

# Investigating Language Assessment Literacy of Novice In-service English Teachers in Private Colleges and Universities

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**Abstract:** Taking Guangxi University of Foreign Languages as an example, this paper primarily investigates language assessment literacy of novice in-service English teachers through questionnaires and interviews, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the current status of language assessment literacy among novice front-line English teachers at private colleges and universities, and summarize the effective ways of improving the novice in-service English teachers' language assessment literacy. It is hoped that this investigation can draw the attention from tertiary institutions regarding the development of language assessment literacy for novice in-service English teachers, and ultimately provide some references and suggestions for the enhancement of language assessment literacy among novice in-service English teachers.

**Keywords:** Language assessment literacy; Novice in-service English teachers; Private colleges and universities

## 1. Introduction

Teachers' language assessment, as a key link in the connection between assessment quality and student achievement, is an important means of evaluating the quality of foreign language teaching. Language assessment literacy (LAL), rooted in specific sociocultural contexts, is multidimensional. In the context of the new era, language assessment currently includes six assessment themes: "assessment to promote language learning; classroom assessment; integrated language language assessment; content assessment; multilingual assessment; multimodel language assessment" (Coombe, *et al.*, 2020)<sup>[1]</sup>. These emerging forms of language assessment in the new era represent further requirements and challenges for the development of teachers' assessment literacy. Language assessment is increasingly focused on the classroom, making the role and responsibility of teachers as assessors more prominent. Tertiary English teachers have the multiple roles of language assessors, educators, and assessment researchers, and assessment is an integral part of their daily work. They continuously need to make instructional decisions based on assessment results. The proficient language assessment literacy of language teachers not only facilitates the improvement of students' academic levels but also constitutes an indispensable component of teachers' professional qualifications (Feng Lin, Meng Yaru, 2023:60)<sup>[2]</sup>. Possessing language assessment literacy is an essential prerequisite for making accurate and effective instructional decisions, representing fundamental knowledge and crucial skills that teachers should possess. It is also a key aspect of developing teachers' core competencies. Novice teachers, as members of the school, play a significant role in school development and educational reform. Therefore, understanding the current status of language assessment literacy among university English teachers and exploring the effective ways for enhancing teachers' language assessment literacy remain important concerns for researchers. Referring to Pill and Harding's (2013)<sup>[3]</sup> continuum of language assessment literacy (five levels of literacy: complete lack of literacy, minimal literacy, functional literacy, procedural and conceptual literacy, multidimensional literacy) and the language teachers' assessment literacy theoretical framework (Lin Dunlai, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>, this survey is intended to explore the current status of language assessment literacy among novice English teachers in private colleges and universities, with the aim of providing effective strategies to enhance their language assessment literacy.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Research on Language Assessment Literacy

Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) stems from assessment literacy and emerged in the field of language assessment researchers about two decades after Stiggins (1991)<sup>[5]</sup> introduced the concept of assessment literacy. Since Taylor's (2009)<sup>[6]</sup> discussion of assessment literacy, scholars in the language testing domain have also attempted to define LAL. Fulcher (2012)<sup>[7]</sup> defines LAL from three dimensions: practice, principles, and context, as "the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to design, develop, maintain, or evaluate large-scale standardized testing and classroom assessments; the familiarity with the testing process; the awareness of the principles and concepts underlying instructional practices, including ethical and professional guidelines; and the ability to contextualize knowledge, skills, processes, principles, and concepts within a broad historical, social, political, and philosophical framework to understand the reasons behind practice, to assess the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals." LAL encompasses not only familiarity with tools and procedures for assessing students' language proficiency, but also other components, particularly providing appropriate feedback to effectively guide learners in setting and achieving learning objectives. Furthermore, individuals with assessment literacy should be aware of the theoretical issues involved in the assessment process, as well as the potential impact of decision-making based on assessment on students (Inbar-Lourie, 2013)<sup>[8]</sup>. Pill and Harding (2013:382)<sup>[3]</sup> define LAL as "a repertoire of competences that enable an individual to understand, evaluate and, in some cases, create language tests and analyze test data". LAL is broadly defined as stakeholders' knowledge about language assessment principles and its sociocultural-political-ethical consequences, the stakeholders' skills to design and implement theoretically sound language assessment, and their abilities to interpret or share assessment results with others stakeholders (Lee, 2019)<sup>[9]</sup>.

Domestically, Lin Dunlai and Gao Miao (2011)<sup>[10]</sup> view assessment literacy as the knowledge and skills required for engaging in the assessment process. He Lianzhen (2020)<sup>[11]</sup> points out that "assessment literacy means understanding why to assess, what to assess, and how to assess, aiming to establish a scientific educational evaluation system and mechanism in line with the needs of the era". Lin Dunlai (2019:13)<sup>[4]</sup> provides a comprehensive definition of LAL for front-line language teachers, stating that it involves "a comprehensive and profound understanding of the target language being taught and language learning; the basic knowledge, skills, and abilities to design, develop, or evaluate language classroom assessments; the familiarity with the language assessment process; the awareness of the principles and concepts underlying language assessment practices; the ability to engage learners actively in the language assessment process; the ability to use appropriate feedback to guide learners in setting and achieving learning objectives effectively; and a good understanding of the role and function of language assessment in specific teaching environments." To sum up, the definition of LAL is generally consistent in the language testing field.

Based on the above discussion, there are three essential elements of teachers' LAL. Firstly, teachers need to possess necessary assessment knowledge, including assessing students' backgrounds and learning needs, designing and using assessment tasks aligned with instructional objectives, interpreting assessment results, and planning and adjusting instruction accordingly. Secondly, teachers need to implement assessment in specific classroom contexts. Finally, teachers need to use appropriate assessment strategies to check whether students have achieved instructional objectives and provide feedback to encourage students to adjust their learning strategies based on assessment results to achieve learning objectives.

### 2.2. Empirical Research on Language Assessment Literacy

As early as 1991, Stiggins<sup>[5]</sup> put forward that teachers lacking assessment literacy lack effective tools to critically interpret the data obtained from assessments. This highlights the necessity of enhancing teachers' LAL. In recent years, foreign scholars have conducted extensive research on improving teacher assessment literacy. These efforts focused more on the composition of teachers' assessment knowledge, the practical application of assessment skills in teaching, and the exploration of pathways to enhance assessment literacy. Jeong (2013)<sup>[12]</sup> investigated the characteristics of teachers' influences on the formation of LAL through online surveys and in-depth interviews. Vogt and Tzagari (2014)<sup>[13]</sup> carried out a survey on language testing literacy training levels and training needs of in-service teachers through questionnaires and interviews. Yastibasa and Takka (2018)<sup>[14]</sup> conducted qualitative research on the features of enhancing teacher assessment literacy. Berry et al. (2018)<sup>[15]</sup>

explored teachers' attitudes towards assessment and their specific practices through classroom observations, interviews, and subject discussions. Vogt et al. (2020)<sup>[16]</sup> conducted a needs analysis for teacher assessment literacy through questionnaire surveys.

In recent years, we have witnessed a growing interest in developing teachers' LAL in China. Many scholars have explored and practiced teachers' LAL from different perspectives. Zheng Donghui (2010)<sup>[17]</sup> conducts a study based on Plake *et al.*'s (1993)<sup>[18]</sup> *Teacher Assessment Literacy Questionnaire*, investigating the assessment literacy of in-service secondary school teachers in a certain province in China. The results revealed that the assessment literacy of secondary school teachers in the province was generally low, and there was a significant correlation between teachers' attitudes towards assessment and their assessment literacy. Xu and Brown (2016)<sup>[19]</sup> proposed a new conceptual framework of teacher assessment literacy in practice. Xu Ying *et al.* (2016)<sup>[20]</sup> conduct a survey on college English teachers' language assessment literacy. Zhu Xiaoyan (2017)<sup>[21]</sup> introduced a fourth element to the language assessment literacy of foreign language teachers, which is that teachers should consider "which aspects of teaching need improvement after language assessment". Chen Yan (2018)<sup>[22]</sup> analyzed the influencing factors of LAL among tertiary English teachers from a qualitative data perspective through in-depth interviews. Wang Shanshan (2019)<sup>[23]</sup> provided several reflections on the construction and enhancement of tertiary EFL teachers' assessment literacy. In addition, researchers have also discussed the current status of language assessment literacy among foreign language teachers in China. For instance, Lin Dunlai and Gao Miao (2011)<sup>[10]</sup>, Xu Yueting (2013)<sup>[24]</sup>, Peng Kangzhou (2014)<sup>[25]</sup>, and Sheng Huixiao (2014)<sup>[26]</sup> have pointed out from various perspectives that the development of language assessment literacy among English teachers in China lags behind other areas (such as classroom teaching). There is significant room for improvement in assessment knowledge base and assessment operational skills. Zhang and Yan (2018)<sup>[27]</sup> analyzed specific issues in English test papers to illustrate the weak areas in the assessment literacy of English teachers. Although much empirical research has been devoted to teachers' LAL, rather less attention has been paid to LAL of novice English teachers in private colleges and universities.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Questions

This article mainly aims to address the following questions:

- (1) What are the enhancement needs in language assessment literacy of novice in-service English teachers?
- (2) What is the using status of language assessment methods among novice in-service English teachers?
- (3) What is the overall level of language assessment literacy among novice in-service English teachers?

#### 3.2. Subjects

This survey focuses on 32 novice front-line English teachers (16 teachers are in charge of English majors and others are teaching English for non-English majors) from a private college in Guangxi, China. All participants are novice in-service teachers who have taught English within the last 1-2 years, comprising 6 male and 26 female teachers.

#### 3.3. Research Design

This survey initially utilized the Tertiary English Teachers' Language Assessment Literacy Scale (Pan Mingwei, Xiao Yangtian, 2022)<sup>[28]</sup> to assess the language assessment literacy of the participants. The assessment was conducted across five different dimensions: English testing and teaching practice (items 1-13), English testing results and their application (items 14-22), fundamental principles of language testing (items 23-33), testing item design skills and testing methods (items 34-47), language testing ethics and attitudes towards language testing (items 48-53). The scale employs five levels represented by the numbers 0 to 4, which is in consistency with the previous research by Pill and Harding (2013:383)<sup>[3]</sup>, who classified LAL from "illiteracy," through "nominal literacy," "functional literacy" and "procedural and conceptual literacy," to an expert level of knowledge: "multidimensional

language assessment literacy”. “0” signifies illiteracy, indicating a lack of understanding in a particular aspect of language assessment; “1” represents nominal literacy, indicating a basic grasp of relevant concepts in the assessment field but with potential misconceptions or partial understanding; “2” denotes functional literacy, signifying a good understanding of knowledge and skills related to language assessment literacy; “3” characterizes procedural and conceptual literacy, indicating familiarity with important knowledge and methods related to language assessment literacy; and “4” stands for multidimensional literacy, reflecting a proficient command of the core content of language assessment literacy as well as other related knowledge.

Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 novice English teachers via telephones. Prior to the interviews, the purpose of the interview was explained to the participants, and all interviews were recorded. Each interview with a teacher lasted approximately 10-20 minutes. The interviews commenced with the participants sharing their experiences in language teaching assessment. Then, the interview continued around the following topics: How do you enhance your language assessment literacy? And what are the challenges for improving language assessment literacy? Then the interview data were transcribed and an inductive approach was utilized to analyze the data.

## 4. Results and Discussions

### 4.1. Enhancement Needs in Language Assessment Literacy of Novice In-service English Teachers

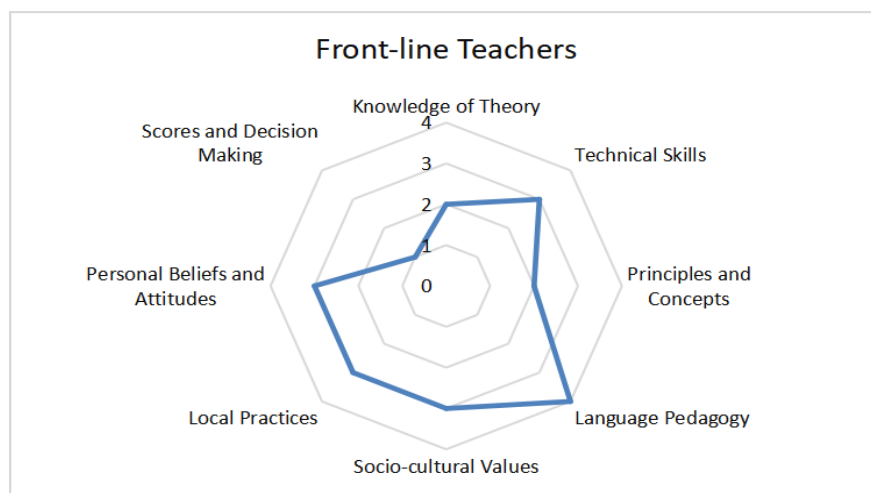


Figure 1: A Theoretical Framework of LAL for Front-line Teachers (Taylor, 2013)

Since the call for better LAL among front-line language teachers is indeed necessary (Giraldo, 2018)<sup>[29]</sup>, the enhancement in LAL of novice in-service teachers is undoubtedly needed. To better explore novice teachers' enhancement needs in LAL, what language assessment literacy teachers entail should be firstly clarified. Figure 1 presents a theoretical framework of LAL for front-line teachers. Taylor (2013:410)<sup>[30]</sup> suggests that front-line teachers' LAL include the following eight dimensions: knowledge of theory, technical skills, principles and concepts, language pedagogy, sociocultural values, local practices, personal beliefs and attitudes, and scores and decision making. According to the radar chart (Figure 1), language pedagogy has the primary requirement for front-line teachers and Lin Dunlai (2019:19)<sup>[4]</sup> believes that language pedagogy in this framework may encompass the specific practices of formative assessment from teachers, setting and refining teaching objectives, designing teaching activities, and evaluating teaching effectiveness, etc. Based on the survey results in Figure 2 from the eight dimensions, the order of needs in LAL among novice in-service English teachers is “language pedagogy>principles and concepts>knowledge of theory>scores and decision making>technical skills>local practices>personal beliefs and attitudes>sociocultural values”.

Another survey was conducted to get some details about teachers' specific enhancement needs in LAL. Figure 3 illustrates the enhancement needs in LAL among novice in-service teachers in the survey. The data reflects that the majority of teachers have the highest enhancement needs in the utilization of assessment results (90.63%), followed by assessment validity (84.38%). Additionally, more than half of the teachers also expressed their learning needs in assessment methods (81.25%), language assessment principles (71.88%), assessment reliability (68.75%), and scoring skills (62.5%). Whereas, the enhancement demand for assessment objectives (34.38%), assessment ethics (12.5%) and

others (15.63%) is relatively lower. It seems that most teachers long for learning more about how to use assessment results and ensure the validity of the assessment. However, they are likely to believe that their mastery of assessment objectives and assessment ethics has been in a good level. Language assessment results help teachers understand students' learning situations and performances, identifying problems and deficiencies in teaching, and allowing for targeted improvements and optimizations in teaching content, methods, and strategies. They also assist teachers in monitoring students' learning progress and changes, promptly identifying learning difficulties and challenges, and implementing interventions and support. Hence, it is of great significance for teachers to utilize the assessment results. Assessment validity ensures that assessment tools or methods accurately reflect students' actual learning situations, which is essential in language teaching. Therefore, it is of value for novice in-service teachers to give priority to the utilization of assessment results and assessment validity. Meanwhile, there are still a lot of things requiring to learn in LAL. For instance, López and Bernal (2009)<sup>[31]</sup> urge teachers to improve the validity, reliability, and fairness of their language assessment practices, and to implement assessment that is conducive to enhancing teaching and learning.

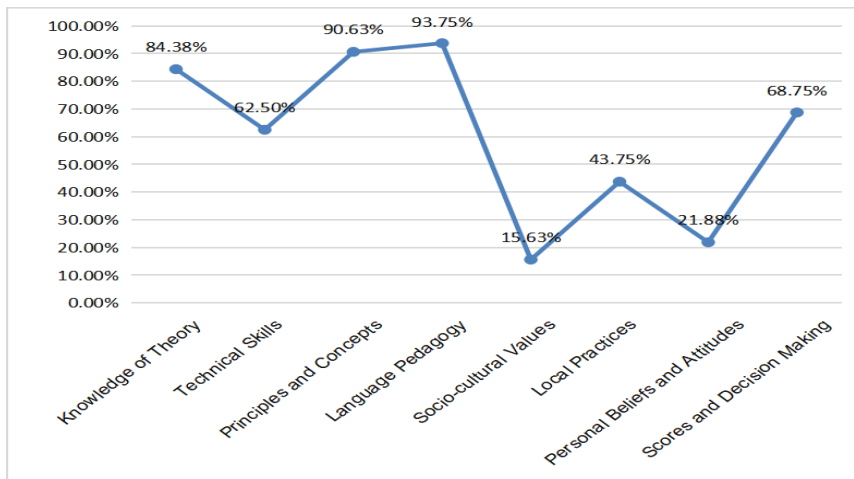


Figure 2: Needs from Eight Dimensions in LAL among Novice In-service English Teachers

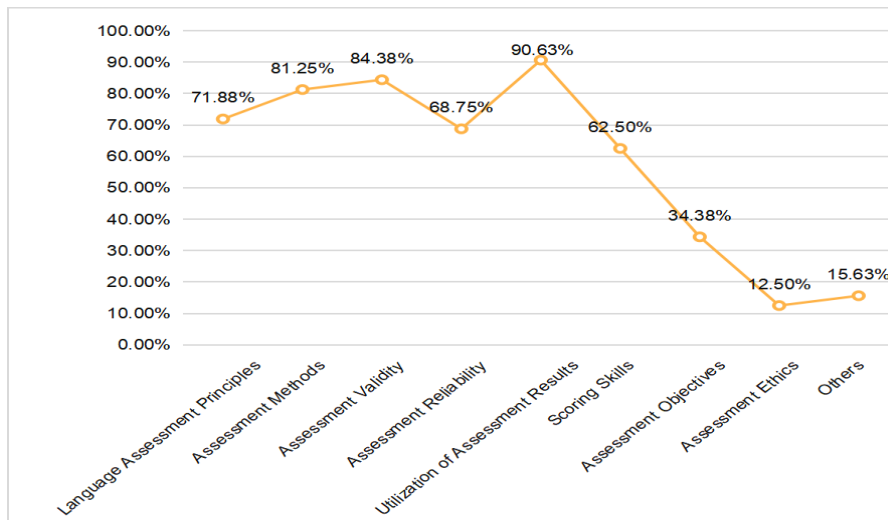


Figure 3: Specific Enhancement Needs in LAL among Novice In-service English Teachers

#### 4.2. Using Status of Language Assessment Methods among Novice In-service English Teachers

The effective use of assessment methods can be considered as the crucial part of enhancing teachers' LAL. Figure 4 presents the assessment methods that are commonly used by novice teachers in their daily teaching practices. As shown in the figure, the most frequently used assessment method is "records of regular performance" (100%), followed by "final exam" (96.88%), "homework" (93.75%), "oral responses" (90.63%), "classroom presentation" (84.38%), "group activities" (84.38%) and "classroom observation" (65.63%). Also nearly half of the teachers often use "exercises in the textbook"

(46.88%) and “collaborative learning projects” (46.88%). However, they do not frequently use the following methods to assess students, such as “self-assessment” (25%), “peer evaluation” (18.75%), “questionnaire surveys” (12.5%), “reflective journals” (9.38%), “evaluation scales” (9.38%), “interviews” (6.25%), “portfolio” (6.25%), and “supplementary materials” (3.13%). Based on the data, we can see that all the novice teachers in the sample make records of students’ regular learning performance, which indicates that formative assessment has gained significant attention from teachers. And approximately 97% of them will employ final exams to assess their students’ academic outcomes, reflecting that summative assessment remains an indispensable part of instructional assessments. Besides, the majority of the respondents tend to use students’ homework performance and classroom performance (like oral responses, classroom presentation, group activities) to make assessments, which can to some extent have impacts on cultivating learning habits, facilitating learning engagement, nurturing team spirit, etc. Notwithstanding it can also be obviously found that alternative assessment methods have been adopted among novice teachers, the use frequency of these assessment methods is relatively low, such as self-assessment, peer evaluation, questionnaire surveys, reflective journals, evaluation scales, interviews, portfolio, and supplementary materials. This is probably because novice in-service teachers are not familiar with these assessment methods. It is similar to the findings from Vogt and Tsagari (2014)<sup>[13]</sup>, in which European language teachers express a significant need for classroom assessment training, including aspects like portfolio assessment, student self-assessment, and peer assessment. Multiple assessment methods play a significant role in language teaching, which can not only provide a more comprehensive understanding of students’ learning situations and performances, evaluating their knowledge, skills, and competencies from various perspectives, but also can stimulate students’ learning motivation and interest, encouraging them to participate in the learning process more actively. Additionally, different assessment methods can cater to different students’ diverse learning styles and abilities, facilitating personalized instruction. Most importantly, a range of assessment methods offers teachers more accurate information to adjust their teaching strategies and enhance instructional quality. According to Herrera and Macías (2015)<sup>[32]</sup>, teachers with an appropriate level of LAL, should be able to connect instruction and assessment, and choose from an available repertoire of assessment methods.

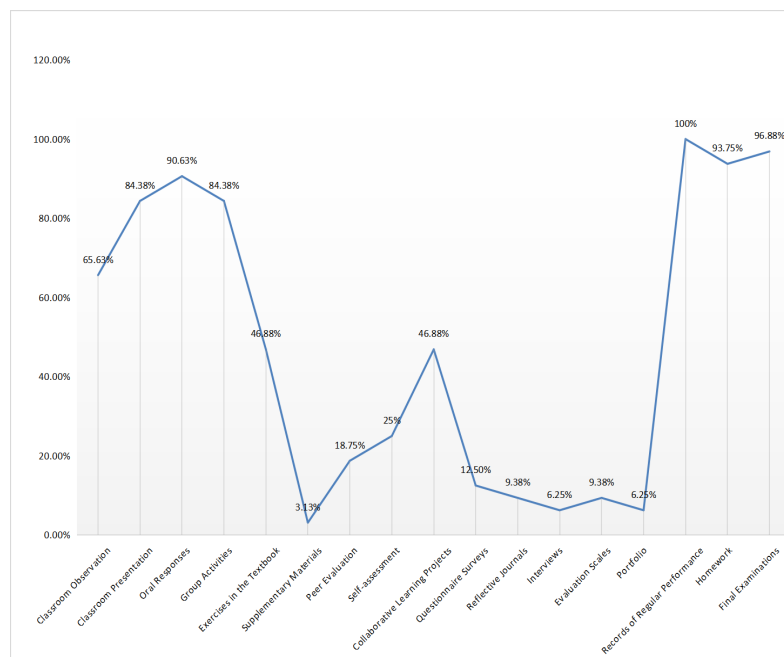


Figure 4: Use of Assessment Methods Among Novice In-service English Teachers

#### 4.3. Overall Level of Language Assessment Literacy for Novice In-service English Teachers

Based on the Tertiary English Teachers’ Language Assessment Literacy Scale (Pan Mingwei, Xiao Yangtian, 2022)<sup>[28]</sup>, the status of language assessment literacy for novice teachers has been investigated. As shown in Figure 5, according to the five levels of LAL mentioned earlier, all the dimensions have exceeded Level “2”, indicating that the novice in-service teachers in the sample have a good understanding of knowledge and skills related to language assessment literacy, but have not arrived at Level “3”, demonstrating they are still not familiar with important knowledge and methods related to

LAL. Furthermore, there is still a certain gap from the outer boundary of the radar chart that stands for Level “5”, highlighting the need for continuous learning to more proficiently grasp the core aspects of language assessment and other related knowledge. In other words, the respondents’ LAL have reached the level between functional literacy and procedural and conceptual literacy, but still have a considerable gap from multidimensional literacy. In addition, compared to other four dimensions, the mean value in the dimension of fundamental principles of language testing is the lowest one (mean=2.22), which suggests that the participants in the survey have a lower level in understanding the fundamental principles of language testing.

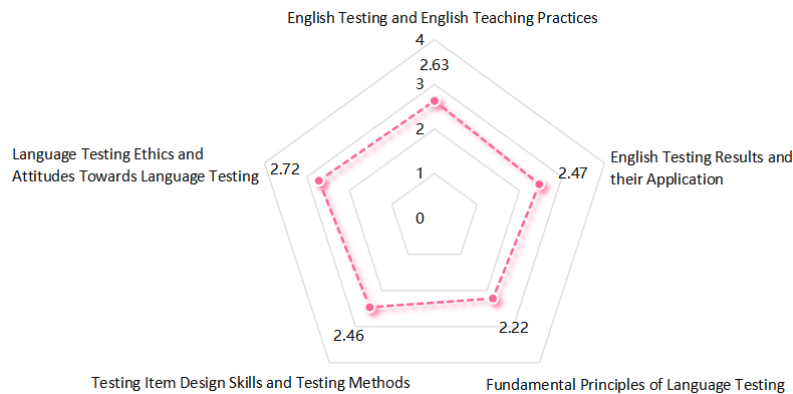


Figure 5: Survey Results on the Overall Level of LAL among Novice In-service English Teachers

## 5. Ways to Enhance Language Assessment Literacy for Novice In-service English Teachers

The present survey only examines the ways of enhancing language assessment literacy among novice teachers from the perspective of front-line teachers. It is intended to know how novice teachers cultivate and enhance their own language assessment literacy. Based on the interview questions “How do you enhance your language assessment literacy? And what are the challenges for improving language assessment literacy?”, four main aspects have been mentioned by teachers interviewed: First, reading relevant literature helps to know the theoretical knowledge about language learning and assessment. For instance, Teachers A and D both mentioned that “reading theoretical knowledge on language teaching are of great assistance in improving their teaching assessment abilities.” Teacher C presented that “By reading books and journals, I have got a deeper insight into the theoretical knowledge base on assessment literacy, but still want some help from experts in this area.” Teacher J said “I carefully read and analyze excellent cases, paying attention to how assessment methods are chosen and how curriculum goals and student needs are integrated.” At the same time, the majority of teachers interviewed felt that they lacked assessment knowledge and skills, and more time and effort is required to learn and comprehend the theoretical foundation of language assessment. Second, attending training conferences is beneficial. Typically, these training sessions cover various aspects of assessment, including assessment methods, evaluation principles, and assessment tools. Teacher B also stated that “During the training conferences, I gained a better understanding of issues related to the validity and reliability of language assessment, as well as how to quantify and analyze test results. However, due to not having undergone systematic learning in language assessment, my understanding of the topic is not yet comprehensive.” Teacher E pointed out, “I spend my spare time to attend some online training conferences (such as Conferences on English as a Foreign Language teaching and assessment), but such opportunities are not very frequent.” Third, actual teaching practices are indeed affective. All the teachers in the interview agreed that practical experiences can gradually develop their assessment skills. Teacher G put forward that “In the practical work of designing and reviewing test items, I have gained a better understanding of language measurement theories, the purposes, methods, and ethics of assessments”. Teacher I also stressed that “In teaching practice, I can continuously experiment with and reflect upon various assessment methods”. Teacher H said that it can be a challenge for him to flexibly select and adjust assessment methods based on individual student profiles. This can be a challenge for him. Teacher F mentioned “Sometimes, it’s difficult to implement peer assessment and self-assessment in classroom teaching.” Finally, guidance from experienced teachers or experts is really necessary. Nearly all of the teachers in the sample mentioned that they have learned from experienced teachers by classroom observation and communication. Teacher J pointed out, “My mentor has shared her assessment experiences and techniques with me, which helps me better apply assessment methods”.

Teacher B stated that she learned a lot from her fellows. In conclusion, the novice teachers in the interview enhance their language assessment literacy through avenues such as reading literature, participating in training conferences, engaging in teaching practice, and gaining guidance from experienced teachers or experts. However, they also encounter challenges in both theoretical and practical aspects.

Given the interview results and previous literature research, the primary avenues for enhancing the language assessment literacy of novice teachers can be summarized as follows:

- Self-directed Learning

To get a deep understanding of what exactly LAL is, novice teachers should actively read relevant literature, acquiring proficiency in professional knowledge and mastering assessment principles, techniques, and the application of various assessment tools. And they also need to continuously stay updated with the latest trends and developments in language assessment. Through reading relevant literature on language assessment, the knowledge base of LAL can be accumulated and teachers' LAL can be improved (Haigh & Dixon, 2007)<sup>[33]</sup>. They can also enhance their assessment literacy through self-study of typical or excellent cases that can draw inspiration and insights. Besides, in the digital era, through online technologies individuals can engage in learning at their own pace and schedule using online courses, educational platforms, video tutorials, etc. The advantage of this way lies in its flexibility, but it also requires teachers to possess a certain level of self-discipline and self-management skills.

- Teaching Practice and Self-reflection

In teaching practice, teachers can explore innovative practice and apply various assessment methods and strategies in real teaching settings. This hands-on experience allows teachers to continuously reflect on their practices and refine their methods to align with their teaching style and students' needs. This conclusion can be evidenced from Gilmore (2002)<sup>[34]</sup> who found that participating in assessment implementation has multiple positive effects on teachers' assessment abilities and literacy. Teachers generally reported that they had stronger reflective abilities regarding assessment issues, were more cautious in assessment decisions, and had a more critical thinking approach. Likewise, Xu Yuetin (2013)<sup>[24]</sup> suggested that carefully planning and implementing large-scale testing projects may contribute to the improvement of teachers' assessment literacy. Jin Yan (2018)<sup>[35]</sup> pointed out that assessment literacy needs to be continually developed and improved through teaching and assessment practices. Reflection is a movement in teacher education and crucial kind of thought that enables teachers to be aware of their experiences and analyze their own practice (Fatemipour & Hosseingholikhani, 2014)<sup>[36]</sup>. Real teaching practice can accumulate assessment experience and regularly reflecting on assessment practices can continuously improve and upgrade language assessment literacy.

- Experts' Guidance and Fellows' Mutual Exchange

Guidance from experts can help novice teachers better apply assessment methods. Novice teachers first chose one expert as his or her mentor. One-on-one mentoring and professional learning community can be established, where novice teachers learn from mentors who provide timely assistance to novice teachers. This guidance can also have novice teachers follow their mentors in "an apprenticeship-style observation" (Lortie, 1975)<sup>[37]</sup>, referring to "mentors' demonstrating how to effectively conduct classroom assessments" (Volante & Fazio, 2007)<sup>[38]</sup>. In addition, novice teachers benefit from engaging in collaborative discussions and exchanges with their fellows, where they can share their practical experiences and teaching strategies related to language assessment. Vogt and Tzagari (2014)<sup>[13]</sup>, through surveys and interviews, found that European language teachers typically acquire assessment experience from mentors or colleagues in their work, with limited formal training. This promotes mutual learning and improvement. In conclusion, novice teachers can gain valuable advice and guidance by sharing experiences and exchanging viewpoints with experienced experts and their fellows.

- Training and Workshops

All prospective teachers should strive to better themselves through in-service training, conferences, workshops and so forth to create a language assessment culture for improvement in language education. (López & Bernal, 2009:66)<sup>[31]</sup>. Novice teachers should participate in regular professional training covering both the theoretical foundations and practical aspects of language assessment, which helps them acquire assessment skills and knowledge. And they can also engage in language assessment workshops and research activities to facilitate exchange and sharing of experiences. Workshops are one



of the main methods for training teachers' LAL, and serve as a valuable complement to formal courses (Malone, 2008)<sup>[39]</sup>. Face-to-face workshops are often organized and facilitated by professionals or trainers. Workshops typically involve interactions among participants, group discussions, role-playing, and more, all of which contribute to practical application and contextual understanding during the training process. Jin and Jie (2017)<sup>[40]</sup> investigated the effectiveness of a one-week language assessment training course and found that the course was effective in enhancing participants' LAL. Tierney (2006:259)<sup>[41]</sup> suggested, "Rather than one-shot training sessions delivered by assessment experts, more collaborative professional development projects that significantly involve educators at the local level will be needed". Jin Yan (2018)<sup>[35]</sup> pointed out that foreign language teachers need thorough training in each dimension of assessment literacy, with training methods including workshops, online learning, and self-study. Jiang Jinlin (2022)<sup>[42]</sup> explored effective approaches to enhance the classroom assessment literacy of university English teachers through the implementation of online training workshops. The results revealed that a combination of interactive and introspective learning methods significantly facilitated participants' progress in both cognitive aspects (concepts, knowledge, skills) and emotional dimensions (confidence, motivation). To sum up, novice teachers should regularly attend professional seminars, online forums and workshops to continuously learning and updating their language assessment literacy. Walters (2010)<sup>[43]</sup> conducted workshops training 11 American teachers to analyze New York State English as a Second Language test items. The training improved teachers' abilities to write test specifications and assess language standards. Baker and Riches (2018)<sup>[44]</sup> organized workshops for foreign language teachers and language assessment experts in Haiti, focusing on evaluating and revising national foreign language exams. The collaboration between teachers and experts enhanced their language assessment literacy. Xie (2021)<sup>[45]</sup> provided online training for 92 pre-service English teachers in Hong Kong, covering exam requirements, development, implementation, test analysis, and result feedback, resulting in favorable outcomes.

In a nutshell, these practices are beneficial attempts at developing novice in-service teachers' language assessment literacy. By following these ways, it is possible for novice in-service teachers to effectively enhance their language assessment literacy, improve their assessment skills and knowledge, and create a more beneficial assessment environment for higher teaching quality and better learning outcomes. However, ways of enhancing language assessment literacy should be diverse and abundant. As Falk and Ort (1998)<sup>[46]</sup> suggested, "Only a long-term, competence-oriented approach that offers teachers opportunities for cognitive, emotional, and social interaction with peers and diverse perspectives can foster the development of teachers' assessment literacy".

## 6. Summary

This paper is aimed at investigating the language assessment literacy of novice in-service teachers in private colleges and universities. The following conclusions are obtained based on the research questions: (1) With respect to the first question, it could be concluded that the primary need for improvement among novice in-service teachers is language pedagogy. Specifically, the utilization of assessment results and assessment validity are most essential. (2) In terms of the second research question, it is found that the novice teachers in the sample use a combination of formative and summative assessment for evaluation. Making records of students' regular learning performance is always employed by novice teachers. And final exams, homework, oral responses, classroom presentations, and group activities are most frequently employed. However, some are rarely used, such as self-assessment, peer evaluation, questionnaire surveys, reflective journals, evaluation scales, interviews, portfolio, and supplementary materials. (3) As for the third research question, the results revealed that the language assessment literacy of novice teachers in the sample was not generally high, between functional literacy and procedural and conceptual literacy, which still have a significant gap from multidimensional literacy. Additionally, the novice teachers are particularly weak in the aspect of fundamental principles of language testing.

In a word, novice in-service English teachers in colleges and universities have a certain level of language assessment literacy. However, research demonstrates that the existing assessment literacy of most novice teachers is often insufficient to enable them to effectively use assessment to enhance students' learning (Lin Dunlai, 2019)<sup>[4]</sup>. The overall level of language assessment literacy among the novice teachers surveyed is still not high enough. There is a lack of training and development opportunities for them to cultivate their language assessment literacy. Therefore, from the perspective of professional development, teachers should strive to enhance their language assessment literacy and, in practice, reconstruct their roles as assessors.

Given the relatively heavy reliance on surveys and interviews in previous studies, a greater variety of research methods (such as experiments, case studies, classroom observation, think-aloud, narrative inquiry, etc.) should also be encouraged in future LAL research to explore language assessment literacy among novice in-service foreign language teachers. Based on this, effective ways to enhance language assessment literacy for novice foreign language teachers can be formulated.

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