

Assessment Literacy on Assessment Practices: A Case Study on Higher Secondary Level English Teachers in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Assessment literacy (AL) is considered important for teachers of any discipline. Given that language assessment is a fundamental responsibility of educators, the discipline of language testing is promoting research on the fundamental knowledge, skills, and principles that are essential for effective assessment. Though Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) has been studied widely in various contexts, it remains insufficiently explored in Bangladesh. This study aims to investigate the current state of LAL among Higher Secondary-level English teachers and its impact on their assessment practices. Using in-depth interviews and observation as research instruments, this ethnographic study critically examines perceptions of teachers towards their language assessment literacy and its impact on regular assessment practices. The findings identified that teachers' understanding of the assessment principles is either flawed or narrowed. Their limited academic and professional experience in assessment design and implementation hampers their ability to develop and apply assessments effectively. The findings suggest implications for language assessment literacy and offer important insights for English teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers involved in English language teaching at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh.

Keywords

Assessment Literacy, Language Assessment Literacy, Assessment Practice, Higher Secondary Level, Washback

1. Introduction

Language teachers must assess students at various stages of their careers, but inadequate knowledge and skills in language assessment can lead to malpractice and poor evaluation (Giraldo, 2021a). Teachers require professional training in language testing and assessment to prevent malfeasance, as research suggests that the field of assessment is in dire need of attention due to its substantial influence on students, institutions, and society (Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2018, 2021a, 2021b). Assessment Literacy for teachers was developed as a result of placing importance on the significance of teachers' assessment knowledge and skills in language assessment. This is an essential skill for teachers to effectively measure student learning and adjust instruction, encompassing knowledge, skills, and attitudes for designing, administering, and interpreting assessments (Stiggins, 2005). Teachers with adequate assessment literacy can create precise assessments that accurately measure students' learning progress and offer valuable feedback.

Brown & Lee (2015) distinguish between "test" and "assessment" in language measurement literature. "Test" is a designed tool with rating scales that measures a person's knowledge or ability in a specific domain, while "assessment" is an ongoing process involving various tools to identify student progress. Though previous definitions of language assessment literacy concentrated on testing (Fulcher, 2012), Scarino (2013) posits that the idea of language assessment literacy must extend beyond testing to include language teaching environments, practices, beliefs, attitudes, and theories that influence instructors' LAL. Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) is a key concept in Assessment Literacy (AL), consisting of five components: social context, proficiency definition, test construction and evaluation, assessment role in curriculum, and practical application (Brindley, 2001). Siegel & Wissehr (2011) expanded on this definition by proposing that teachers need both theoretical and practical assessment principles. Fulcher (2012) provides a comprehensive framework that considers historical and social factors. Scholars like Baker & Riches (2017), Bøhn & Tsagari (2021), and Kremmel & Harding (2020) suggest a multidimensional aspect of LAL and recommend it to different stakeholders.

Assessment is essential for monitoring student progress, delivering feedback, and evaluating accomplishments; nevertheless, its efficacy is significantly dependent on instructors' assessment literacy. Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) refers to the knowledge, skills, and principles required by stakeholders like teachers, students, administrators, and language testers for conducting language assessment in different educational contexts (Giraldo, 2018, 2021a, 2021b). LAL can include technological literacy involving efficient use of technology for fair, transparent, and smooth assessment design and administration (Ng, 2012). Brown (2013) also argues that statistical literacy is crucial for language teachers as part of their LAL to overcome statistics anxiety and understand its usefulness.

Assessment Literacy is of paramount importance for educators, particularly language teachers. As primary stakeholders in the assessment process, some research emphasises on language assessment practices, beliefs, and needs among teachers. They argue that teachers need a solid understanding of different assessment types, underlying principles, and the skills required to design effective assessments in various contexts (Berry et al., 2019; Crusan et al., 2016; Hill, 2017; Hill & McNamara, 2011; López-Mendoza & Bernal-Arandia, 2009). There are some studies which found that teachers prioritise practical matters, such as the development of assessment instruments (Fulcher, 2012; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018). The past language learning experiences of teachers as students, together with their experiences as educators, shape their literacies, beliefs, philosophies, and their classroom choices and methodologies (Crusan et al., 2016). In contrast, a few researchers have investigated resources to improve teachers' Language Acquisition (LAL) and have recognized textbooks as a vital element (Davies, 2008; Giraldo, 2021a, 2021b; Inbar-Lourie, 2013; Malone, 2008). They added that open internet resources, or open resources enhance the theoretical, practical, social, and ethical dimensions of language testing.

Popham (2004: p. 82) strongly emphasized the importance of assessment training for teachers, asserting that a lack of such training could be considered "professional suicide". In another study, Popham (2009: p. 4) states, the inadequacy of assessment knowledge may "cripple the quality of education". Studies by William (2011) and Shepard (2017) have shown that assessment-literate teachers are better equipped to adapt their instruction to meet diverse student needs and foster continuous improvement in student learning. Moreover, assessment literacy has been linked to increased teacher confidence, job satisfaction, and professional growth (Brown & Hirschfeld, 2008; Popham, 2009).

In the education system of Bangladesh, the Higher Secondary level is regarded as one of the most critical phases. The higher secondary English curriculum prioritizes learner-centered approaches to enhance students' communicative competence, integrating listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. The English assessment scheme at the higher secondary level includes continuous classroom assessment, internal examinations, and public exams like Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). The HSC English test consists of two papers: Paper I pertains to seen comprehension, vocabulary, and guided writing, and Paper II encompasses unseen comprehension, grammar, and writing. Each paper is worth 100 marks. English for Today (EFT) is a textbook that has been developed for the contents of paper 1. It is structured around a variety of themes, including human accomplishments in science and technology, mythology and literature, traffic education, human rights, peace, and conflict. The Higher Secondary Certificate exam is the culmination of a two-year program that is administered by five regional education boards. Results of this public exam are crucial for students as they serve as a prerequisite for enrolment in higher educational institutions. For example, the university admission examination requires a total of 200 marks, with 25% derived from HSC test scores. This underscores the significance of these assessments.

This study seeks to understand the language assessment literacy of English language teachers at higher secondary level by exploring their lived experiences through using ethnography research approach. This further examines the assessment practices of these teachers, identifying potential gaps in their literacy, and examining the factors influencing their assessment literacy.

2. Literature Review

Assessment literacy, a term that has evolved over the past three and a half decades, was initially defined as teachers' technical knowledge and skills in psychometric principles and test design. Stiggins (1991) asserts that assessment literacy (AL) is an essential talent for educators because it enables them to understand, evaluate, develop language assessments, and analyze test results. Given their involvement in classroom-based and large-scale assessments, it is advised that they be integrated into teachers' professional development programs (Popham, 2009). In light of the increasing significance of testing and assessment in educational programs worldwide and the apprehensions regarding test misuses or abuses, the literature has reiterated the demand for AL development (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Fulcher, 2012; Hay & Penney, 2013; Siegel & Wissehr, 2011). Assessment literacy includes theoretical and practical knowledge and competence in all aspects related to student learning assessment, including design, administration, grading, evaluation, and impact of various alternatives for classroom and large-scale assessments.

Studies on the assessment literacy and practices of teachers have predominantly concentrated on the definition of these concepts and teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward AL/LAL (Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2018; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 1991; Taylor, 2009; Xu & Brown, 2016). The attitudes of teachers toward assessment were found to be significantly correlated with their knowledge of educational assessment by Quilter & Gallini (2000). Berry et al. (2019) discovered that while instructors believed that evaluation was an essential component of effective instruction, their lack of training with creating assessment problems made them less confident in performing assessment task.

Considering the importance of LAL, in recent years, researchers (Coombe & Davidson, 2021; Coombe et al., 2007; Weng & Shen, 2022; Gan & Lam, 2022; Wang et al., 2023) explored the issue of LAL in different contexts. Öz & Atay (2017) investigated the in-class language assessment literacy of Turkish EFL instructors exploring their perceptions and practices. The study reveals a gap between theoretical understanding of classroom assessment and its actual application, showing a minimal relationship between instructors' experience and their perspective of assessment. In another study, Yastıbaş & Takkaç (2018) conducted research on eight English language instructors at a foundation university in Türkiye and discovered that LAL assists educators in the development of credible assessments that properly evaluate learning outcomes and give constructive feedback. The study underscores the significance of coursebooks as a crucial resource for the formulation of assessments.

Some studies have focused on the teachers' language skills as part of LAL/AL. For example, A survey study on 702 second language writing teachers by Crusan et al. (2016) indicated that instructors' beliefs, practices, and knowledge regarding writing assessment were influenced by their linguistic background and teaching experience. Findings show that teachers with higher linguistic knowledge demonstrated better understanding of writing assessment and varied practices, while less experienced teachers showed greater assessment knowledge. Although the training evidence was found positive here, the study suggests that certain teachers expressed confusion and apprehension about the creation and use of rubrics and writing assessment in general. In contrast, conducting an adapted version of Fulcher (2012)'s LAL survey on 280 Iranian EFL teachers' language assessment literacy Janatifar & Marandi (2018) found that they require more hands-on training in language assessment, beyond theoretical knowledge. This highlights the need for practical training and professional development opportunities for effective classroom assessment practices, Furthermore, Mellati & Khademi (2018) found that instructors' assessment literacy significantly influences learners' writing outcomes, while teachers' assessment awareness fosters effective and motivated assessment design in instructional contexts.

In another study, Yan & Fan (2020) explored how environmental and personal factors affect the growth of language assessment literacy (LAL) among Chinese stakeholders. They identified various LAL characteristics among language testers, EFL instructors, and graduate students through interview data. Although researchers and students possess a more comprehensive understanding of theoretical assessment concepts, EFL instructors possess a more profound knowledge of practical application.

After analyzing the features and impacts of 14 research studies on professional development programs which promoted teachers' language assessment literacy Giraldo (2021a)'s study revealed that teachers broadened their understanding of language assessment, developed proficiency in creating professional instruments, and incorporated a wider range of assessment constructs. Finally these results together accentuate the essential need of continuous professional development in assessment literacy to improve successful teaching and learning. Bøhn & Tsagari (2021)'s study delved into Norwegian teacher educators' perceptions of language assessment literacy (LAL) using Taylor (2013)'s model. Findings of this study emphasized the importance of understanding LAL from various stakeholders' perspectives, particularly teacher educators, who can significantly influence LAL development.

In Bangladesh, Assessment Literacy (AL) is a crucial component of education; nevertheless, research in this area remains limited. Yet, recent research has identified challenges and possibilities for the development of LAL among English language teachers, emphasizing the necessity of additional research in this field (Islam et al., 2021; Khan, 2022; Karmaker, 2020; Rahman & Khan, 2021; Islam et al., 2021; Sultana, 2019). Islam et al. (2021) brought attention to the fact that teachers in Bangladesh do not have enough knowledge of assessment, which is a major obstacle to the implementation of constitutional changes. Additionally, they emphasized the precarious situation of teacher assessment literacy, which is a result of the exclusion of teachers' perspectives in the development of assessment policies. Sultana (2019)'s research on Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) among secondary English educators in Bangladesh identified a substantial deficit attributed to insufficient formal training and dependence on conventional rote learning techniques. The research highlights the need of professional development programs to enhance instructors' evaluation competencies, offering significant insights into practical experiences. Similarly, Karmaker (2020) and Khan (2022) conducted research on the assessment literacy of English teachers at tertiary-level in Bangladesh. Khan (2022) found that they lacked assessment literacy, poor training, and confidence in their methods, which indicates a severe gap in professional growth. Identifying mismatch between learning goals and assessment strategies, Karmaker (2020) brought to light the difficulties that instructors at the university level have when attempting to adopt effective assessment techniques. In another study, Rahman & Khan (2021) found a misalignment between the content of the syllabus and the goals of the curriculum at secondary schools in Bangladesh which often create inaccurate examinations that do not effectively measure the academic success of their students. This leads to teachers "teaching to the test," which in turn causes students to depend on memorization and private tutoring as their primary means of education. Concerns were raised about the accuracy and fairness of assessments as a result of the research, which identified test items that violated validity and reliability criteria.

Islam et al. (2021) investigated the present condition of English language assessment in Bangladesh, analyzing basic concepts, prevalent methods, and obstacles encountered in the field of assessment. They contended that the ineffectiveness of assessment methodologies is a contributing factor to the failure of English language learning in Bangladesh. Furthermore, a continuous disparity between assessment concepts and methods has been identified.

Several studies have been carried out in order to investigate various features of AL and LAL. Nonetheless, to the researcher's best knowledge, there exists an overlooked area for examining language assessment literacy and assessment practices among Bangladeshi English teachers at higher secondary level based on their lived experiences. However conducting research on the validity of English Language Testing at the Higher Secondary Level in Bangladesh, Ali & Sultana (2016) found a significant discrepancy between curriculum objectives and the current test format, and argued that Higher Secondary language tests are largely incapable of accurately measuring their intended constructs. In contrast, this research aims to investigate the current level of assessment literacy among English teachers at higher secondary level and its impact on their assessment practices. Taking into account all of the issues that are now being faced in the field of English language assessment and the relevance of performing research on the teachers' language assessment literacy, the study makes an effort to discover answers to the questions that are listed below.

3. Research Question

1) What is the perception of English teachers at higher secondary level towards language assessment literacy?

2) How does their assessment literacy influence their assessment practices?

4. Theoretical Framework

The research study utilizes LAL as the theoretical framework suggested by Giraldo (2023) to clarify the research results and the associated discussion. Davies (2008) first posits that LAL encompasses knowledge of theories and models of language proficiency, skills in design and educational assessment, ethical principles, and the impact of language testing (Giraldo, 2021a: p. 266). Subsequently, Giraldo (2018, 2021b, 2023) expands this theory by incorporating additional elements into "A Core List of LAL for Language Teacher"s, drawing from established LAL theories developed by researchers over the past 19 years (Boyles, 2005; Brindley, 2001; Davies, 2008; Fulcher, 2012; Giraldo, 2018; Inbar-Lourie, 2008, 2013; Kremmel, & Harding, 2020; Scarino, 2013; Stabler-Havener, 2018; Taylor, 2013; Vogt et al., 2020). The components of **Figure A1** (see **Appendix 1**) are basic elements that academics have utilized to enhance the significance of LAL for language teachers. The components include knowledge, skills and principles. They demonstrate that teachers' expectations regarding their language assessment practices are increasing, which in turn establishes Language Assessment as a high-impact aspect of their professional development.

Giraldo (2021a) added that the LAL framework is suitable enough to be used for the analysis of professional development efforts for teachers. This is due to the fact that such initiatives have the potential to influence teachers' skills, knowledge, or principles for language assessment. The knowledge dimension encompasses language ability models, assessment frameworks, theoretical concepts, second language acquisition theories, personal assessment contexts, ethics, fairness, and impact.

Investigating the assessment literacy of teachers necessitates a multidimensional approach that encompasses knowledge, skills, and principles. The knowledge dimension includes awareness of applied linguistics, assessment theory and concepts, and their own language assessment context. This enables researchers to evaluate educators' understanding of the theoretical foundations of assessment and its practical ramifications within their particular educational contexts. The skills dimension involves designing assessment instruments, including specifications, rubrics, and alternative methods, and test critique, identifying poorly designed items, and evaluating instruments for validity and reliability. Finally the principles dimension emphasizes ethical assessment data use, fair student treatment, democratic practices, transparent assessment systems, critical stance against unethical language use, and awareness of the consequences of assessment systems, both intended and unintended. By ensuring that instructors' assessment practices are consistent with the overarching educational principles, this dimension fosters equitable outcomes for all students. This paper employs LAL's three components (see **Appendix 1**) for exploring the teachers' perceptions towards language assessment literacy and assessment practices of 10 Bangladeshi higher secondary English teachers using an ethnographic research approach.

5. Methodology

This study is an exploratory qualitative study that has used an ethnographic approach to explore assessment practices among 10 English teachers teaching at Higher Secondary levels in Chattogram city in Bangladesh. The sample of this research described was diverse in terms of age, gender, level of education, length of profession, which yielded a comprehensive understanding of their language assessment literacy and practices (see **Appendix 2**). A purposeful snowball sampling strategy was employed to collect data. Snowball sampling, a type of purposeful sampling, is particularly useful for identifying "the best people to study because of the complexity of events" (Creswell, 2012: p. 209). Data were collected from 10 English teachers teaching at Higher Secondary levels in Chattogram city in Bangladesh. The respondents vary in their academic background and teaching experience. Pseudonyms are used to protect their identity and privacy.

This study used interviews and observation as the data collection instruments. At first, two rounds of semi-structured interviews are used to gain in-depth information about how and to what extent English language teachers of this study develop their language assessment literacy and how they implement them in actual assessment practices since they start their job. Most of these interviews were conducted in Bangla, English as per the choice of the participants. Next, after each of the interviews the observational tool takes the researcher beyond the interview for a firsthand look at the actual assessment practices of participants. Some question papers and outline of continuous assessment from the teachers have been collected to perceive their real assessment practices as part of our observation research method. The focus of the observation includes assessment practices and assessment formats that participants described during the interviews and so on.

Interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim which included everything the interviewer and interviewee said, word-for-word. Afterwards, the data were coded based on emerging themes related to the research questions. The analysis of data in this study was based on thematic analysis which is known as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p. 79). The researcher wrote summaries of each theme and included extensive direct quotations from the interviews to illustrate and validate her points in constructing the themes. The next stage was to analyse and report on each theme in detail to "...identify the 'essence' of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: p. 92). The selected quotations, which were in Bangla in the interviews, were translated into English to use them in the findings section of this article.

6. Findings of This Study

This section analyses the interview and observation data on how and to what extent English teachers of this study develop their assessment literacy and assessment practices including their preferences. It will also discuss what types of difficulties or differences they face in their assessment practices. Finally, the analysis will focus on the types of strategies they employ in making their practices successful.

6.1. LAL-Knowledge: Perception towards Language Assessment Literacy

Language assessment literacy (LAL) denotes the knowledge, skills, and principles necessary for contextualized language assessment (Giraldo, 2018, 2021a, 2021b; Davies, 2008). Findings of this study show that participants of this study demonstrated a flawed or limited understanding. When asked about the principles of assessment one of the participants stated,

Assessment means evaluating answer scripts, and we received training on how to evaluate exam answer scripts before joining the service. [T05] To be honest I am not quite clear about these terminologies. I think assessment means conducting exam at the end of the year. [T07] I think testing and assessment are synonymous. They are important for students' promotion to the next class. Without assessment how can we publish results. [T09]

Assessment is an umbrella term. A teacher can assess student in many ways. Though our assessment is mostly summative I try to conduct quiz test and class test and give feedback to my students. [T3]

The above examples show that the teachers of this study have a narrow understanding about language assessment and they mostly associate it with testing exclusively. While the participants show their lack of assessment knowledge, its core concepts, and principles, T3, the experienced participant exhibited a better understanding of assessment. Language assessment literacy encompasses knowledge of language and methodologies like communicative teaching, multilingual learners, and content-based language teaching, as argued by Davies (2008) and Inbar-Lourie (2008). Giraldo (2021a) also added that the first component of LAL namely knowledge includes language ability models, assessment frameworks, theoretical concepts, second language acquisition theories, teaching pedagogy, personal assessment contexts, and some critical issues: ethical, fairness, and impact.

From the responses of the participants, it can be inferred that the participant has a limited perspective on knowledge of assessment as per the criteria of Giraldo (2021a). Though teachers spend a lot of their professional activities in assessment-related activities their concept of assessment is not clear. An analysis of the

responses shows that teachers' previous educational background plays a major role in shaping their understanding. As most of the participants are graduated from English literature, they lack theoretical knowledge of language teaching and assessment. Conversely, participants with MA degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT) demonstrate a better grasp of assessment concepts, principles, and key terms, including formative and summative assessment. This may be linked to a lack of educational background and training in language acquisition and language learning, particularly in preservice teacher education. This is consistent with the findings of some studies who report the feelings of under-preparedness among teachers in language acquisition and express a need for training in all domains, including knowledge, skills, and principles (Giraldo & Murcia, 2019; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014).

Findings of this research demonstrate inadequate or often no professional training in assessment and related concepts for higher secondary-level English teachers. Some teachers reported receiving training sessions before and during their service covering topics like teaching methods, classroom management, and student interaction, but none specifically focused on assessment skills and principles. Teachers responsible for setting questions for public exams received a two-day long workshop organized by the respective exam board. One teacher recalled receiving training before joining the service on creative question-making, but this training was not exclusive to English language teachers and included teachers from various subjects. He stated:

For professional training, I haven't had any training or workshop specifically on Testing and Assessment in Language. So far as I can recall about a oneday training Program which was about Creative Question Setting but I can't call it as Training on Testing and Assessment. [T02]

Interview data show that the lack of training causes them unaware of assessment literacy and may result in an over dependence on conventional testing formats. Similarly, Ahmad (2022) found that the teacher training programs implemented by the government and private groups to acclimate English teachers at Higher secondary level to the newly approved CLT curriculum have not produced favourable results due to the traditional instructor centred training approach. He suggests that the provided teacher training should be reflective, interactive and must be aligned with appropriate content and applied knowledge to make them effective for the teachers. Participants of this study have also suggested that the training program should be iterative and related to the practical knowledge in their classroom pedagogy such as effective teaching methods, syllabus and classroom material design and assessment practices based on personal assessment contexts. Research shows that professional development is a multifaceted, iterative learning process for teachers, influenced by factors like pre- and in-service education, duration, content knowledge, training models, opportunities, ongoing teaching experience, professional standards, school participation, and collaboration with colleagues (Christoforidou & Kyriakides, 2021; Pastore, 2023). Fulcher (2012) and Jeong (2013) both emphasize the importance of teachers seeking special training in the design of assessment instruments. They found that teachers prefer clarity and practical examples over abstract notions, and they often learn from experienced peers to compensate for their lack of preservice or in-service training in language assessment. Similarly, the participants of the study reported that they encountered difficulties in the initial stages of evaluating the exam script and questions paper due to the dearth of training they received prior to commencing their employment. In addition, they stated that they sought help from their more senior colleagues when they experienced any issues. The senior professors said that they had cultivated assessment skills via their years of experience in administering examinations, including question formulation and script evaluation.

6.2. LAL-Skills: Limited Diversity in Assessment Formats

The second dimension of Giraldo (2018)'s LAL framework focuses on the skills of conducting various forms of assessment. Interview data indicate a lack of diversity in assessment formats, with a heavy reliance on end of year written exams and a neglect of alternative approaches such as oral presentations, group discussions, and listening comprehension tasks. This limited variety fails to accommodate the diverse learning styles and strengths of students, potentially disadvantaging those who excel in oral communication or collaborative activities. Furthermore, it restricts opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate a broader range of language skills. The interview data reveal that teachers of this group adhere to the traditional evaluation method and the directives issued by the national education board. Additionally, they are unaware of any rubrics and hardly possess the ability to develop assessment assignments for the English exam in a manner that is tailored to the students' needs or the context. The observation data suggest that they exhibit little capability to evaluate assessment instruments based on language assessment criteria, namely reliability, validity, authenticity, and practicality, as well as to recognize inadequately prepared test items. Hence it is evident that teachers of this study lack the assessment literacy in terms of skills criteria that are conceptualised in Giraldo (2021a: p. 267) which states that LAL skills involve designing assessment instruments specifying items and tasks, creating rubrics and criteria, using alternative methods, interpreting statistics and score, and conducting test critiques identifying poorly designed items, and evaluating assessment instruments for validity and reliability.

6.3. LAL-Principles: Preference for Summative Assessment

Findings of this study describe that most teachers fail to distinguish between formative and summative assessment, with some equating assessment solely with the question setting and evaluating answer scripts. Research shows that language teachers prioritize linguistic competence, rely on traditional assessment methods, and avoid alternative assessments like peer-assessment (Giraldo, 2021a). However, they believe assessment should serve formative purposes and impact teaching and learning (Babaii & Asadnia, 2019; López & Bernal, 2009; Sultana, 2019). For this study, all participating teachers reported having experience in performing assessment-related tasks. Among them, one teacher reported his involvement in setting question papers for public examinations while the rest were engaged in setting questions and evaluating scripts of internal college exams. Notably, most of the participants emphasized summative assessment in their practice. Their preference for summative assessment was highlighted in the data. For example,

Usually, we adopt summative assessment to measure our students' language proficiency, and we have some kind of obligation to take it at the end of the course or session. [T3]

However, the centralized nature of the education system also restricts teachers' autonomy in designing assessments that fully align with their classroom instruction. This constraint often forces teachers to rely on standardized test formats, such as previous years' board exam questions. For example:

I adhere to the sample formats of previous years' board exam questions, and I am bound by the constraints of those formats. I consult guidebooks available in the market for inspiration, but I do not simply copy the questions. Instead, I edit and modify them to enhance their quality and raise the standard. [T02]

Despite such limitations, teachers who have experience in setting questions for board exams reported having a degree of autonomy. One such teacher (T07) explained,

We have significant autonomy in setting questions, but we are bound by the boundaries and instructions set forth by the board and ministry.

This suggests that while teachers may have some freedom to change the contents and format of board exam questions, they are ultimately constrained by the overarching guidelines and objectives set by the higher authorities. The tension between teacher autonomy and standardized assessment practices also extends to classroom assessments. Teachers reported having greater freedom to design formative assessments but encountered challenges when attempting to implement more innovative approaches. One teacher (T03) shared:

We have freedom and autonomy when designing classroom assessments like formative tests. We offer students various question types, including multiple choice, gap filling, and both open and closed-ended questions. However, in an exam-oriented education system, students may find it tedious when we deviate from the standard test formats.

This finding underscores a key dilemma faced by teachers in Bangladesh's education system. While they may be encouraged to employ diverse and engaging assessment strategies in their classrooms, the prevailing emphasis on standardized testing and rote learning can create resistance among students accustomed to traditional formats.

6.4. Impact of LAL on Assessment Practice

The last dimension of Giraldo (2021a)'s framework is principles which focuses on the practice of assessment literacy. According to the theoretical framework, the principles of assessment encompass ethical use of data, fair treatment of students, democratic practices, transparency, a critical stance against unethical language assessment, and awareness of the consequences of assessment systems, both intended and unintended. Even if teachers have a solid understanding of assessment ideas, the question remains whether or not they successfully implement those principles. The study observed them to investigate how teachers incorporate concepts like validity, reliability, and fairness into their assessment design. Findings suggested that even when teachers were aware of assessment concepts, they did not always consistently implement them. Challenges such as time pressure, large class sizes, and a focus on high-stakes exams could lead to assessments which were misaligned with the learning goals or best practices. One Teacher Stated that:

We have a large class size in Bangladesh as well as fewer resources. Despite having the intention of doing something good to uplift the learning and skills of the students but we can't do everything we want for our limitation. [T05]

The interview data further reveals that the prevalent exam-oriented education system in Bangladesh significantly influences classroom assessment practices. Language assessment is restricted to the assessment of reading and writing skills only. This narrowed focus on assessment has a negative backwash effect on learners. Because of the large class sizes and small number of teachers at each institution, students rarely express any interest in honing their speaking and listening skills. Teachers find it extremely challenging to assess two skills because they are not trained to do so with the limited resources available. Teachers are under pressure to prepare students for high-stakes exams and allocate a disproportionate amount of instructional time and assessment resources to reading and writing tasks. As a result, speaking and listening activities are frequently neglected or relegated to a secondary role in the classroom.

This lack of emphasis on oral communication skills in assessment practices can have far-reaching consequences. Students may graduate from higher secondary institutions with limited proficiency in real-world communication scenarios, hindering their academic and professional prospects. Moreover, this neglect can perpetuate a cycle of under-preparedness, as teachers who received limited instruction in speaking and listening may struggle to incorporate these skills into their teaching practices. To address this issue, it is imperative to advocate for a more balanced and holistic approach to assessment that recognizes the importance of all language skills, including speaking and listening. This could involve implementing a wider range of assessment formats, such as oral presentations, group discussions, and listening comprehension tasks, alongside traditional written exams.

The findings of this study illuminate a complex landscape of assessment literacy among higher secondary English language teachers in Bangladesh. Teachers' educational background plays a central role in shaping their assessment literacy. A significant knowledge gap regarding key assessment concepts and principles is evident among the respondents. Most of the participants are unfamiliar with assessment principles such as reliability and validity. Additionally, the distinction between formative and summative assessment is not clear to most of the teachers. Moreover, findings of the current study align with the findings of some of the previous studies in the Bangladesh context. Rahman & Khan (2021) identify the lack of assessment literacy among teachers as a significant barrier to assessment reform in Bangladesh. The study further reveals a notable tension between teacher autonomy and the constraints imposed by a centralized education system. While teachers are involved in the design of assessments, their autonomy is frequently limited by standardized formats and the pressure to conform to board exam expectations. This constraint can hinder their ability to implement innovative assessment strategies and tailor assessments to the specific needs of their classrooms.

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The study investigated the level of assessment literacy among the higher secondary level English teachers in Bangladesh using the theoretical framework of Giraldo (2021a). The findings reveal that teachers usually view language assessment from a practice-based perspective, which involves administering tests in accordance with education board rules and regulations. They often learn from experienced colleagues to compensate for their lack of assessment literacy, including knowledge, skills, and practice. Analysis suggests significant opportunities for improvement in the assessment methods used by higher secondary English teachers in Bangladesh, with critical ramifications for both practice and policy via diverse pragmatic and contemporary preservice or in-service training.

In terms of practice, professional development programs for English language teachers should prioritize assessment literacy. These programs should cover both theoretical concepts and practical applications, equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to design valid, reliable, and fair assessments (Brown, 2004; Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Teachers should participate in a variety of regular pre- and in-service training programs in order to build an understanding of the assessments that must correspond with learners need and context, and to develop strategies to promote academic development for students.

There is also a need to shift away from a narrow focus on written exams towards a more holistic and diversified approach to assessment. Teachers should be encouraged to incorporate various assessment formats, including those that evaluate speaking and listening skills. This will ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of student learning. Furthermore, assessments should be aligned with broader learning objectives, moving beyond rote memorization. This involves focusing on critical thinking, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Lastly, teachers should provide timely and constructive feedback to students. This feedback should help students understand their strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for improvement, thereby fostering continuous learning and development.

There is a need to re-evaluate the current assessment landscape in Bangladesh. Policies should encourage the use of diverse assessment formats and empower teachers to design assessments tailored to their specific contexts. A more decentralized approach could further empower teachers to design assessments that foster a broader range of skills beyond rote memorization. Additionally, teachers should be granted greater flexibility and autonomy in designing assessments that are both valid and aligned with their instructional goals. This shift in policy would support the development of more comprehensive and effective assessment practices in the education system.

This study investigated the assessment literacy of 10 Higher Secondary Level English teachers from five colleges in the Chattogram region of Bangladesh. Given the limited sample size, the findings cannot be generalized to the entire country. However, they have identified a potential lack of assessment literacy among language teachers in similar settings, particularly in low-performing and rural colleges. This study contributes significantly to the field of assessment literacy by providing a unique perspective on the Bangladeshi context. The exploration of language assessment literacy among Bangladeshi English teachers underscores the need for extensive further research in this area. While this small-scale study does not definitively establish a lack of assessment literacy among the 10 participating teachers, their perspectives, opinions, and classroom practices raise concerns about the quality of their knowledge, skills, and practices related to language assessment. The results of the research shed light on a number of significant problems and corresponding suggestions that are all connected to the possibility of low levels in assessment literacy among higher school teachers.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Appendix 1: Knowledge, Skills, and Principles in Language Assessment for Teachers (Adapted from Giraldo, 2021a)

Knowledge	Skills	Principles
 models describing language ability frameworks for doing language assessment, e.g., criterionreferenced purposes and theoretical concepts relevant theories in second language acquisition and language teaching pedagogy personal assessment contexts, which include practices and beliefs critical issues such as ethics, fairness, and impact 	 Design of assessment instruments assessment specifications items and tasks rubrics with criteria alternative assessment instruments, e.g., peer- assessment protocols statistics and score interpretation Test critique identification of poorly designed items evaluation of assessment instruments against qualities such as validity and reliability 	 ethical use of assessment data fair treatment of students democratic practices in which students can share their voice transparent practices to inform the nature of assessment systems and their consequences critical stance towards unfair or unethical uses of language assessment awareness of consequences (both intended and unintended) of assessment systems

Figure A1. Examples of Knowledge, Skills, and Principles in Language Assessment for Teachers (Adapted from Giraldo, 2021a).

Appendix 2: Participant Details

Teacher ID	Academic Degrees	Gender	Designation	Specialization on Assessment/Testing	Teaching Experience
T01	BA and MA in English	М	Professor in English	×	22
T02	BA and MA in English, MA in EDU	М	Assistant Professor in English	Yes	13
T03	BA and MA in English, MA in ELT	F	Associate Professor in English	Yes	15
T04	BA and MA in English	М	Associate Professor in English	×	18
T05	BA and MA in English	М	Lecturer in English	×	05
T06	BA and MA in English	М	Lecturer in English	×	07
T07	BA and MA in English	М	Lecturer in English	×	04
T08	BA and MA in English, MA in EDU	F	Assistant Professor in English	Yes	10
T09	BA and MA in English		Lecturer in English	×	02
T10	BA and MA in English	F	Assistant Professor in English	×	11