

ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE- LITERACY AMONG JORDANIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract: *The study aims to define language assessment literacy among Jordanian secondary school teachers. The study sample consisted of (214) teachers at Irbid Governorate selected using random sampling method. To achieve the study objectives, a questionnaire consisted of (36) items was distributed on the study sample. The study showed that knowledge level of language assessment among Jordanian teachers was low. The study revealed statistically significant differences in the knowledge level of language assessment among Jordanian teachers due to years of experience, in favor of more than 10 years and due to qualification, in favor of PhD, while there were no statistically significant differences in light of gender. In light of the results the study suggests to pay more attention by university administrations to design training programs able to fulfill the actual needs pre-service teachers in Jordan.*

Keywords: *Assessment Literacy, Language.*

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Introduction

Educational systems always seek to develop students' skills by providing them with rich learning experiences. This cannot be achieved unless teachers' preparation programs working on qualifying teachers are active participants in promoting learning teaching process. Teachers are a key pillar for the educational process considering the fact that they interact with students, making them more able to define their needs, problems and weaknesses. As such, teachers are in a better place to transfer the content of the learning material to students. As English is one of the basic school subjects working on transforming information and knowledge to students in an unfamiliar language for them when knowing that their native language is Arabic, this foreign language has many semantics and structures making it difficult for teachers to assess students' needs unless they interact with them face to face. The Ministry of Education in Jordan (2020) acknowledged the importance of teachers as key factors in its quest to promote the quality of education. This has urged the educational authorities to include different teaching skills in their teachers' preparations

programs and to focus on the various assessment tools that can help teachers in the development of the quality of the learning-teaching process. Assessment as indicated by Rayan (2015) is one of the tools educators employ in identifying the problems learners face while acquiring specific school subject. It is also one of the tools assisting educators identify the most influential factors affecting learners' competence in acquiring learning content. Therefore, assessment helps educators and education decision makers make objective judgments about the real performance of students; something that is very significant to determine the quality of school subjects and the ability to achieve the learning outcomes. In the same vein, NVAO (2016) indicates that successful assessment is based on using a set of standards and indicators; that are employed to obtain the needed information about students' performance objectively. Additionally, assessment can inform educators and decision makers about the needed amendments, whether in the educational objectives or in the teaching methods adopted to improve the quality of the learning material. For these reasons, having basic knowledge about the fundamentals of assessment is of vital significance for teachers, and this dictates the need for preparation programs to include the basics of assessment such as designing assessment tools, applying them, judging their reliability and validity as instruments for data collection. Assessment is the use of various tools, tests, measures and indicators that can give a clearer picture about the improvement in students' performance in academic, psychological and social domains. It also identifies teachers' practices towards achieving the learning- teaching process objectives by using different assessment tools such as projects, role playing, interviews, tests and quizzes and presentations (Coombe, 2018). The importance of assessment in the educational process stems from the fact that it provides guiding indicators to make judgments concerning the quality of the learning process and the instructional methods used by teachers. For the majority of teachers, assessment is the main source for obtaining an accurate feedback about students' performance and it verifies their mastery level of the learned skills. It also gives teachers some valid benchmarks about strengths and weaknesses among students, their attitudes, tendencies, and interests which can help in guiding educational supervision (Alkharusi and Al-Hosni, 2015). Assessment, as postulated by Alkharusi (2017), is a tool that may be used to evaluate the learning- teaching process, in designing class activities and learning content so as they can achieve the learning objectives. It is an instrument to raise the quality of educational outcomes and can be also employed to make active decisions about EL-Freihat M. S. E. (2021).

Teachers' compliance in presenting the school curricula in away conforming with the educational philosophy. It also identifies to how extent teachers are adopting high quality teaching strategies and that they are using assessment tools that may define individual differences among students. Any given language entails four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Teachers' assessment of these four language skills needs that school language curricula and students ability to master these skills to be assessed. This assessment process may inform making any changes on the nature of the language textbook to ensure their effectiveness and ability to promote different language skills. It also indicates that these textbooks are able to achieve the basic standards for assessment while ensuring their ability to give teachers a thorough vision whether students are acquiring these skills (Shadiev and Yang, 2020). Using language skills assessment, Coombe (2018) emphasizes that teachers should obtain a comprehensive feedback related to students' performance in the different language skills. It also guides them to select the most appropriate assessment tools. This, in turns, implies that teachers should be more than qualified in making assessment in and out of class as it may help in obtaining a clearer perspective about students'

performance. Therefore, language teachers' preparation programs should include formal and informal assessment strategies so teachers can make objectives decisions about their ability to achieve the educational goals. Despite the importance of the language skills, teachers are still facing significant problems hindering their students' acquisition of such language skills. In this respect, Dhlan (2019) indicates that teachers are still in a great need of pre-service and in-service training programs to qualify them to be active actors in making objectives assessment about the performance of their students; something that need more investigation. This was emphasized by the Jordanian Ministry of Education (2020) in its guidelines for the promotion of teachers preparation programs provided by the public and private universities. Different studies have examined teachers' language assessment literacy skills in the different educational contexts. For example, Ali (2011) conducted a study in Bangladesh to define teachers' and students' perspectives concerning the assessment of English secondary language teaching curriculum. Interviews were conducted with (6) English teachers and (9) high school students with varying degrees of proficiency in English language. The study showed that the level of assessing English secondary language teaching curriculum does not reflect the development of all language skills. Concentration is placed on reading and writing skills and other skills were neglected. There is a contradiction between the objectives of the English language curriculum and teaching methods presented in schools. The study showed that teachers use self-evaluation strategies to motivate students learning. It also showed that English language teaching curriculum needs redesigning so that all four skills are included in the evaluation system. Gonzales and Aliponga (2012) compared classroom assessment preferences of Japanese language teachers in Philippine and English language in Japan. The study sample included (61) Japanese language teachers and (55) English language teachers who responded to a questionnaire measuring classroom evaluation preferences of language teachers. The study found that the most preferred assessment practice by the teachers from both countries was assessment as learning, while the least preferred assessment practice was communicative function of assessment (assessing to inform). It also found no statistically significant differences in the preferences for assessment of learning and assessment as learning. In Turkey, Han and Kaya (2014) investigated the assessment practices and habits of Turkish teachers using a sample consisted of (95) teachers in a number of primary and secondary schools who responded to a questionnaire. The study results found that teachers give less importance to listening and writing skills and that speaking is the most challenging skill to assess. The study showed no statistically significant difference in the teachers' assessment preferences in light of gender, assessment training, teaching hours, and number of tests. Using a questionnaire administrated to a sample consisted of (24) junior high school teachers, Saefurrohman (2015) tried to identify classroom assessment preferences among teachers. The study found that EFL teachers' main classroom assessment preference purpose was assessment for learning, followed by the classroom assessment of learning, and last classroom assessment as learning. It also showed that the most frequently used classroom assessment for learning for Indonesian teachers was to group their students for instruction purposes in the class, it also showed that the most frequently used classroom assessment was assessment for learning among teachers. Another study by Kalajahi and Abdullah (2016) examined the level of assessment literacy among a sample of (65) lecturers working in a Malaysian university. To achieve the study objectives, a questionnaire was used. The study revealed that the state of assessment literacy among lecturers was low.

Problem Study

Language assessment is one of the main challenges facing language teachers since it requires special skills other than those that should be mastered by different school subjects. Language assessment is essentially a requirement for making objective judgments about different aspects of language teaching process. Asserting this fact, Dhlan (2019) indicates that teachers' use of traditional assessment tools in language classes imposes many difficulties as they are not able to have comprehensive perspectives about students' actual performance. When knowing that language assessment is based on observation and interaction, not written tests in most cases, having language assessment skills means that teachers are more able to design effective instructional strategies that may help students acquire the targeted language skills. Stressing the fact that teachers' lack the needed skills for assessing language skills, Al-Sawalha (2020) contended that teachers are still relying on traditional assessment tools. The author further added that language teachers' assessment skills and literacy are under the optimal level, which has negative effect on students' academic performance. In the same vein, Alamreen (2020) emphasizes different facts that students mastering the four basic skills are still under the desired levels. He attributed this to teachers' lack of the basic language assessment tools and skills that may help them increase the quality of their instruction and to provide an accurate feedback about the level of learning content presented in schools.

The study seeks to define the knowledge level of language assessment among Jordanian teachers, and to reveal the differences in the knowledge level of language assessment among Jordanian teachers in light of gender, years of experience, and qualification. Limitations of the Study The limitations of the study included that the sample of the study was confined to a number of teachers at Irbid governorate. Furthermore, the generalization of the results is limited by the psychometric properties of the instruments used for data collection in this study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results, the study suggests: - Including language assessment skills pre-service teachers' programs to develop their language literacy level.

More attention by university administrations to design training programs able to fulfill the actual needs pre-service teachers in Jordan.

Providing the needed resources in schools to help teachers adopt language skills assessment as a part of their daily teaching practices.

Future research examining difficulties facing Jordanian teachers when using language assessment is needed.

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