

TIRF-British Council Research Mentoring Awards

Researcher

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Project Title

English Language Teachers' Assessment Literacy:
Their Knowledge and Practices

Dissertation Supervisor

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated

Language Assessment

TIRF Mentor Name

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Final Report

Introduction

Language testing and assessment has played a vital role in the development of designing curriculum as well as enhancing teaching and learning. Also, other stakeholders use the assessment results to adapt their policies. As a result, all stages in the assessment process, from designing a test to interpreting the scores, need to be done carefully.

In Vietnam, teachers' assessment performance is considered to be highly traditional; test-based approaches are still common in institutions, and scoring systems are not meaningful to students because they rarely receive feedback (Hoang, 2010; Nguyen, 2013; as cited in Bui, 2021). In recent years, following the switch to communicative language teaching and assessment worldwide, Vietnamese authorities also require a communicative factor in assessing language (MOET, 2014, as cited in Ngo, 2022). Nonetheless, competence-based assessment seems to be prevalent in tertiary English major programs, of which the four skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) are directly assessed. Moreover, the quality of the exam questions still leaves much to dispute (Ngo, 2022).

Background

Recognizing the importance of language teachers' assessment literacy, I decided to conduct a study titled "English Language Teachers' Assessment Literacy: Their Knowledge and Practices." This study is going to be carried out at two public universities in North Vietnam. The overall purpose of this study is to investigate language teachers' assessment literacy in terms of their knowledge, skills, and principles. In order to reach this aim, this study's objectives are to explore the

assessment level of teachers according to their perspectives and how they perceive their LAL (language assessment literacy) in practices.

Research Questions

Based on the information above, this study addresses to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the teachers' perceptions of language assessment literacy?

RQ2: How do teachers perceive their language assessment literacy in practice?

RQ3: What is the relationship between their perceptions and their actual assessment practices?

Research Design & Methods

This study uses a mixed-method design to investigate teachers' LAL on three components of knowledge, skills, and principles. This method is used to help the researcher gather information on the level of teachers' assessment competence and how they perceive their knowledge in practice. Therefore, the explanatory sequential mixed-method approach is regarded to be relevant.

This research will be carried out in two phases. In phase one, a questionnaire will be delivered to teachers to help answer RQ1 about teachers' perceptions of LAL in three components: knowledge, practices, and principles. In phase two, the teachers will participate in an interview to discuss their self-evaluation and how they perceive their assessment literacy in practice. After that, the data from these two phases will be analyzed to examine the relationship between teachers' LAL knowledge and practices.

The teachers participating in this study will have a chance to look again at what they have acquired, what they have unlearned, and need to relearn about language assessment. The results from this study are expected to draw an overall picture of the assessment competence of EFL teachers in two universities, making suggestions for their assessment needs in the future to enhance teaching and learning quality as well as for the leaders to carry out positive changes in terms of policies and procedures.

Reflection on Mentoring Period

I have been working with my mentor, Professor Ofra Inbar, for six months and I find that my time spent with her is really wonderful. I still remember the moment I received my first email from her. I could not believe that I had the opportunity to be the mentee of a well-known scholar whose works I read from the beginning days of writing my research proposal. The six months I spent working with Prof. Inbar are unforgettable memories. She was very kind and helped me in choosing the research design as well as to develop the research questions. Moreover, she also sent me some documents I needed to complete my literature review.

Throughout the mentoring period, I also made progress on my research project. Firstly, I gained a thorough understanding of three components of LAL, especially about principles. This newly gained knowledge gives me a clear picture of what I need to investigate with the participants and explain to them about LAL. Secondly, I also made some changes in the research design, from a qualitative to a mixed-method design. I decided to conduct this study with more than 100 EFL teachers instead of just 20 teachers, as I originally planned. I hope that this change will bring more precise results for my study. Lastly, my research skills also improved when I wrote my literature



review. The mentor raised questions so that I could clarify my points and cite scholarly works to meet academic requirements at my university. I needed to show my critical thinking when presenting different viewpoints or perspectives, not only listing them.

My deliverable is the literature review on language assessment literacy. Although there is room for improvement, I tried my best to draw an overall picture of studies on language assessment literacy, especially in an EFL context. It is my honor to be a TIRF-British Council Research Mentoring Award recipient which allowed me to work with Prof. Ofra Inbar, gain more knowledge, and develop research skills. Thank you for giving me this opportunity!