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A Survey on Language Assessment Literacy of College English Teachers in Hebei Province

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Abstract

Language Assessment Literacy (hereinafter abbreviated as LAL) is closely related to second language teaching and learning practices. It is crucial to examine its relationship with teaching, feedback, and testing, as well as communication with students and stakeholders, therefore necessary training in LAL is important for a successful language teacher. College English teachers from different types of universities in Hebei Province are taken as research subjects of this study. The research aims to examine their overall level of language assessment literacy, analyze whether significant differences exist between variables. Based on the results of the study, the authors propose some suggestions for optimizing teacher training and promoting teachers' language assessment literacy.

Keywords

Language Assessment Literacy, College English Teachers, Status

1. Introduction

Assessment is an important part in the process of teaching. Multiple Language Assessment approaches, for example, formative and summative assessment, would be used to comprehensively understand students' learning status and make effective instructional adjustments, and to ensure the successful achievement of teaching objectives. In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to educational evaluation reform and teacher professional development.

In recent years, education authorities have paid great attention to educational evaluation reform and teacher professional development. In 2020, "The Plan for Deepening the Reform of Educational Evaluation in the New Era" (https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2020-10/13/content_5551032.htm) clearly proposed that we should adhere to scientific and effective evaluation orientations, improve outcome-based evaluation, strengthen process evaluation, investigate value-added

evaluation, and develop a comprehensive evaluation system. And the adoption of information technology was emphasized to enhance the scientific development, professionalism, and objectivity of educational evaluation. In 2025, "The Outline of the Plan for Building a Strong Education System" (2024-2035) laid great emphasis on the need to build a high-quality, professional teaching workforce. It is significant to comprehensively improve teachers' professional competence, and consolidate the foundation of a strong education system through strengthened training for all teachers nationwide. These documents, without any doubt, provide important institutional guidance and development directions for improving college teachers' assessment literacy.

In view of an international outlook, the UK released the UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF) in 2006, and revised it in 2011 and 2023. The latest version explicitly identifies "critical evaluation" as a foundation of effective teaching practice. It also emphasizes fostering evidence-based, reflective approaches to teaching and learning in diverse academic and professional contexts. This can serve as an important international reference for the development of teachers' assessment literacy in China.

Domestically, though the unified professional standard for university teaching is not currently in service, relevant guiding documents have clearly defined requirements for teachers' assessment competence. "The College English Teaching Guide (2020 Edition)" emphasizes improving teachers' knowledge and skills for assessment. Special attention was paid to the following aspects: their theoretical literacy and practical ability in formative assessment, appropriate handling of the relationship between testing and teaching, mastering of advanced assessment techniques, the ability to use diverse data analysis methods, and to generate practical evaluation results. Similarly, "The Teaching Guide for Undergraduate English Majors" also stresses that teaching evaluation should focus on issues like promoting student learning, scientifically determining evaluation content and standards based on training objectives, selecting appropriate evaluation methods, emphasis on feedback and application of results, and the integration of formative and summative assessment, etc.

In conclusion, from national policy orientations, international standards, and specific teaching guidelines, language assessment literacy has become a key dimension of teachers' professional development. It is of vital importance to improve the quality of college English teaching. In this study, College English teachers from different types of universities in Hebei Province are chosen as research subjects, and their overall proficiency of language assessment is evaluated to analyze whether significant differences exist across variables. Based on this, the author proposes some suggestions for optimizing teacher training and enhancing teachers' language assessment literacy.

2. Literature Review

Research on teachers' assessment literacy abroad began relatively early. Tradi-

tional definitions of assessment literacy (AL) relied more on classification than empirical research and often overly depended on psychometric theories and technical issues of validity (Bracey, 2000; Popham, 2009). The initiator of this research, Stiggins (1995), argued that teacher assessment is a scientific way to judge students' performance guided by relevant knowledge and skills rather than arbitrary behavior. Such judgments are the foundation for instructional decision-making. Fulcher gives another definition, which is believed to be more comprehensive and widely accepted, serving as an important starting point for related research.

Research on Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) largely avoids such a priori definitions. Fulcher (2012) defines LAL as:

The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals. (Fulcher 2012: p. 125)

The definition here is comprehensive and widely accepted, and it may serve as an important starting point for related research. However, Taylor (2009) pointed out in his research that different stakeholders, such as professional test developers, teachers, and admissions officers, may require different types of LAL.

Language Assessment Literacy (hereinafter abbreviated as LAL) is closely related to second language teaching and learning practices. It is crucial to examine its relationship with teaching, feedback, and testing, as well as communication with students and stakeholders, therefore necessary training in LAL is important for a successful language teacher. However, there are few empirical studies on teachers' assessment literacy, especially in China, where most studies focus on reviews or theoretical discussions (Tang, 2013; Xu, 2013; Lin & Wu, 2014). Xu & Liu (2024) summarized five major research areas and proposes research scope, perspectives, and methodologies of LAL should be expanded.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Questions

This research is intended to survey the status of language assessment literacy among college English teachers in Hebei Province, and make an analysis of the differences based on university type, teaching experience, educational background, gender, and professional background, and further explore how this literacy is reflected in classroom teaching. It is hoped that this study will render reasonable suggestions for improving teacher education and teaching management systems. Thus, the study aims to address the following questions:

1. What is the current state of language assessment literacy among college Eng-

lish teachers in Hebei Province?

2. Do significant differences exist in language assessment literacy across different university types, teaching experience, education level, and professional titles?

3. How can the LAL of teachers be effectively improved?

3.2. Participants

50 English major teachers and college English teachers from different types of universities in Hebei Province, including provincial key universities, local undergraduate institutions, and higher vocational colleges, are randomly selected as research subjects. Three teachers will be interviewed using a semi-structured interview format, while three other teachers will be observed in class (via video recording), and relevant teaching materials will be reviewed at the same time.

Detailed information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic information.

	types	percentage/%
age	male	20.0
	female	80.0
Years of Teaching Experience	Less than 5 years	14.0
	5 - 10 years	8.0
	11 - 20 years	46.0
	21 - 30 years	30.0
	More than 30 years	2.0
Educational Background	Junior College	0.0
	Bachelor's Degree	24.0
	Master's Degree	66.0
	Doctoral Degree	10.0
Professional Title	Teaching Assistant	10.0
	Lecturer	40.0
	Associate Professor	42.0
	Professor	8.0
Major	English major	58.0
	Non-English	42.0
Normal Major or not	Yes	58.0
	No	42.0
Type of Institution	Local Undergraduate Institution	66.0
	Provincial Key University	20.0
	Vocational Institution	12.0
	Other	2.0

3.3. Research Methods and Tools

Questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews are adopted in the study to investigate the language assessment literacy of college English teachers in Hebei Province. The questionnaire data is collected and analyzed with the social statistics software SPSS 29.

3.3.1. Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of two main sections: the first section focuses on the participants' demographic information, including gender, teaching experience, professional title, and the type of institution they belong to. The second part centers on assessing knowledge related to language assessment. For the sake of reliability and validity, the questionnaire is mainly based on Mertler's (2003) Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI) and the Language Assessment Literacy Questionnaire by Shu Hanying and Xu Juan. The questionnaire retains the seven assessment literacy standards from CALI, with three questions under each standard.

3.3.2. Classroom Observation

Besides the questionnaire survey, the researcher also conducted classroom observations of three college English teachers (two from English majors and one from general English courses). These observations laid emphasis on the assessment-related activities before, during, and after class. In addition, the researcher reviewed related teaching materials, such as the course evaluation plan, syllabus, assignments, and exams. The classroom observations mainly centered on the following two parts: the assessment by the teacher and the assessment by students. The researcher also paid attention to the assessment methods, such as questioning, quizzes, group presentations, and whether feedback was provided where necessary.

3.3.3. Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to better understand the status, key features, and influencing factors of college English teachers' assessment literacy, this study adopted semi-structured interviews. Based on the seven CALI standards and incorporating new changes in teacher assessment practices in the AI era, an interview outline was designed with 15 open-ended questions. These questions are designed to record issues like teachers' preparation for assessments, assessment design, the use of results, application of AI tools, assessment training experiences, influencing factors, and development needs.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 50 valid questionnaires were collected for the survey, and the data were analyzed with SPSS to explore whether there are significant differences in language assessment literacy across different university types, teaching experience, education level, and professional titles. As for classroom observations and inter-

views, three English teachers were selected. The interviews covered participants with different professional titles, teaching experience, and academic backgrounds to keep sample diversity. A series of interviews was conducted through a combination of online and in-person methods, and after that, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Questionnaire Results Analysis

4.1.1. Overall Language Assessment Literacy of English Teachers

Language Assessment Literacy of College English Teachers (Table 2) clearly demonstrates that the average score of the teachers' overall language assessment literacy is 12.56, with an accuracy rate of 60%. The overall average score is comparatively low, and their assessment literacy level needs improvement. As for Standard 3 and Standard 7, both have an accuracy rate of 77%, revealing that the teachers have a good command of knowledge regarding this area. However, Standard 4 only has an accuracy rate of 22%, which is the obvious weak point in their LAL. This may, by and large, significantly suggest that the teachers lack a good command of certain assessment concepts, for example, norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessment, formative and summative assessment, as well as the use of assessment information, and assessment validity. Considering the purpose of assessments, we find that those teachers would tend to view them more as tools for "testing learning outcomes" rather than recognizing their function in "promoting learning through assessment and enhancing teaching through assessment." Standard 5 has a large standard deviation (0.95), which is significant in that it reflects a wide variance in teachers' literacy levels in this area. This, to some extent, indicates the need for targeted training for those teachers.

Table 2. Language assessment literacy of college english teachers.

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	Total
N	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
Mean	1.86	1.86	2.32	0.68	1.78	1.74	2.32	12.56
Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	0.50	2.00	2.00	2.00	13.00
Mode	2.00	2.00	3.00	0.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	12.00
AR	62%	62%	77%	22%	59%	58%	77%	60%
SD	0.67	0.61	0.77	0.82	0.95	0.66	0.74	3.00

4.1.2. Differences by Teaching Experience

To explore whether teachers with different teaching experiences differ in their level of LAL, descriptive statistics and inferential analyses were conducted (see Table 3). The data demonstrate that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups across the seven standards or in the total scores. As shown in Table 4, although the p-values for Standard 3 ($p = 0.051$) and the total score ($p = 0.052$) were slightly above the conventional threshold of 0.05, and they were very

close to significance, which may indicate that a marginally significant trend might be possible. This may, to some extent, reveal a potential difference among groups with varying teaching experience regarding their assessment literacy, though it does not yet reach formal statistical significance.

Table 3. Mean scores of teachers with different years of teaching experience.

	Less than 5 years		5 - 10 years		11 - 20 years		21 - 30 years		More than 30 years	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S1	1.75	0.22	2.00	0.28	1.95	0.17	1.97	0.18	1.75	0.22
S2	1.75	0.19	1.75	0.24	1.94	0.14	1.75	0.15	1.00	0.47
S3	2.38	0.27	2.75	0.34	2.20	0.20	2.41	0.22	1.00	0.68
S4	0.88	0.31	0.50	0.40	0.43	0.23	0.57	0.25	1.00	0.80
S5	1.88	0.37	2.50	0.46	1.53	0.27	1.74	0.29	0.00	0.92
S6	1.63	0.29	2.00	0.37	1.68	0.22	1.67	0.23	2.00	0.73
S7	2.25	0.27	2.50	0.35	2.56	0.20	2.41	0.22	1.00	0.69
Total	12.50	1.01	14.00	1.28	12.29	0.75	12.52	0.81	6.00	2.55

Table 4. Analysis of differences in LAL by teaching experience.

	F	*p*
S1	0.853	0.477
S2	1.766	0.176
S3	2.924	0.051
S4	0.111	0.953
S5	2.123	0.119
S6	0.596	0.623
S7	2.191	0.110
Total	2.898	0.052

4.1.3. Differences in Professional Titles

The study analyzed teachers' scores on each standard (see Table 5) because there may be possible differences across professional titles. The results of the ANOVA (Table 6) show that among the seven standards, only Standard 3 showed a statistically significant difference across title groups (F = 4.125, $p = 0.015$). This may suggest that a professional title is an important aspect that has an influence on the performance concerning this standard. It may be interpreted as teachers with senior titles are more likely to have participated in specialized assessment training and accumulated more experience. And they could have a better understanding of concepts such as scoring reliability and score interpretation. No significant differences were found for the remaining standards or for the total score.

Table 5. Mean scores of teachers with different professional titles.

	Assistant		Lecturer		Associate Professor		Professor	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S1	1.67	0.27	1.88	0.16	2.18	0.16	1.25	0.28
S2	2.00	0.22	1.49	0.14	1.88	0.14	2.00	0.24
S3	2.83	0.32	1.88	0.20	2.29	0.20	2.50	0.34
S4	1.00	0.38	0.31	0.23	0.75	0.23	0.50	0.40
S5	2.33	0.44	1.20	0.27	2.00	0.27	1.25	0.46
S6	1.67	0.35	1.65	0.21	1.59	0.21	2.00	0.37
S7	2.67	0.33	2.27	0.20	2.43	0.20	2.25	0.35
Total	14.17	1.20	10.68	0.74	13.11	0.74	11.75	1.28

Table 6. Analysis of differences in LAL across different professional titles.

	F	*p*
S1	0.439	0.727
S2	1.196	0.329
S3	4.125	0.015
S4	0.898	0.454
S5	2.140	0.117
S6	0.222	0.880
S7	1.505	0.234
Total	2.622	0.070

4.2. Analysis of Classroom Observation

With the purpose of gaining a more comprehensive and systematic understanding of the current state of language assessment literacy among college English teachers in Hebei Province, this study conducted classroom observations of assessment-related activities based on the questionnaire survey. A classroom observation scale was used for teacher assessment of literacy. Three English teachers were observed for a more comprehensive understanding of the status of language assessment literacy among college English teachers in Hebei Province. The observation revealed that all three teachers could establish relatively clear teaching and learning objectives. In the interview, Teachers A and B did not explicitly state their teaching objectives at the very beginning of the class, while Teacher C introduced both the teaching objectives and related assessment methods in class.

From the perspective of diversified assessment participants, Teacher A (in-class quiz) relied solely on teacher assessment, without students' peer review and evaluation. In contrast, Teacher B (writing task) and Teacher C (presentation task) incorporated not only teacher assessment but also peer assessment and self-assessment.

Regarding instructional feedback, Teacher A provided feedback on test results through the Xuexitong platform and offered some explanations of key points. Teacher B required students to conduct peer assessment of writing tasks, and I Write was introduced to provide feedback. Meanwhile, he shared selected high-quality student work in the class and made comments on the advantages and disadvantages of the model work. Nevertheless, the feedback covered only part of the assignments instead of all student work. Teacher C employed diverse feedback methods, with a combination of praise and evaluation of real-time corrective feedback based on students' performance, like pronunciation, intonation, body language, and eye contact. Teacher C also engaged other students through questioning, which helped gain effective feedback outcomes.

In view of assessment methods, Teacher A mainly used in-class quizzes based upon CET-4 and oral questioning. Teacher B used writing exercises and oral questioning at the same time, and teacher C adopted performance-based tasks and classroom questioning.

4.3. Analysis of Interview

The focal points of the interviews are assessment practices, design, along with theoretical knowledge of assessment literacy, influencing factors and perceptions, and future development needs. All three teachers in the interview clearly emphasized a strengthened training program and relevant research in language assessment literacy.

Regarding how they prepare classroom tests and assessments, the three teachers provided responses of varying depth. Teacher C's response was well-structured and closely aligned with the classroom observation results. Apparently, this teacher has a better ability to design and implement teaching and assessment from an assessment-oriented perspective.

Concerning whether they had participated in assessment-related training after graduation, the three teachers gave partially affirmative or negative responses. This probably indicates that enhanced training programs are urgently needed.

Teacher C:

Firstly, the teacher should be familiar with the teaching content and identify key points and difficulties; secondly, it is very important for the teacher to determine the assessment content and format based on these key points and difficulties. In this process, you need to ensure that the content is concise and focused to suit classroom testing. The formats can be flexible and varied; additionally, ensure the reliability of the test so that it accurately reflects students' learning. Lastly, you may refer to authoritative resources when designing test items and make necessary adaptations to better suit students' actual needs and conditions.

Teacher A: The teacher should extract key points and design different types of questions, such as listening, vocabulary, and translation, based on the teaching content, and then release the test via Xuexitong.

Teacher B: You can simply find some questions online, or use AI tools to gen-

erate a test or exercise and provide some feedback.

When those teachers were asked whether they had participated in assessment-related training after graduation or entering the profession, the three teachers gave partially affirmative or negative responses. It shows that related training still needs to be strengthened.

Teacher A: I have not participated in any specialized training. I have only come across some related content in general training programs, for example, the foreign language teacher development forums.

Teacher B: I think it was mentioned during training.

Teacher C: No, I have not participated in any such kind of training.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the questionnaire surveys, classroom observations, and interviews, it is easy to draw the conclusion that the general level of language assessment literacy among college English teachers in Hebei Province is relatively weak and further improvement is required. The apparent weakness lies in teachers' understanding and mastery of assessment theories, knowledge, and skills. Thus, enhanced training and full support from the school are urgently needed to tackle the problem.

With respect to differences in assessment literacy, significant differences were found in Standard 3 across different professional title groups. However, there are no significant differences between English major teachers and non-English major (college English) teachers.

First and foremost, it is critical to strengthen the assessment competence of pre-service teachers. The integration of LAL into the curriculum design for English teacher education programs, as well as electives, workshops, and practical training courses are suggested.

Furthermore, it is also very important to further enhance the assessment competence of in-service teachers. Well-designed training should be provided through collaborative research activities, such as workshops, joint research and related lectures. And this can be conducted through multiple approaches, such as digital resource platforms and video channels. "Test design competitions" can also be used to enrich teachers' access to assessment knowledge. As Pan & Xiao (2022) proposed, "the development and improvement of assessment literacy have largely relied on academic seminars and workshops; however, given the large number of teachers in China, accelerating the improvement of assessment literacy requires the support of information technology."

To improve English teachers' LAL is a systematic and challenging project. It requires the joint efforts of teachers, institutions, and educational administrative departments. At the same time, it is of vital importance to establish a scientific and well-structured assessment system and standards. It is hoped that by providing targeted and personalized training programs for teachers of different levels (pre-service, in-service, and advanced stages), as well as those with different pro-

fessional titles, teaching experience, and institutional backgrounds, teachers' assessment literacy can be effectively enhanced.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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