



Language assessment literacy (LAL) in Norway

Teachers and teacher educators' perceptions of construct

Preliminary results from an exploratory study

1. Background and rationale for the study

- The LAL construct has been operationalized in different ways (e.g. Fulcher, 2012; Kremmel & Harding, 2013; Vogt & Tsagari, 2014)
- More research is needed to inform our understanding of LAL (Inbar-Louie, 2013; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017)
- This study takes Taylor's (2013) model as a starting point
- The study seeks to explore teachers' conceptions of the construct in the Norwegian context in order to better understand LAL

2. The study

- Problem statement:
 - *How do teachers and teacher educators understand the LAL construct?*
- Data collection method:
 - Semi-structured interviews:
 - General questions on LAL
 - Specific items on issues hypothesized to be of importance; Likert scales (1-6) used to measure degree of agreement with items

2. (cont.)

- Participants
 - 10 EFL teachers at the lower and upper secondary level in Norway
 - 5 EFL teacher educators in Norway (tertiary education)
- Analysis
 - Content analysis: questions, in-vivo; critical extracts
- The investigation is now being followed up by subsequent studies, nationally and internationally, to further investigate the LAL construct

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4. The Norwegian context

- English is compulsory from year six through year 16
- Teaching and learning should be based on the national curriculum
- Assessment is regulated by the Regulations to the Education Act:
 - Assessment must be both summative and formative
 - Grades are not to be given until lower secondary school (age 13+)
 - Students are entitled to know what the goals of instruction are
 - Self-assessment is mandatory

5. Preliminary findings

5.1 Strong focus on formative assessment in Norway

There is less summative assessment. There is much, much, much more formative assessment. And then we're more relaxed when it comes to assessment... because... we have told each other loudly and clearly that: "We have to have our focus on learning"... "The pig is not gaining weight because you weigh it". We are here as teachers. The students are here to learn, not because we are going to judge them all the time. (T6)

5.2 Scepticism towards multiple-choice testing

To what extent is knowledge of multiple-choice testing important?

I may know too little about this, but I don't think that's important at all. I don't understand how that can promote learning, but I'm sure that it can... But I'll say two here. (T1)

Er... for us who work with texts in a broad perspective... it becomes kind of an instrumental view of assessment ... when you're doing multiple choice and testing and those kinds of things. But I can understand that it may have a function... if you do those kinds of tests, that kind of knowledge is probably important. Put a four on that statement. (T6)

5.3 Overall conceptions of the LAL construct

5.3.1 Academic knowledge / subject matter knowledge

[You need to have knowledge of] culture and... language knowledge and... er... Because giving feedback on for example grammar requires an understanding of how language is grammatically put together... And the same thing goes for text structure. (T4)

5.3.2 Knowledge of *what* to assess

I'm thinking that it is very important to be able to consider a text, oral or written, as a coherent whole . Er... yes... as a communicative whole. Er... and be able to assess... what... well, one thing concerns the test construct, that is, what should be assessed... and at what level... that is, which aspects should be assessed. And to see the consequences of this... and to look at it on a general level and from a given perspective on the text. [...] And to have a sober and conscious attitude towards what... is being communicated [by the student] and how. (TE5)

5.3.3 Knowledge of *how* to assess

So you need to understand what are different types of assessment... er... how different types of assessment have different aims or goals ... er... what types of assessment do I want to use in the classroom? What type of implementational space, or what, sort of, institutional limitations are upon me? When I want to do that, what are the rules and regulations, and how do I work... er... And also, most importantly, I think... and it's something teachers sometimes struggle with... er... and that is: Would it... or... what am I doing when I'm doing this type of assessment? What is my role? And actually, what's happening? (TE2)

5.3.4 Pedagogical skills/communication skills

- **Skills of relating/interacting**

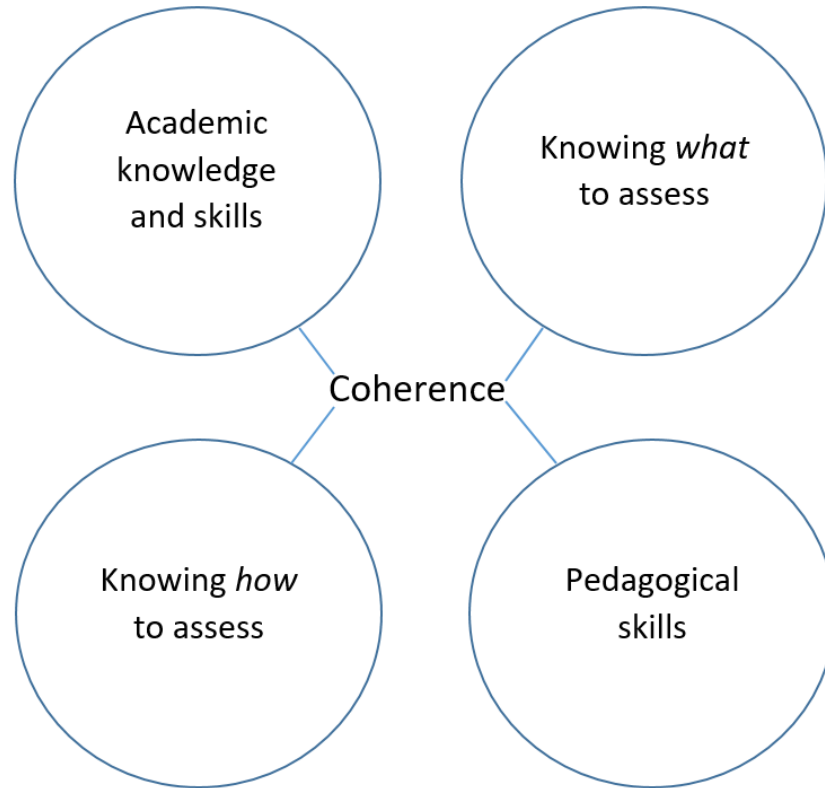
- *it requires a behaviour and a presence and a commitment that means the pupils... trust you and enjoy receiving guidance from you. (TE1)*

- **Communication skills**

- *for good assessment practices teachers need to know how to communicate that [strengths and weaknesses in performances] to learners over time (TE2)*

- *Being able communicate results in a good way is really important. Because this is what makes the students understand. So you may well put this at a six. (TE3)*

5.4 A visualization of the teachers' conception of LAL



6. Findings in the light of Taylor's model (Taylor, 2013)

The informants generally agree that:

- **local practices** are *very* important: Teachers must have knowledge of the national curriculum and the Regulations to the Education Act;
- **theory** is important: theories of language / communicative competence more so than assessment theory;
- **sociocultural values** are important.

5.3.5 Other interesting findings

Several informants mention:

- How to help students make use of feedback
- The importance of a student-centred approach
- Collaborative work
- Tacit knowledge vs explicit knowledge / declarative vs procedural knowledge / knowing that vs knowing how (Ryle, 1945)
- The importance of integrating theory and practice in teacher education (cf. e.g. Jensen, Staal & Hammerness, 2018)

6. Where do we go from here?

- The investigation is now being followed up by subsequent studies, nationally and internationally, to further investigate the LAL construct

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6. (cont.)

- A more systematic analysis is needed in order to establish clearer categories and to give «thicker descriptions»
- Should we analyse more explicitly in the light of Taylor's model?
- Should we develop our own (more context-sensitive) model?
- Would it be interesting to elaborate on skills-knowledge dimension (what kind of theory is needed; are skills more important than knowledge etc.)?

Thank you!

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