

Language Teaching Research Quarterly

2024, Vol. 45, 22–38



The Exploration of EFL Preservice Teachers' Self-Perceived Importance of Assessment Literacy

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Received 17 June 2024

Accepted 15 October 2024

Abstract

It is fundamental for language teachers to assess their students' performance. Therefore, they should be familiar with various forms of assessments because teaching and assessing languages are closely related and have a great deal to do with one another. This study examined EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of assessment literacy at a medium-sized university in South Korea, employing a survey questionnaire of self-perceived language assessment. The survey results reveal significant variability in the confidence levels of EFL preservice teachers across six domains of assessment literacy, with the highest confidence in preventing cheating and the lowest in constructing tests for advanced learners. Challenges in communicating assessment results, particularly with parents, indicate a need for professional development in communication strategies. While ethical practices and digital assessment literacy show strong commitment and proficiency, areas like avoiding "teaching to the test" and designing online tests require further training to ensure comprehensive assessment capabilities. Such an investigation in this study will assist in spreading the significance of assessment literacy and its results on teaching and learning. The implication of the study is expected to improve the policies and practices in the field of education.

Keywords: *Assessment Literacy, EFL Preservice Teachers, Language Education, Teacher Education*

How to cite this article (APA 7th Edition):

Park, E. (2024). The exploration of EFL preservice teachers' self-perceived importance of assessment literacy. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, 45, 22-38. <https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2024.45.02>

Introduction

Assessment has been crucial in the field of education, in which teachers are required to make decisions on instructional activities and grading for student accomplishments and academic progress towards learning outcomes (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018; Cheng et al., 2004; Vogt et

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<https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2024.45.02>

al., 2020; Wilson, 1996; Xu & Brown, 2016). Assessment is acknowledged as a vital part of teacher professionalism (Giraldo, 2018; Tian et al., 2021). Therefore, classroom-based assessment should be conducted by well-grounded teachers and educators with theoretical and applicable procedures along with its significance and effectiveness. (Brookhart, 2003; Cheng et al., 2008; McMillan, 2003).

It is critical for teachers to establish learning environments in which both teachers and students are fully functioning and effective evaluators during instruction (Volante & Fazio, 2007). Language assessment proficiency with sound evaluation practices is an essential skill for quality teaching and learning within accountable educational contexts. Therefore, language assessment is a fundamental part of instructional and pedagogical processes. It helps teachers to understand their students' language abilities and to plan lessons that meet their needs. Because teachers normally conduct language assessment in the classroom setting, it is essential to address the issues and concerns of assessment literacy to the effectiveness of teaching (William, 2011), the quality of student learning (DeLuca & Klinger, 2010; Lile & Bran, 2014; Mertler, 2004, 2009; White, 2009) and student learning motivation and strategies (Alkharusi, 2013). Student achievement is closely relevant to sound assessment practices (Campbell & Collins, 2007; Mertler, 2004).

However, many EFL teachers still have a limited understanding of assessment details in teaching and learning (Malone, 2013; Yin & Park, 2023). Several researchers (Al-Bahlani, 2019; Alkharusi, 2011; Ukrayinska, 2024; Xu & Brown, 2017) have called for further research on assessment literacy due to a dearth of their assessment knowledge and skills. Furthermore, some teacher education programs have difficulty in training preservice teachers well to undertake desirable classroom assessment practices, and assessment training is scarce in teacher education programs (DeLuca & Bellara, 2013; Popham, 2009; Stiggins, 2010). Teachers' assessment practices are also discrepant to suggested practice of assessment (Galluzzo, 2005; Mertler, 2004). For these reasons, "many of today's teachers know little about educational assessment" (Popham, 2009, p. 5) and teachers generally have a dearth of confidence in their assessment practices (Malone, 2013; Volante & Fazio, 2007). This discrepancy may be attributed to unsound training of assessment practices in teacher education (Bachor & Baer, 2001; Graham, 2005), which may lead to poor quality of education. This may be real in teacher education programs in Korea due to a dearth of information about teacher assessment literacy. There has also been little research on the development of assessment literacy in language education in Korea (Chung & Nam, 2018).

The capacity of the scope of assessment and evaluation is a crucial feature to guarantee the success of teacher education programs (Popham, 2009; Volante & Fazio, 2007). With the recent trend towards standards-based curriculum and assessment, focusing on teacher assessment literacy will guarantee the development and professionalism of teachers and the enhancement of teaching and learning. It may be true that "an ounce of assessment literacy promotion may act as a pound of retention cure" (Volante & Fazio, 2007, p. 762). Engaging preservice teachers with concentration on the needs of assessment training and education will be a step in the preferable direction to the improvement and development of teaching and learning. In the long run, this study will have a significant effect on assessment practices of preservice teachers and, therefore, on the achievement of students in language education in

Korea. In this regard, this study explored EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of assessment literacy to fill a gap in practice and research. The guiding research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How do different domains of teacher assessment practices interrelate, and what factors contribute to their mutual influence among preservice teachers?

RQ2: What is the perceived importance of assessment literacy among EFL preservice teachers?

Literature Review

Assessment Literacy

Assessment literacy refers to “the knowledge skills and principles that stakeholders involved in assessment activities are required to master in order to perform assessment tasks” (p. 257). The emergence of a literacy framework in language assessment has become crucial based on teachers' needs and stakeholders' requirements in decision-making (Inbar-Lourie, 2017). Assessment literacy is a domain of increasing proficiency in reading and writing and a repertoire of competence for assessment stakeholders to understand, evaluate, create, and interpret all the procedures of language assessment (Pill & Harding, 2013). A few studies (Chung & Nam, 2018; Giraldo & Murcia, 2018; Lam, 2019; Mohammadkhah et al., 2022; Xie, 2021; Yastıbaş & Takkaç, 2018) put assessment literacy pedagogy of language learning into the spotlight. Lam's (2015) study investigated the developmental pathway of preservice teachers' language assessment literacy in a professional development program of a teacher education institution in Hong Kong. Such analysis led to the conclusion that the deficiency of language assessment training caused the reaching of the theory-practice gap during the process of language assessment. Giraldo and Murcia's (2018) study encompassed the influence of language testing courses for preservice teachers in a language teaching course in Colombia. A combination of theory and practice of language assessment with characteristics of language teaching methods and policy regulations for evaluation were shown as essential. Yastıbaş and Takkaç's (2018) qualitative explorations of Turkish educators' assessment literacy has revealed that assessment literacy is the key in designing robust, reliable, and valid language assessments with a positive washback effect on student outcomes. Xie's (2021) design-based research described the process of a test development project to enhance preservice English teachers' assessment literacy in Hong Kong. The study results revealed that the participants generally had a positive attitude towards the innovative development of assessment literacy in language education but suggested further research and development of assessment literacy. Chung and Nam's (2018) study was the only study focusing on language assessment literacy of Korean English language teachers. This study investigated perceptions of Korean EFL teachers' language assessment literacy skills regarding training experiences and their needs. The results showed that a dearth of training in language assessment literacy made EFL teachers discounted with the development of strategies for practical assessment skills. The study implied that teacher training on language assessment is crucial for EFL teachers to foster quality language assessment practices.

Another component of assessment literacy that should be included is digital assessment literacy, implying “the role of the teacher as an assessor in a technology-rich environment” (Eyal, 2012, p. 37). Teachers currently encounter various types of assessments in digital environments. Assessment literacy should also be adapted and designed for pedagogical approaches in the digital environment. Eyal's (2012) study framed digital assessment literacy

to measure teacher assessment abilities and skills and demonstrated the adaptation of various technologies for different assessment purposes. Eval's level of digital assessment literacy is a threshold of teacher quality and professional development of digital and technology use. Teachers need to acquire and understand knowledge and skills of technology in the digital environment. Digital assessment literacy has not been widely acknowledged yet; thus, its area should be further researched in the 21st century digital era.

Recent studies (i.e., Estaji, 2024; Ukrayinska, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024) discussed issues of language assessment literacy for preservice and in-service language teachers all over the world. Estaji's (2024) study explored EAP teachers' perceptions towards the need for professional development in different aspects of language assessment and the effect of the proposed language assessment teacher education course on the knowledge of language assessment in Tehran state universities that were investigated. The study established that EAP instructors had a high perception of a need for intense training. Furthermore, the instructors viewed the teacher education courses as an introduction into the theoretical and practical understanding of assessment literacy. Therefore, there is a prerequisite need for teacher education courses which emphasize assessment literacy, i.e., shifting EAP teachers' assessment literacy beliefs within authentic classroom settings.

Ukrayinska's (2024) study aims to address the development of language assessment literacy in preservice teachers across Ukrainian universities. It focuses on examining how current approaches to teacher training in Ukraine foster assessment literacy through an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach. The study provides a detailed description of the Ukrainian teacher training system and its assessment literacy-related components, analyzing educational programs and curricula from universities offering preservice teacher preparation. It also outlines the didactic conditions that facilitate assessment literacy acquisition and suggests that the synergies observed in the Ukrainian model may offer valuable insights for improving assessment literacy development in other European universities.

Zhang et al.'s (2024) study identified new areas of knowledge regarding language assessment and training in order to develop appropriate strategies for increasing language teachers' assessment literacy. Four dimensions identified include language assessment for learning, language assessment in pedagogy, technical skills, and assessment principles and concepts in language pedagogy. 871 English university instructors responded to the survey. Analyzing the results, the authors found that the differences in assessment literacy development needs between the various groups of teachers decreased with the growth of the number of years they spent teaching. The participants showed their self-confidence of assessment literacy in practice. However, more professional development was required in terms of the understanding of assessment principles, assessment concepts, and psychometric analysis of language assessment.

As can be seen, current research demonstrated that preservice and inservice language teachers were aware of language assessment literacy. Estaji's (2024) study enlightens the importance of intensive professional development for EAP teachers, since they also need theoretical and practical guidelines in assessment literacy. Similarly, Ukrayinska's (2024) study pointed to an advantage of an integrative, interdisciplinary model of assessment literacy deployment in Ukrainian university training applicable to the future throughout the whole of Europe. Zhang et al.'s (2024) study addressed specific domains including teaching practices,

technology application, and psychological assessment to which in-service teachers require further professional development. The study also shows that teachers' self-efficacy in assessment literacy rises with experience. Altogether, the findings provided in these studies underpin the necessity of targeted teacher education courses, continuous professional development, and contextually based strategies for empowering professionals all around the globe to develop sound language assessment literacy.

Methodology

Research Design

Survey methods are a widely used tool in educational research to collect data on individuals' beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics with the involvement of designing a questionnaire that respondents can complete, either in written form or electronically (Creswell, 2015; Fowler, 2014). The use of quantitative data offers accurate and factual results. In particular, this study employed online survey questionnaires via Google Forms.

Context and Participants

This study was conducted in the Department of English Language Education at a medium-sized national university in South Korea. The focus of the research was on preservice teachers who were majoring in English language education. These preservice teachers were enrolled in two required courses during the research period: "Logic and Essay Writing of English Education" and "Material Design and Methods." These courses were designed to help preservice teachers develop their writing skills and learn about effective teaching methodologies, respectively.

A total of 110 preservice teachers participated in this study. The data collection methods included an online survey and interviews, which allowed for both quantitative and qualitative insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions. Out of the 110 participants, 79 were female, making up 71.8% of the group, while 31 were male, accounting for 28.2%. The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 26 years, indicating that they were primarily young adults in the early stages of their teaching careers.

Despite being enrolled in a teacher preparation program, most of the participants had limited formal teaching experience, as they were still college students. However, a number of them had acquired practical teaching experience through private instruction and tutoring roles. Specifically, 28 participants had worked as private instructors, where they likely taught small groups or individuals in informal settings. Additionally, 26 participants had experience working as private tutors, offering one-on-one instruction in subjects such as English language skills. Thirty-six of the preservice teachers had participated in volunteer teaching activities, which may have involved teaching underprivileged or underserved communities. In contrast, 20 participants reported having no teaching experience at all at the time of the research, highlighting the varying levels of practical experience within the group.

The demographic data collected and summarized in Table 1 provided a detailed overview of the participants, including their gender distribution, age range, and diverse levels of teaching experience. These demographic variables were important for understanding the participants' backgrounds and could have implications for their responses to the survey for their perceptions of the teaching profession. This study aimed to capture the unique perspectives of EFL

preservice teachers in South Korea, considering their academic preparation, prior teaching experiences, and readiness for the challenges of the teaching profession.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

Demography	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	79	71.8
	Male	31	28.2
Age	21-22 years old	54	49.0
	23-24 years old	47	42.8
	25-26 years old	9	8.2
Teaching Experience	Private instructor	28	25.5
	Private tutor	26	23.6
	Volunteering teacher	36	32.7
	No experience	20	18.2

Data Collection and Analysis

This study employed a survey questionnaire adapted from Al-Bahlani's (2019) study on assessment literacy. The online questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms. Forty survey items ask preservice teachers' perceptions of assessment literacy, including the domains of 1) assessment construction and administration, 2) assessment performance, 3) grading, 4) communicating assessment results with others, 5) assessment ethics, and 6) digital assessment literacy. Each domain includes five to seven assessment statements. Each statement is answered with five Likert scales from "very competent (5)" to "never competent (1)". The reliability of the surveyed data was estimated on the total sample (N=110). The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.91 for all the items. The reliability statistics range indicated a relatively high level of internal consistency.

The data of the survey questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively with descriptive and inferential statistics. All questionnaire items were tabulated and analyzed statistically using SPSS to calculate their frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics were calculated after screening and selecting the data to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient, Pearson's r , was computed to quantify the strength and direction of the relationship between the survey items. To ensure ethical considerations, the participants were not threatened in any way, and all the processes in the study were sanctioned by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). All participants' written informed consent to engage in this study was presented to everyone, concerning all such activities as data collection and use for research and publication. The privacy and anonymity of the participants were guaranteed to boost their reliability and confidence. This risk issue was overcome during the research phase as security was monitored.

Results

Descriptive Statistics of the Domains of Assessment Literacy

The descriptive statistics for the six domains assessed in the study are presented in Table 2. The results indicate that, on average, participants rated their proficiency in all domains between 3.84 and 4.14. The domain of Assessment Ethics had the highest mean score (M=4.14, SD=0.62), followed by the grading domain (M=3.98, SD=0.55). Other domains, such as

Assessment Performance (M=3.94, SD=0.57), Digital Assessment Literacy (M=3.91, SD=0.71), Communication (M=3.88, SD=0.60), and Assessment Construction/Administration (M=3.84, SD=0.64), also had relatively high mean scores. The range of scores across all domains was generally broad, with some participants rating themselves as low as 1 or 2, and others rating themselves as high as 5.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics*

Domain	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Construction&Administration	110	3.84	.64	2	5
Performance	110	3.94	.57	2	5
Grading	110	3.98	.55	2	5
Communication	110	3.88	.60	2	5
Ethics	110	4.14	.62	1	5
Digital Assessment Literacy	110	3.91	.71	1	5

Interrelation and Influencing Factors of Preservice Teachers' Assessment Practices

Correlational analysis was conducted to answer the first research question. The correlational analysis of the six domains assessed in the study is presented in Table 3. The domain of Construction & Administration was highly correlated with Performance ($r=0.79$), Grading ($r=0.66$), Communication ($r=0.67$), and Digital Assessment Literacy ($r=0.57$). It showed a moderate correlation with Ethics ($r=0.38$). Performance showed strong correlations with Construction & Administration ($r = 0.79$), Grading ($r=0.74$), Communication ($r=0.69$), and Digital Assessment Literacy ($r=0.70$). It had a moderate correlation with Ethics ($r=0.53$). Grading had strong correlations with Performance ($r=0.74$), Communication ($r=0.68$), and Digital Assessment Literacy ($r=0.69$). It also correlated moderately with Ethics ($r=0.58$) and Construction & Administration ($r=0.66$). Communication correlated strongly with Performance ($r=0.69$), Grading ($r=0.68$), and Digital Assessment Literacy ($r=0.69$). It had a moderate correlation with Ethics ($r=0.54$) and Construction & Administration ($r=0.67$). Ethics had moderate correlations with all other domains: Performance ($r=0.53$), Grading ($r=0.58$), Communication ($r=0.54$), Digital Assessment Literacy ($r=0.66$), and Construction & Administration ($r=0.38$). Digital Assessment Literacy showed strong correlations with Performance ($r=0.70$), Grading ($r=0.69$), Communication ($r=0.69$), and Ethics ($r=0.66$). It also had a moderate correlation with Construction & Administration ($r=0.57$). Overall, the analysis indicates significant positive correlations among all six domains, with the highest correlations observed between Construction & Administration and Performance ($r=0.79$), and the lowest significant correlation between Construction & Administration and Ethics ($r=0.38$). These findings suggest that participants who rated themselves highly in one domain tended to rate themselves highly in other domains as well.

Table 3*The Correlations between the Assessment Domains*

Domain	Construction & Administration	Performance	Grading	Communication	Ethics	Digital Assessment Literacy
Construction & Administration	1	.79**	.66**	.67**	.38**	.57**
Performance	.79**	1	.74**	.69**	.53**	.70**
Grading	.66**	.74**	1	.68**	.58**	.69**
Communication	.67**	.69**	.68**	1	.54**	.69**
Ethics	.38**	.53**	.58**	.54**	1	.66**
Digital Assessment Literacy	.57**	.70**	.69**	.69**	.66**	1

** : $p < 0.01$

Preservice Teachers' Self-Perceived Importance of Assessment Literacy

Survey results showed EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of assessment literacy. There are six domains of assessment literacy: 1) assessment construction and administration, 2) assessment performance, 3) grading, 4) communicating assessment results with others, 5) assessment ethics, and 6) digital assessment literacy.

The first domain is assessment construction and administration. The participants rated their proficiency in assessment construction and administration fairly high across all items, with some variation in confidence levels for specific tasks. The standard deviations for the items range from 0.72 to 0.95, indicating varying levels of agreement among participants. The item with the highest mean score is "determining if a test is valid for classroom assessment" ($M=3.99$, $SD=0.76$), indicating that participants felt most confident in this area, while the item with the lowest mean score is "writing test questions that suit the level of high-achieving students" ($M=3.63$, $SD=0.95$), suggesting that the participants found this aspect of meeting the student's high level more challenging.

Table 4*Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Construction & Administration*

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1. Choosing the appropriate methods for classroom assessment	110	3.85	.72	2	5
2. Using assessment guidelines to plan assessment	110	3.93	.85	1	5
3. Writing clear test instructions	110	3.76	.93	1	5
4. Constructing written tests based on instructional objectives and students' abilities	110	3.84	.81	1	5
5. Determining if a test is valid for classroom assessment	110	3.99	.76	1	5
6. Using assessment results in developing treatment plans for low-achieving students	110	3.85	.79	1	5
7. Writing test questions that suit the level of high achieving students	110	3.63	.95	1	5

The second domain is assessment performance. In Table 5, "assessing class participation" received the highest rating ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.62$), indicating that it is the most favored assessment method among those evaluated. "Assessing students' learning through oral questions" had the lowest ($M=3.68$, $SD=0.87$) among other items of assessment performance. "Using the rating scale/checklist while observing students' performance" receives the second highest rating ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.65$). Other methods of assessment performance, while generally

positive, showed some variability in their perception. The diversity in opinions highlights the need for a flexible approach in student assessment, accommodating different preferences and teaching contexts.

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Performance

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
8. Assessing class participation	110	4.24	.62	3	5
9. Assessing students learning through oral questions	110	3.68	.87	2	5
10. Developing performance assessment methods	110	3.99	.81	2	5
11. Defining rating scales and rubrics for performance assessment	110	3.87	.86	1	5
12. Communicating performance assessment criteria to students in advance	110	3.99	.79	1	5
13. Assigning hands-on activities (e.g., projects, presentations)	110	3.91	.82	2	5
14. Using the rating scale/checklist while observing students' performance	110	4.02	.65	2	5
15. Assessing individual hands-on activities	110	3.90	.76	2	5
16. Assessing students' learning through observation	110	3.92	.85	2	5
17. Allowing students to choose the assessment task they prefer among various assessment tasks	110	3.84	.83	2	5

The third domain is grading. The item “avoiding bias (personal preferences) in grading” had the highest mean score ($M=4.30$, $SD=0.86$), indicating that participants felt most confident in their ability to grade objectively, while “training students to assess tasks done by peers” had the lowest mean score ($M=3.77$, $SD=0.89$), suggesting that participants found this aspect of grading more challenging. The item “teaching, assessing, and grading in correspondence to main learning objectives” also had a relatively high mean score ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.71$), suggesting that participants generally align their grading with the main learning objectives. Participants rated their proficiency in avoiding bias in grading and aligning grading with learning objectives higher than other grading tasks, with peer assessment training being the most challenging.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Grading

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
18. Determining students grades according to students' average performance	110	3.86	.76	2	5
19. Identifying different factors to be considered when grading	110	3.92	.80	1	5
20. Avoiding bias (personal preferences) in grading	110	4.30	.86	2	5
21. Teaching, assessing, and grading in correspondence to main learning objectives	110	4.06	.71	2	5
22. Training students to assess tasks done by peers	110	3.77	.89	2	5

The fourth domain is communicating assessment results with others. Participants rated their ability highest in “providing written feedback to students” ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.86$) and “providing oral feedback to students” ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.86$), indicating strong confidence in the areas of providing feedback to students. “Communicating assessment results to students” also received a high mean score ($M=4.01$, $SD=0.82$), suggesting effective communication skills with students regarding their assessments. The lowest mean score was for the item “communicating assessment results to parents” ($M=3.38$, $SD=0.98$), indicating participants found this aspect more challenging. The two items of “using portfolios to assist students' progress” and

“communicating assessment results to other colleague educators” received moderate mean scores (around 3.75 to 3.77), indicating average confidence levels in these communication tasks. Participants generally felt confident in providing feedback to students and supporting them in monitoring their progress, but they found communicating assessment results to parents to be more difficult.

Table 7*Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Communication*

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
23. Using portfolios to assist students' progress	110	3.77	.86	2	5
24. Communicating assessment results to other colleague educators	110	3.75	.90	1	5
25. Communicating assessment results to students	110	4.01	.82	1	5
26. Communicating assessment results to parents	110	3.38	.98	1	5
27. Providing written feedback to students	110	4.07	.86	1	5
28. Providing oral feedback to students	110	4.06	.86	2	5
29. Providing students with suggestions to enable them to monitor their progress in learning	110	4.00	.79	2	5

The fifth domain is assessment ethics. Participants rated their adherence to ethical practices highest in “preventing students from cheating on tests” (M=4.42, SD=0.72), indicating strong commitment to maintaining test integrity. The items of “informing students of the assessment objectives before applying the assessment” (M=4.18, SD=0.68) and “keeping assessment results confidential” (M=4.13, SD=0.89) also received high mean scores, reflecting participants' emphasis on transparency and confidentiality. The item “avoiding the use of assessment as a way to punish students for their behavior” was similarly highly rated (M=4.14, SD=0.98), suggesting participants' conscientiousness in fair assessment practices. The lowest mean score was for the item “avoiding teaching to the test when preparing students for tests” (M=3.84, SD=0.91), indicating participants may find it more challenging to avoid focusing solely on test preparation at the expense of broader learning objectives. Participants demonstrated a strong commitment to ethical assessment practices, particularly in maintaining test integrity and ensuring transparency with students regarding assessment objectives and results.

Table 8*Descriptive Statistics of Assessment Ethics*

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
30. Informing students of the assessment objectives before applying the assessment	110	4.18	.68	2	5
31. Keeping the assessment results of each student confidential	110	4.13	.89	1	5
32. Avoiding the use of assessment as a way to punish students for their behavior	110	4.14	.98	1	5
33. Preventing students from cheating on tests	110	4.42	.72	1	5
34. Avoiding teaching to the test when preparing students for tests	110	3.84	.91	1	5

The sixth domain is digital assessment literacy. Participants rated their proficiency highest in “using assessment data to plan future teaching” (M=4.03, SD=0.84), indicating strong competence in utilizing digital assessment information for instructional planning. The items of “providing criteria for online/computerized tests/tasks along with the tests/tasks” (M=3.98,

SD=0.78) and “giving computerized course tasks/tests” (M=3.89, SD=0.85) also received relatively high mean scores, suggesting participants’ capability in setting criteria and administering computer-based assessments. The lowest mean score was for “using online web tools to design language skill tests” (M=3.73, SD=0.95), suggesting participants may find this aspect of digital assessment literacy more challenging. Participants demonstrated varying levels of digital assessment literacy, with stronger competencies in using assessment data for teaching planning and setting criteria for digital assessments. Areas such as designing online tests and varying assessment tools for classroom effectiveness may require further development.

Table 9*Descriptive Statistics of Digital Assessment Literacy*

Item	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
35. Using online web tools to design language skill tests	110	3.73	.95	1	5
36. Giving computerized course tasks/tests	110	3.89	.85	1	5
37. Assessing student language skills using online tools	110	3.89	.87	1	5
38. Varying digital assessment tools according to effectiveness for classroom purposes	110	3.87	.90	1	5
39. Providing criteria for online/computerized tests/tasks along with the tests/tasks	110	3.98	.78	1	5
40. Using assessment data (e.g., student participation, grades, user activity in online discussion, reports) to plan future teaching	110	4.03	.84	1	5

Discussion*Variability in Confidence across Assessment Domains*

The survey results revealed significant variability and differences in the confidence levels of EFL preservice teachers across the six domains of assessment literacy. The highest confidence levels were recorded in the domain of assessment ethics wherein the participants were most confident in their capacity to ensure that students do not engage in cheating during assessments. On the other hand, the lowest confidence levels were observed in the domain of construction and administration of assessments, and participants were equally provided with an opportunity to write test questions for the advanced level that they also found rather difficult. Such variability indicates specific domains necessary for teacher training programs to ensure that preservice teachers understand, design, and implement formative and diagnostic assessments for diverse learning abilities (Estaji, 2024; DeLuca et al., 2012; Popham, 2009; Ukrayinska, 2024). This study also shows that higher confidence in assessment ethics might result from the fact that application of ethical considerations or concerns (e.g., against cheating) is much more directly mentioned in educational discourses. The lower confidence observed in constructing assessments may be attributed to the lack of practical experience acquired by teacher education programs. To address this gap, it is vital that sufficient hands-on experiences are afforded to preservice teachers so that they can develop and implement the assessments (Ukrayinska, 2024).

The disparity of confidence levels raises important questions about the overall planning of the curricula of teacher education. While teacher education programs present strong theoretical knowledge and foundations, the practical application of constructing assessments for the diverse learners seems to be underemphasized. Therefore, the improvement of this component of teacher preparation is critical (Estaji, 2024). One such possibility could be increasing the use

of tasks implying the development of the assessments to address the different learners' levels as an intervention for preservice teachers. Increasing the amount of practice preservice teachers have in this domain, for example through formative assessment workshops or real-world teaching simulations, could be beneficial. Having a list of assessment methods which will help preservice teachers to take into account the needs of students with special significant needs might promote the establishment of a more inclusive and moderate variety of methods of assessment (Brookhart, 2011; Estaji, 2024).

The results imply that it is high time for the design of teacher education programs that correspond to this stipulation to be approachable in such a way that caters for the learning diversity of the students through adoption of instructional and assessment differentiation. Mastering these skills is beneficial for growing confidence and for promoting the learning of the excellence of inclusiveness (Heritage, 2010). This is in accordance with the beliefs of Popham (2009) and DeLuca et al. (2012) that teacher preparation should aim at preparing faculty for effectively managing students with diverse needs and learning abilities. In this regard, the concept of assessment literacy should extend to include practical and enhanceable practices in which preservice teachers evaluate and modify their performance. This echoes Brookhart's (2011) opinion that continuous feedback and reflection must occur frequently in order for preservice teachers to progress.

In terms of limitations, this study did not control for the fact that participants' prior teaching experience in any form like private teaching or volunteering may have contributed to the confidence levels of the participants in any particular domain. Further research could focus on the effectiveness of these varied forms of teaching experience on the development of assessment literacy. Also, this study was carried out in one university, which cannot generalize to other educational settings. Future studies could extend the study sample to preservice teachers from other universities to fill the gap of the assessment literacy development in diverse contexts. Some implications for practical curriculum and instruction in teacher education programs and for preservice teachers involve increased use of simulation and more differentiated assessment experiences and promotion of reflective practices to improve the preservice teachers' confidence and competency when designing and implementing assessments.

Challenges in Communicating Assessment Results

The study revealed that one of the major difficulties reported was the communication of assessment results, pointing out both favorable aspects and the remaining deficits. The surveys showed that participants were very confident of giving oral and written feedback to the students, indicating good direct communication with the learners. This strength indicates that preservice teachers are well prepared to use a student-centered communication approach in teaching as required. However, the participants had a significantly lower confidence score in disseminating assessment results to the parents, thus identifying an area of weakness. This study presents some crucial concerns about how teacher education programs prepare future teachers for other elements of teacher's communication roles.

The difference in confidence between communicating with students individually and parents can be explained by the difference in communication. Interacting with students results in more direct interactions, particularly in terms of formative assessment practices, which

assists in improving this domain of communication. Thus, interactions with parents could be less frequent, more official, and involving emotions, especially when talking about difficulties or poor results of a student. In this way, preservice teachers may not only lack confidence in their ability to engage in such conversations but be ill-equipped if they have not had enough training or prior experience in these forms of interactions. This gap has become a large concern since communication with parents is very essential in ensuring they support students in their learning. According to Brookhart (2011) and Heritage (2010), parent-teacher communication is critical in the overall learners' success using an information sharing rationale to warrant parents are involved in their children's learning process. Thus, it can be concluded that teacher education programs have to focus more on the elaboration of preservice teachers' abilities to for such communicative situations.

From a pragmatic angle, what teacher education programs can do is to provide seminars or lessons focusing on effective communication to parents. Such may encompass 'mock' conferences involving preservice teachers assuming the roles of parents or teachers and training of preservice teachers engaging in a challenging talk with students, for example, a poor academic performance or a student's mischievous behavior. It is recommended that universities should develop populations of mentorship where experienced teachers train and monitor performance of preservice teachers in the area of parent communication to enhance their self-confidence and skill levels.

Some of the drawbacks of this research may include the possibility that the results attained may be skewed by the level of confidence the participants demonstrated when completing the test or lack of it, rather than an actual capability to perform particular tasks in real-life situations. Future research could include videotaping lessons and asking students and parents (if any) to fill out questionnaires so as to come up with more authentic measurements to a set of preservice teachers' communication skills. In addition, the study of how cultural environments influence the communication of parents and teachers could be informative, for example for countries like South Korea where cultural attitudes to education and parents' engagement might be different from the other world.

Overall, the students and parents' communication skills should be given much more attention during teacher training since these competencies are critical to the accomplishments of positive and effective learning environments. Providing professional learning communities with communication skills for teachers and incorporating the use of such skills into the preservice teachers' reflective practices will guarantee that the availability and delivery of communication results in assessment across diverse audiences.

Ethical Considerations and Digital Assessment Literacy

Ethical considerations and digital assessment literacy are prominent in the survey findings. In the domain of assessment ethics, participants demonstrated considerable understanding of assessment ethical practice with regard to acts of dishonesty and privacy violations. Nonetheless, "teaching to test" was rated lower, it could be an area of ethical concern which preservice teachers might not be advised enough. Regarding digital assessment literacy, being able to use assessment data proficiently for planning purposes was high, while the ability to design language skill tests using on-line tools; was low. This emphasizes the need for further development of training for using technology in a more appropriate manner in assessment

practices, so that teachers are better prepared to use such tools to enrich and expand the range of evaluation techniques (Estaji, 2024; Popham, 2018; Xu & Brown, 2016). Teacher education programs should provide strategies that are more encompassing to teaching instead of teaching to the test. Workshops and professional development sessions can enable preservice teachers to have appropriate skills and knowledge which will help them to uphold ethical standards and achieve education goals. There is obviously something that demands further improvement concerning the training of preservice teachers in the field of digital assessment literacy. When technology is ubiquitously implemented in learning processes, teachers need to have necessary practical knowledge about assessments supported by technology. This also involves offering, preparing and developing tests, in ways which enable the actual assessment of language skills. Teacher education programs should provide preservice teachers with opportunities to practice with different types of digital tools for assigning online assessments. Including modules on data analysis and interpretation aids preservice teachers to use assessment information when developing instructional techniques.

Preservice teachers must undergo professional development continually to learn new technologies and ethical standards (Xu & Brown, 2016). Continuing professional development is one way of ensuring that preservice teachers remain assessment literate since the kind of knowledge any teacher needs changes when he or she is growing as a professional (Popham, 2018; Zhang et al., 2024). Offering access to resources, online classes, and group support networks can develop their capacity to sustain ethical and well-organized assessments in classrooms.


Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to examine EFL preservice teachers' perceived importance of assessment literacy. The results show that the preservice teachers had varied confidence in implementing and designing assessment to their target students and perceived challenges in communicating assessment results. However, they were cognizant of assessment ethics and digital assessment literacy in this technology era. In this regard, assessment training and ongoing professional development can be of help to enhance their assessment literacy levels. Teacher education programs can also make certain that preservice teachers have the adequate skills in the delivery of fair, balanced and computerized tests to cater for different students' needs by embracing ethical and information technology skills proficiency (Brookhart, 2011; Estaji, 2024; Heritage, 2010; Popham, 2018; Xu & Brown, 2016; Zhang et al., 2024). Addressing this can aid preservice teachers in improving their assessment competence and confidence in their future classrooms. Such an investigation in this study will assist in spreading the importance of assessment literacy and its results on teaching and learning.

Despite the potential of research applicability, several limitations should be discussed. One limitation associated with the survey is low external validity. A few major concerns are apparent when the results are generalized to the target population. A small sample size may not capture the target population heterogeneity (Fowler, 2014). These results may not be generalizable across settings, populations or time points. Being aware of these limitations is useful when it comes to understanding research results and when designing subsequent research projects which might require higher and more diverse samples. All in all, the implications of this study put forward are that current teacher education programs require

enhancement and the fulfilment of policies and legislations regarding the assessment practices. In addition, it will serve as a foundation for the worthwhile outcomes of language assessment and language education for the researchers and practitioners.

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Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

Funding

This paper was supported by Sunchon National University Research Fund in 2024 (Grant number: 2024-0346).

Ethics Declarations

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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