Teachers’ Assessment Literacy Impact on Learners’ Writing Achievements

Muhamad Taufik Hidayat
Institut Pendidikan Indonesia Garut
mtaufikhidayat637@gmail.com

Abstract
Classroom assessment may significantly affect learners’ academic achievements. The effect can be either direct or indirect. Inspired by this fact, the current study attempted to investigate teachers’ assessment literacy and its impact on their current assessment practices and learners’ writing outcomes. The Inquiry endeavored to benefit an understanding of the extent to which teachers’ assessment literacy affects their practices and their learners’ outcomes. To this end, the researchers employed teachers’ assessment literacy inventory, and Writing Competence Rating Scale (WCRS) to obtain the data for analysis. Ten EFL instructors and seventy five male junior EFL undergraduate students were involved in this study. The results indicated that teachers’ assessment literacy has a statistically significant impact on learners’ writing achievements and teachers’ assessment awareness leads teaching environments into effective and motivated assessment design. The result suggested that teachers’ assessment awareness be taken into account as initial requirement for every teachers and educators.

Keywords: Assessment, Assessment Literacy, Writing achievement

INTRODUCTION
There are many contributing factors to operative teaching and learning processes; amongst which teacher knowledge is perhaps is one of the dominant factors. Teachers and their understanding play diverse parts in the complex process of language teaching. One aspect of the teacher knowledge is how to assess learners’ abilities or assessment literacy. Many schools or colleges are equipped with modern educational apparatuses, however if teachers fail to have the required knowledge to organize the classroom assessment for promoting the learning process, all of the materials and classrooms will lose their values (Al-Malki & Weir, 2014; Susuwele-Banda, 2005). It is believed Teachers’ Assessment Literacy (AL) might impact their teaching plan and practices. Mertler (2003) defined assessment literacy as the possession of knowledge about the basic principles of assessment and evaluation practice which are the terminology of assessment concepts such as test, measurement, assessment and evaluation, the development and use of assessment methodologies and techniques in the classroom, familiarity with different tools and apparatus of language assessment, familiarity with standards of quality in classroom assessment, and familiarity with an alternative to traditional measurements of learning. In other words, assessment literacy is the readiness of a teacher to design, implement, and discuss the assessment strategies, measurement tools, evaluation criteria, decision making milestones as well as formative and summative tests.

Legitimate assessment system take up an essential part in guaranteeing the way that students are meeting instructional objectives. In particular, instructors should have the option to make and carry out legitimate and dependable assessments to meet certain
students' learning and decide the adequacy in their educating. Moreover, educators should have the option to examine the consequences of their assessment with students and their folks, and utilize the aftereffects of their evaluations to control more proper instructive guidance (Alkharusi, Kazem, and Al-Musawai, 2011; Bastian, Henry, Pan, and Lys, 2016; Beziat and Coleman, 2015). It infers from the writing that numerous educators neglect the instructive and classroom assessment. The lone openness to the ideas and practices evaluation and other kinds of assessment may have been a couple of meetings in their educator schooling programs in which they center at the hypothetical establishments of the idea of evaluation. This disregard is for the most part a direct result of unseemly useful assignments and undertakings in their schooling programs. Additionally, they probably won't feel the need to procure assessment information which eventuates in low evaluation education (Karimi and Shafee, 2014; Razavipour, Riazi, and Rashidi, 2011). A few instructors normally show up at their first showing experience and task with no essential and basic comprehension of the now no longerions of instructive and study classroom assessment. Likewise, these days, with the headway of current instructive contraptions and adjustments in instructive educational plan, substance, and guidance, there has been an increment in assumptions about instructors' evaluation skill. Consequently, it is necessitated that educators and instructors develop homeroom evaluations that adjust new educational programs with acknowledged guidelines as a methods of improving student' capacities, tests' characteristics, and grades' translations (Dayal and Lingam, 2015; Mertler, 2003). Employing adequate assessment techniques and grading practices, teachers can show their instruction, enhance learners' motivation to learn, and increase learners' levels of achievement. Classroom assessment can be used for different objectives which include addressing the learners’ needs, assigning learners in homogeneous groups- at the part of their language proficiency for their next educational levels, evaluating learners and instruction, motivating learners, and so on (Mertler, 2003; Dinther, Dochy, & Segers, 2015). There are many considerations towards the major classifications of assessment which divides it into summative and formative assessments. Many researchers have found numerous teachers who claimed that their learners’ achievements were no longer adequate at the end of the educational term. In addition, teachers need to make crucial instructional decisions and summative or once-a-year tests are now no longer adequate in providing teachers with the moment-to-moment and day-to-day information about learners’ achievements (Ogan-Bekirolgu & Suzuk, 2014; Beziat & Coleman, 2015; Zhang, Cown, Hayes, Werry, Barnes, France, & TeHau-Grant, 2015). The problem is that teachers are unable to gather or use dependable information on learners’ achievements due to the extensive materials wherein they have no control over them and that they have to cover for summative or once-a-year tests. This problem is highlighted especially in some educational systems such as

Payame Noor educational system in Indonesia. In this educational system, teachers have to cover fixed textbooks and instructions, as well as comply with the standardized final tests in which are also beyond their control (Karimi & Shafee, 2014). In contrast to summative assessment, formative assessment is a process in which teachers have control over each content and assessment procedure. They can adjust their ongoing instructional activities according to classroom-based evidence. In this type of assessment, learners simply like teachers have an active role in selecting classrooms’ activities and subsequent assessment procedure. In other words, teachers are able to set their educational instructions fit to the immediate environment, available materials, and learners’ specific needs (Stiggins, 2006; Lingam & Lingam, 2016). Formative assessment causes a powerful
improvement in the instruction, because it is intended to stimulate adjustments in teachers’ flexible instructional programs or in learners’ current learning-tactics. One aspect of formative assessment is that teachers frequently administer classroom tests and quizzes, now no longer for grading purposes (Maclellan, 2004), however to let the teachers and the learners perceive whether they need to make any changes in what they are studying in classroom. The main function of the formative assessment process is to supply effective and practical evidence that will enhance learners’ achievements (Popham, 2009; Tong & Adamson, 2015). Assessment for formative purposes is an integral part of any teaching program which includes practices such as effective teacher questioning, use of success criteria, feedback, observation, conferencing, and student self-assessment (Yan & Cheng, 2015).

Ironically, in this age of increase in emphasis on assessment, many universities and state education agencies do not require pre-service teachers to complete specific coursework about classroom assessment. This continues to be an interesting phenomenon, since many in-service teachers report that they are well prepared to assess students’ learning. Furthermore, teachers from different countries and different educational systems often claim that lack of adequate preparation is largely due to inadequate pre-service training in the area of educational measurement; thus, it is worth pondering over it internationally and shedding light on its latent aspects which can influence the whole process of education, particularly language teaching (Campbell, Murphy, & Holt, 2002; Mertler, 2003; Verberg, Tigelaar, & Verloop, 2015). Mertler (2003) also cited literature that calls for an increase in emphasis on teacher preparation programs for classroom assessment and a decrease in emphasis on summative testing. Studies have generally concluded that teachers’ skills in each areas are limited. In other words, their assessment literacy is limited. Despite the importance of assessment training course, many teachers and instructors start their teaching career without adequate ability in measuring learners’ abilities and appropriate evaluation of educational instructions. Ordinarily, teachers have to comply with fixed state educational instructions that limit them simply to deliver the previously designed materials to the learners. However, they have the ability to evaluate their teaching instructions and materials. In other words, in spite of the fact that teachers have no control over the content, they can modify the assessment procedure and evaluate their learners’ ability more effectively. Moreover, there might be differences between teachers who have high level of assessment literacy in their classroom management and those who don’t; therefore, the current study investigated teachers’ assessment literacy and its impacts on their current assessment practices and learners’ writing achievements.

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the assessment literacy, the researchers administered Assessment Literacy Inventory (ALI) (A previously-validated inventory, Mertler & Campbell, 2005; see instrument section below to know more about this inventory) among 26 EFL instructors (available sample). Based on the results of the ALI, five instructors with the highest assessment literacy (assessment literate instructors) and five instructors with the lowest assessment literacy (assessment illiterate instructors) were selected for the study. All the instructors aged between 35 to 50 years. These ten instructors had 75 students in their classrooms; therefore, 10 male EFL instructors and 75 EFL undergraduate students were selected as the participants of the present study. All of the instructors accepted to
participate in the study voluntarily. At the outset of the study, they were informed about
the nature of the study. They were also ensured that their identity in the survey would be
held in strict confidence and were allowed to withdraw their participation at any time
without penalty. All of them had more than ten years of teaching experience. There are
different assessment procedures in these educational systems, and the participants of the
study were familiar with these three systems. The learners who ranged from 20-27 years
of age and were studying English writing course took part in this study. These learners
studied writing English in ten classes; in five classes (35 learners) with instructors with
high assessment literacy and five classes (40 learners) with instructors with low assessment
literacy. As the researchers used same pretest and posttest for all students, and the
differences among the classes were not the case in the study as well, for convenient
analysis, the 35 learners of assessment literate instructors were considered as one group
(Group 1, N= 35) and 40 students of the assessment illiterate instructors were considered
as another group (Group 2, N= 40).

FINDINGS
The quantitative data of the current study were the scores of the two groups (35 learners
of assessment literate instructors (Group 1, N= 35) and 40 students of the assessment
illiterate instructors (Group 2, N= 40)) in writing pretest and posttest. To answer the
second research question which needs quantitative data, the researchers conducted one
way ANCOVA. To explore the assumptions for a normal one-way analysis of variance
that are called normality or homogeneity of variance, the researchers checked the
specific assumptions associated with ANCOVA. The results of this analysis are
presented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9.943</td>
<td>19.963</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>60.883</td>
<td>122.241</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6.135</td>
<td>12.318</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>.532</td>
<td>.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups * Pretest</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>1.220</td>
<td>.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>32.872</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>.498</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>573.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>62.700</td>
<td>69</td>
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</table>

a. R Squared = .476 (Adjusted R Squared = .452)

Table 1: Check for homogeneity of regression slopes

The results of Table 1 indicate that the significant level of interaction term which
is revealed as (Groups * Pretest) is more than .05; therefore, it can be said that the
researchers have not violated the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes. Thus,
ANCOVA analysis can run safely. To explore teachers’ assessment literacy and its
impacts on learners’ writing achievements, a one-way ANCOVA was employed to test
writing scores in post-test while controlling for their pretest on this test. The following
tables show the results of one-way ANCOVA.
The results in Table 2 show that the Sig. value is much larger than the cut-off of .05 which indicates the research does not violate the assumptions of equality of variance.

A one-way between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of assessment literacy on learners’ outcomes. The independent variable was the type of groups (learners with assessment illiterate instructors and learners with assessment literate instructors), and the dependent variable consisted of scores on writing posttest. Learners’ scores on the writing pretest were used as the covariate in this analysis. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate. After adjusting for the writing pretest scores, there was a statistically significant difference between the two intervention groups on writing posttest scores $F(1, 67) = 57.640, P = .00$, partial eta squared $= .46$ which is a large value.

**DISCUSSION**

As it can be observed in the current study, assessment illiterate instructors had limited knowledge about evaluation and classroom assessment. They were not taught how to effectively build an assessment system to interpret standardized tests and classroom assessments. The direct result of this low degree of knowledge is a chaos in the classroom.
Teachers understand the drawbacks of the instruction and learners know their weaknesses just after the term, when they cannot obviate or even modify them. If teacher trainers cannot enhance teachers’ assessment literacy in their teacher education programs, this feeble assessment system remains in constant trouble, and learners suffer the consequences. As illustrated in the literature, many factors such as professional teachers (Yan & Cheng, 2015), effective teacher education programs and professional development experiences (Bezat & Coleman, 2015), teachers’ content knowledge (Herman et al., 2015), and other factors than teachers’ assessment literacy such as teaching experiences, educational system, time of instruction, and cultural point (Karimi & Shafaei, 2014) may influence both teachers’ activities in the classrooms, learners’ achievements, and the quality of educational systems.

Literate teachers in assessment can act appropriately in response to test results and make the right decisions in the middle of the course, when they can work for the drawbacks of their own instruction and assessment system and learners’ weaknesses. The literate teachers were confident enough to control the process of assessment and this confidence comes from two sources. Their positive attitudes toward formative and dynamic assessment and their pedagogical knowledge. Teachers’ knowledge, especially the knowledge and skills needed to develop assessment tasks would help evaluating instruction and achievements. Knowledgeable teachers can establish formative assessment through establishing learning goals, eliciting and interpreting evidence of learners’ learning and providing effective and specific feedback. Therefore, two important points should be considered by teacher trainers in teacher education programs. The first important point in every teacher education program is teachers’ beliefs about that program. Teachers’ beliefs about assessment determine their understandings to a high degree. Mellati et al. (2015) investigated the sources of teachers’ pedagogical beliefs. They found that the beliefs are derived from many sources the two prominent ones are Experienced Pedagogical Beliefs (Beliefs that are derived from their experiences as learners and before the program) and Educational Pedagogical Beliefs (Beliefs which they have learned in the program). They stated that determining these beliefs is crucial for teacher trainers as these beliefs influence each other and the subsequent pedagogical practices. The second important point is teachers’ knowledge. Teacher knowledge has two aspects; theoretical and pedagogical. It is teacher trainer’s responsibility to focus on both aspects of teacher knowledge in the programs. Many teachers learned the theoretical knowledge very soon and overlooked the pedagogical one as they think it is unnecessary. Any significant improvement in educational outcomes requires building the capacity of the existing teachers. Qualified teachers enhance educational system’s quality, which eventuate in improvement of learners’ learning and achievement. The findings of the current study also emphasized that teachers’ assessment practices in their education programs enhance the quality of their teaching as well as the learner outcomes. William and Thompson (2008) pointed out that teacher professional development is more effective when it: is related to the direct context in which the teachers operate, happens in sustainable and enduring courses rather than being in the form of sporadic one-day workshops, and happens in active and collective participation of teachers.

The findings of the current study indicated that three major features of assessment literate instructors’ classrooms were setting goals based on learners’ interest, dynamic assessment through classroom assignments, and giving feedback. In other words, language learners learn the language well, when the educational instruction follows their
interests and consider their contextual differences in classroom assessment. This will not be achievable unless teacher education program be modified in terms of relevance, practicality, and comprehensibility. In accordance with Clark-Gareca (2016), the results indicated that teachers’ lack of expertise in test construction and in using valid evaluation procedures creates intricate problems for teachers and learners. Despite an emphasis on classroom assessment for several years, the findings of the current study revealed that there are still some deficiencies in classroom assessment knowledge among Iranian EFL teachers. The findings highlighted the necessity of considering teacher assessment knowledge in teacher education programs. Teachers learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and learners’ potential when they were taught the concepts practically. The findings of the interviews revealed that there are at least three reasons why assessment illiterate instructors did not use formative assessment in their classrooms. First, some teachers had limited knowledge of this kind of assessment (limited knowledge). Second, teachers felt they had not enough time to check learners’ progress, strengths, and weaknesses through formative assessment (limited time). And third, teachers felt there was inefficient financial support (limited wage); therefore, teachers were not motivated enough to try out different forms of assessments in their classrooms. Although these are common complaints of the teachers, they imply that they are not prepared for the actual environment of the classroom. Teachers should be faced with the reality of classroom in the education programs when they are taught how to manage them, how to control them, and how to assess them.

Two main objectives of assessment practices are to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning processes and to find ways to enhance learners’ outcomes. The results of quantitative data demonstrated that teachers’ assessment literacy has a statistically significant impact on learners’ writing achievements. Assessment knowledge provides teachers the required information about the effectiveness of their pedagogy and the curriculum materials. In addition, by interpreting the assessment results, skillful teachers can provide a deep and understandable information for parents and governments. Superficial knowledge about the assessment procedure may affect teachers’ judgement and decisions that they make. Assessment literate teachers have a central role in learners’ success. They can modify the instructions, the process of teaching, and even their instructional decisions continually to promote teaching and learning conditions. Unquestionably, teachers need support. However, some conditions should be set to support them efficiently. There should be a direct link between policy makers, stakeholders, teachers, and researchers, but before that, researchers and stakeholders should understand what exactly happens in the classroom. Without such kind of understanding, teacher education programs will not be prepared adequately and will not meet the challenges teachers face in the classroom. Assessment literacy means the knowledge of any procedure that is used to obtain information about the learners’ learning condition. Assessment literacy should be the central focus of teacher education programs to set established educational standards in learning environments.

**CONCLUSION**

The present study investigated teachers’ assessment literacy and its impact on their current assessment practices and learners’ writing outcomes. To reach this goal, triangulation of the data was observed. The results of the study demonstrated that instructors’ assessment
literacy has a significant impact on learners’ writing ability. The findings also confirmed
that there is a great difference between classroom practices of assessment literate
instructors and assessment illiterate instructors. Assessment literate instructors often set
their classroom activities based on three fundamental notions: setting goals based on
learners’ interests, dynamic assessment through classroom assignments, and giving
feedback. In their interviews, some instructors stated that such active learning
environments are the direct consequence of effective teacher education programs.
Conversely, assessment illiterate instructors counted reasons other than a teacher
education program for their failure in conducting formative assessment in the classroom.
They stated that limited time and wages are the most important factors that demotivated
them in their classrooms. They also asserted that lack of knowledge has influenced their
decisions that they make. The findings highlighted the emphasis of teacher assessment
literacy more effectively in teacher education programs. Teachers can learn how to
evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and learners’ practical and potential when they
were taught these concepts practically. Practical and pedagogical aspects of teacher
assessment should be focused on the programs; a way in which teachers can apply their
theoretical knowledge about selecting the most suitable teaching and assessment methods
for their particular environments, conducting prerequisite modifications, administering,
scoring and interpreting the findings of teacher-produced assessment methods, making
suitable decisions about individual learners and teaching process, and transferring
assessment findings to learners, parents, other audiences in their actual classrooms.

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