INVESTIGATING EAP ASSESSMENT LITERACY

An overview of a mixed methods research project

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The objectives of this project were to:

• Investigate the assessment literacy of EAP teachers, based on the good practice highlighted in relevant research

• collect data from relevant EAP practitioners which could be considered representative of the sector

• analyse the data and make recommendations for the sustenance and enhancement of EAP teacher assessment literacy, so that stakeholders can benefit from changes to EAP assessments; professional development or training

• Promote ongoing attention to the need for high-quality testing and assessment in EAP, the results of which can be used to draw trustworthy inferences.
Research questions

The research questions which drove the research project were as follows:

• To what extent do EAP teacher views on EAP testing and assessment practices reflect language testing research and practices which comprise Assessment Literacy?

• How can EAP Assessment Literacy be sustained or enhanced?

The research hypothesis which was tested was:

• EAP teachers who are involved in EAP testing and assessment do not have any identifiable development requirements with regard to their knowledge and ability to implement assessment good practice and recommendations stemming from research.
Supporting literature

• Key proponents of Assessment Literacy
• Features of Assessment Literacy and examples of supporting research in Education, Applied Linguistics
• Guidance resources for the development and enhancement of EAP Assessment Literacy.
• Training for teacher Assessment Literacy through general and EAP teacher education
• University-led EAP Assessment Literacy through in-house testing

Bachman
Inbar-Lourie
Shohamy
Messick
Taylor
Messick
Davidson & Lynch
Davies et al
Blue et al
Fulcher
Popham
Price et al.
Stiggins
Price et al.
Stiggins
Fulcher
Popham
BALEAP
O’Sullivan
Weir
U of Reading
Sharpling
Coniam
Sharpling
Wallis
Wallis
Research design, methods & analysis

- Review of possible philosophies
- Adoption of a pragmatic paradigm
- Use of mixed methods of data collection
- Quantitative and qualitative
- Online survey (187 recipients)
  - *Bristol Online Surveys*
- 25 research interviews
  - *Face-to-Face & Via Telephone/Skype*
Questionnaire Structure

**Welcome Page**
- Welcome message
- Topic background overview
- Definition of assessment
- Details of incentive
- Context of study at the University of Leicester
- Instructions for survey page navigation
- Survey duration indication
- Overview of survey organisation
- Reminder of opportunity to opt in to survey participation
- Thank you message

**Data Protection & Ethics**
- Confirmation of adherence to data protection protocols
  - (AQ1) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (yes/no) - Participant agreement request for the use of data
  - Hyperlink to download Research Information Sheet providing full details of the research project
  - (AQ2) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (yes/no) - Participant confirmation of access to Research Information Sheet
  - Invitation to email researcher with additional queries
  - (AQ3) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (yes/no) - Respondent’s acknowledgement of voluntary participation and facility to withdraw
  - (AQ4) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (yes/no) - Agreement request for respondent participation in the survey
  - (AQ5) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (yes/no) - Permission request for the researcher to use the data in anonymised form

**Personal Details**
- (AQ6) FACTUAL MCQ single answer (male/female) Gender confirmation
- (AQ7) FACTUAL Drop-down selection list (6 options) Age bracket identification
- (AQ8) FACTUAL Drop-down selection list (all countries in the world) Confirmation of nationality (most closely associated with) and free-text ‘other’ option for added flexibility
- (AQ9) FACTUAL 4 sub items in a grid format (A-D) MCQ single answer (yes/no/unsure/no) investigating EAP education and assessment involvement
- (AQ10) FACTUAL Drop-down selection list (all countries in the world) Identification of country where the participant has most recently been involved with EAP assessment and free-text ‘other’ option for added flexibility
- (AQ11) FACTUAL Drop-down selection list (6 different types of educational institution) Description of type of institution where most recently involved with EAP assessment and free-text ‘other’ option for added flexibility
- (AQ12) FACTUAL Drop-down selection list (5 different time spans from 0-23 months to over 20 years) Confirmation of time elapsed since first started working in EAP

- Training, skills, strengths and weaknesses in EAP testing and assessment
- Approaches to EAP testing and assessment design
- Views on/experience of validity and reliability in EAP testing and assessment
- Practices involving analysis and interpretation of the results and scores of EAP tests and assessments
- Consideration of ethics in EAP testing and assessment
- Influence of research and other resources for the purpose of EAP testing and assessment on EAP teacher Assessment practices

**Survey Results**
- Strongly agree:
  - 85.6%
  - 8.7%
  - 4.5%
- Agree:
  - 5.7%
- Disagree:
  - 0.6%
- Strongly disagree:
  - 0.0%

**BOS Bristol Online Surveys**
## Interview Structure

- **Training, skills, strengths and weaknesses in EAP testing and assessment**
- **Approaches to EAP testing and assessment design**
- **Views on/ experience of validity and reliability in EAP testing and assessment**
- **Practices involving analysis and interpretation of the results and scores of EAP tests and assessments**
- **Consideration of ethics in EAP testing and assessment**
- **Influence of research and other resources for the purpose of EAP testing and assessment on EAP teacher Assessment practices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interview structure and duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>General opening field-related question as an introduction (BQ1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee training and skills in EAP testing and assessment (BQ2, BQ3, BQ4, BQ5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EAP test and assessment design processes (BQ6, BQ7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Validity and reliability in EAP testing and assessment (BQ8, BQ9, BQ10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Analysis and interpretation of EAP testing and assessment (BQ11, BQ12, BQ13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The influence of research and resources (BQ14, BQ15, BQ16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ethical factors (BQ17, BQ18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Final general question inviting any further comment on the topic (BQ19)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Research design, methods & analysis

TRIANGULATION

QUALITATIVE DATA

Data Collection
(Interview data & questionnaire open question responses)

Data Analysis

RESULTS COMPARED, INTEGRATED AND INTERPRETED

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Data Collection
(Questionnaire DVAS items and Likert Scales)

Data Analysis
Research design, methods & analysis

**Table: Agreement Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questionnaire**

**Data Analysis**

- Descriptive statistics of grouping
- Chi square tests
- **Cronbach’s Alpha** (Likert Scale internal reliability)
- **Factor Analysis** to identify constructs within Likert Scales
- **Content Analysis** - to analyse qualitative open responses
Research design, methods & analysis

INTERVIEWS

- Content Analysis - to analyse qualitative open responses
- Interactional Profile Evaluation - to consider the interplay between interviewee and interviewer

Second coder used to corroborate, reject or suggest alternative categories
Second coder used to help identify any noteworthy factors in interactional profiles which might affect reliability
Findings

• There is a need for more structured training interventions associated with EAP assessment.

• There is a lack of reference, amongst practising EAP teachers who assess, to research associated with assessment.

• There appears to be an interest in additional opportunities for collaboration amongst EAP practitioners both within and across institutions and with content teachers.

• There is a need to extend practitioners’ skills in interpretive EAP assessment, including use of statistics.

• There are key concerns amongst practitioners with regard to the ethicality of EAP assessment.
The research questions which drove the research project were as follows:

- To what extent do EAP teacher views on EAP testing and assessment practices reflect language testing research and practices which comprise Assessment Literacy?
- How can EAP Assessment Literacy be sustained or enhanced?

The research hypothesis which was tested was:

- EAP teachers who are involved in EAP testing and assessment do not have any identifiable development requirements with regard to their knowledge and ability to implement assessment good practice and recommendations stemming from research.
Limitations

• Opinions of EAP teachers regarding their own assessment literacy rather than a more objective measure of Assessment Literacy

• Questionnaire respondents were restricted to practitioners with membership of professional bodies, which may have excluded less engaged practitioners

• A greater number of questionnaire respondents and interviewees may have influenced the nature of the data gathered

• Additional time devoted to the piloting stage could have resulted in the honing of certain questionnaire items

• Had a trained interviewer been employed the interactions may have been of a different nature and more accurate information could have been revealed
Recommendations / Actions

• Provide a framework for in-service EAP assessment training
• Create an online annotated bibliography for EAP assessment literacy
• Promote collaborative research and learning opportunities in EAP assessment
• Develop interpretive EAP Assessment Literacy skills including user-friendly statistical analysis training
• Raise awareness about the key importance of ethicality as an aspect of EAP Assessment Literacy
Extended Bibliographies


Traditional testing

Traditional testing is a scientific field, with precise definitions and purpose is the creation of quality tests that are used to test knowledge of those tested. Results obtained from testing scores of test takers, classifying test takers into levels, assigning grades and accepting or rejecting, need to be of high quality and follow the criteria of psychometrics.
Key proponents of Assessment Literacy:

  - An description of the flaws in testing and assessment practices and a call to action for educationalists to improve the situation

- **Fulcher, G. (2012).** *Assessment literacy for the language classroom.* [Journal Article]. Language Assessment Quarterly, 9(1)
  - An investigation into the assessment literacy of practising English language teachers

  - Promotes the importance of assessment literacy particularly from the position of test-takers themselves

- **Stiggins, R. J. (1991).** *Assessment Literacy.* The Phi Delta Kappan, 72(7), 534.
  - First usage of the term assessment literacy - sets out the importance of assessment literacy from the wider stakeholder perspective

  - A spotlight on the importance of developing and maintaining Assessment Literacy in the context of high-stakes language assessment
• Features of Assessment Literacy


A step-by-step approach to using statistics in interpreting results of language assessments. Includes examples and Excel templates

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2013) Language Testing, 30 (3) Special Issue on Language Assessment Literacy: SAGE

A special issue of the Language Testing Journal with a range of relevant articles related to language assessment literacy


An overview of the skills needed to assess language and a critical discussion of existing language testing courses


A seminal article on the concept of construct validity


An insight into the social and political implications of assessment
• Guidance resources for EAP assessment literacy


Training for EAP teachers in assessment


University-led Assessment literacy - in-house testing


Guidelines published by BALEAP to assist practitioners in understanding standardised EAP-related tests


Discussions relating to the validity of in-house testing including a paper by Rea-Dickins


An insight into the development and structure of a well-known in-house test developed by the University of Warwick


A discussion of the research undertaken by Weir which related to the development of TEEP at the University of Reading


More recent information about the TEEP test at Reading which outlines the test features and structure
Thank you please contact me if I can help with any queries:
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