Title of Project:
An Investigation of the Language Assessment Literacy of Teacher
Educators in Chile: Knowledge, Practices, Learning, Beliefs, and Context

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Final Report

Motivation for the research
Language assessment literacy (LAL) is currently generally understood as the knowledge, skills, and principles of language assessment that stakeholders need for their practices (Davies, 2008; Fulcher, 2012). LAL research has primarily focused on pre- and in-service language teachers, especially on ways to understand their needs and to develop their LAL (e.g., Hasselgreen, Carlsen, & Helness, 2004). LAL studies indicate that language teachers around the world feel underprepared for their language assessment professional tasks (e.g., Vogt & Tsagari, 2014), and that little language assessment training is offered to pre-service teachers during their teacher education (e.g., López Mendoza & Bernal Arandia, 2009). However, little research attention has been given to the LAL of those who prepare preservice teachers for their future profession (i.e., teacher educators). In addition, the dominant methodology in LAL research has been the survey approach, eliciting perceived needs and self-reported knowledge (e.g., Vogt & Tsagari, 2014). While self-reported knowledge questionnaires and interviews as means of measuring knowledge provide the researcher with insights into what stakeholders' knowledge might be, the question is whether the understandings gained about LAL from these methodologies are objective or whether they might strongly depend on stakeholders' self-perception.

In response, this study aimed to investigate teacher educators' LAL in terms of their theoretical knowledge, as well as their language assessment practices, and the extent and nature of the LAL training they conduct with pre-service teachers. The study also aimed to gain information about teacher educators' LAL via more direct methods, which did not heavily rely on their self-perceptions of their language assessment knowledge and practices.

Research questions
Overarching Research question:
How can we characterize the language assessment literacy of teacher educators in EFL teacher education programs in Chile?

Specific Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1. What is the teacher educators' language assessment knowledge?

RQ2. What are the teacher educators' language assessment practices?

RQ3. What shapes teacher educators' language assessment literacy?

       3a. What are their macro-sociocultural and micro-institutional working contexts?

       3b. What are their conceptions of language assessment?

       3c. What is their decision-making regarding their language assessment practices?

       3d. How do they learn about language assessment?

       3e. What is their perception of their own identity as language assessors?

RQ4. How do the teacher educators develop the language assessment literacy of the next generation of EFL teachers they are training?

Research Methodology

Inspired by the *Teacher Assessment Literacy in Practice* (TALiP) model by Xu and Brown (2016), this mixed-method study consisted of an online test to understand teacher educators' language assessment knowledge, and of interviews and an analysis of their (language) assessment materials to investigate their practices. The study was conducted with teacher educators working in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher education programs in Chile.

     Participants: Ninety-four Chilean teacher educators completed the online test, and 20 shared and discussed their assessment materials (113 documents) during interviews. Specifically, the study focused on three types of teacher educators: (a) language teacher educators, who teach English language acquisition courses (i.e., EFL courses) to develop student-teachers' English proficiency; (b) testing teacher educators who give language assessment training to future teachers; and (c) program directors whose primary responsibility is to manage and lead the EFL teacher education program and their educational teams.

     Data collection: Data were collected from the online test and interviews were conducted in parallel. The online knowledge test was distributed through an anonymous link sent via email to several teacher educators data bases and shared through social media groups. The interviews were held face-to-face or using Skype. The assessment materials were collected during the interviews.

     Analysis: Data analysis of the online knowledge test focused on the performance of the participants, the test itself and its items, and on the constructs that underlie the test. This was done by means of (1) descriptive statistics, (2) test reliability and item analysis, and (3) factor analysis. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically (Riazi, 2016) with the help of the software program Atlas.ti (8.3). To increase consistency of the results, a second coder was engaged. The assessment materials analysis consisted of identifying language assessment tasks developed by the teacher educators, namely tests, quizzes, productive tasks, and projects, and describing their characteristics: type of assessment, targeted construct, and types of item. Also, information regarding teacher educators' practices was sought to complement the information shared about these practices in the interviews.

Summary of Findings

This study found that teacher educators had not received language assessment training in their academic lives. However, they had practice-derived language assessment knowledge, which they have mainly acquired on the job, through collaboration within their communities of practice (Wenger & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), and from the internal language assessment culture and practices of their institutions. However, some limitations were observed in language teacher educators' language assessment practices regarding analysis of language assessment instruments, results, and scoring. The findings also indicated that due to the limitations in their LAL, these teacher educators had low levels of language assessment self-efficacy, and they did not characterize themselves as language assessors. The

LAL levels of testing teacher educators were higher, which seemed to be the result of their opportunities for learning about language assessment theories and research through the teaching of their language testing. Accordingly, testing teacher educators showed higher levels of self-efficacy and had clearer perceptions of themselves as language assessors.

The study also found that the levels of teacher educators' LAL were influenced by their professional context, namely by macro-sociocultural (i.e., national policies, the Chilean school reality) and micro-institutional (i.e., academic freedom, institutional assessment culture) variables. These contextual variables seemed to guide and sometimes limit teacher educators' language assessment practices and clashed with their own conceptions of language assessment, which resulted from their previous experiences with assessment as students themselves. Therefore, the teacher educators' language assessment practices involved a series of compromises to balance the boundaries set by the context, their beliefs about language assessment, and their lack of knowledge about language assessment.

The findings of this study also indicated that the levels of LAL of the teacher educators influenced the extent to which they developed their student-teachers' LAL. Those with higher levels of LAL (i.e., testing teacher educators) paid attention to modeling their language assessment practices and encouraging reflection on these practices in their student-teachers. Conversely, those with limited levels of LAL, i.e., *language* teacher educators, greatly neglected the language assessment modeling and encouragement of reflection in their teaching.

Finally, this study found that LAL is composed of five components, namely context, language assessment knowledge, conceptions of language assessment, and language assessment practices; and two concepts which have been identified as "by-products" of LAL: language assessment self-efficacy and language assessor identity. The study also found the relationships between the LAL components in a more complex construct of LAL in practice:

- The context component intertwined with all the other components of LAL by: (1) fostering or hindering the construction of knowledge, (2) shaping teacher educators' conceptions of language assessment, and (3) influencing their language decision-making and practices.
- The language assessment knowledge component shaped the beliefs and emotions about language assessment held by stakeholders.
- The practices component resulted from language assessment decision-making, balancing language assessment knowledge, conceptions of language assessment, and the influences of contextual variables. Also, practices influenced the context where stakeholders work.
- There was a relationship between LAL and language assessment self-efficacy and language assessor identity.

Implications for Language Education
This study has implications for pre- and in-service language education. First, regarding pre-service education, it is recommended that language testing and assessment as a subject and research field occupy a larger share of EFL language teacher education curricula. It is advised that EFL teacher education programs include in their curricula at least one course exclusively dedicated to the teaching of language assessment. Such a course should include theory, but also practical and hands-on work of developing and analyzing language assessment tasks. Moreover, the course should be connected to the local language classroom reality, so that it is meaningful for the language assessment practices of the future language teachers. It is also recommended that the language testing courses offered in EFL language teacher education are connected with other courses within the curriculum, namely educational assessment, language acquisition, teaching methodology, and practicum, in terms of the

alignment of theories and contents offered and hands-on opportunities to put into practice what it is learned in relation to language assessment.

As for in-service education, if LAL is to be enhanced in teacher education, it will be important to offer LAL training as professional development for the teacher educators currently working in the EFL teacher education context. In this regard, findings of this study suggest that LAL professional development is localized, since this study has stressed the importance of the context in LAL. Localization requires that LAL professional development programs are duly informed about the sociocultural and political boundaries that teacher educators have in their working contexts. In addition, it is recommended that LAL professional development initiatives for teacher educators consider the formation of teacher educator communities of practice as part of the design of the training offered. This could be done through the inclusion of collaborative assessment development projects (Tsagari & Vogt, 2017), which give space for the co-construction of materials and dialogic reflection (Mann & Walsh, 2017) among the trainees.

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