their perspectives towards assessment literacy. Therefore, there was essential discrepancies between native and non-native teachers' perspectives with respect to assessment literacy.

Furthermore, this study can bring about fruitful results for EFL teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers and administrators to come to a better understanding of the importance of the role of assessment literacy in educational system.

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