

Native and Non-native English Teachers' Perceptions toward Assessment Literacy Regarding Their Teaching Experience

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Abstract: Assessment literacy is an almost newly concept which is dealt with in the language assessment domain and needs much more research studies to reach a better understanding of the issue since it might indicate the success or failure of a teacher, instructor, or tester on his/her career. The present study was an attempt to extend our knowledge on the perspectives of English language native and non-native teachers about assessment literacy. Furthermore, it is designed to seek whether there was any significant relationship between native and non-native English language teachers' perceptions regarding assessment literacy and their experience. To achieve such goals, a mixed methods design was recruited. In the quantitative phase, Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Cynthia Campbell and Craig Mertler (2004) was utilized which consisted of five Scenarios, each followed by seven questions. Through convenience sampling, the researcher either distributed the questionnaire among 100 native and non-native English teachers or sent it by E-mail to them. In the qualitative phase, a semi-structure interview was selected as a qualitative tool for collecting data. To this end, 10 teachers were volunteered to take part. Based on the quantitative findings of the research, there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perceptions regarding assessment literacy and their experience. However, there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perceptions regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Based on the qualitative results of the study, seven codes were classified according to three themes, namely, assessment assumptions, assessment targets, and professional development. These seven codes were classroom observations, assessment consistency, formative assessments, summative assessment, higher-order thinking skills, lack of assessment literacy of coursework, and lack of technology assessment literacy. Thus, it is concluded that teachers should assume the role of classroom observation and consistency of the assessment as two major assumptions of assessment. Besides, valid assessment should be designed in order to activate the higher-order thinking skills of the students.

Keywords: assessment literacy, native teachers, non-native teachers, teaching experience.

Introduction

Certainly, assessment literacy is an important part of language assessment which enables teachers to evaluate and weigh teaching and learning. Recently, as stated by Deluca and Klinger (2010, p. 419), "given the increasing importance of both large-scale and classroom assessment, developing assessment literacy in teacher candidates needs to be an explicit component of teacher education programs". According to Popham (2004) and Stiggins (1991), numerous particular ideas have been proposed concerning what educators need to know to be known as assessment literate. Recently, many researchers and scholars paid much more attention to and discussed the importance of assessment literacy for teachers. According to Newfields (2006), first of all, educators should recognize why language assessment literacy is significant because of three captivating reasons which are elaborated below.

The first suggestion was proposed by MacBeath and Galton (2004) as they believed that assessment is a well-known characteristic of many educational systems. They added that educators are expected to devote from ten percent to fifty percent of their work time on assessment-related activities. In the majority of educational centers, a considerable percentage of the budget was dedicated to formal testing. Considering this issue, it's worth censoriously knowing how assessment decisions are made.

The second reason is referred to the necessity of understanding of educational literature regarding assessment literacy. Truthfully, knowing the essential statistical conceptions is remarkably considered as a prerequisite for reading critically both specialized journals and numerous general articles in academic publications. Ignoring this radical point leads to the difficulty of evaluating the evidences support or even reject any point described in an article.

The final suggestion which should be taken into account is that assessment literacy delivers a condition in which educators can transfer their own classroom results with others. According to Hopkins (1985), in order to improve a community that fosters learning, teachers should share their inquiries with peers. In fact, teachers should become proficient at the fundamental basics of qualitative and quantitative inquiry in order to make

classroom research more understandable to a wide audience. Above and beyond, assessment literate specialists should spend a time criticizing and analyzing their own readings and sharing the significances in ways which are theoretically conclusive. Numerous essays with provocative perceptions lack sufficient analysis and/or evidence to permit readers to censoriously deduce the ideas.

Generally, the concept of “assessment literacy” has not been meticulously and precisely scrutinized in the context of Iran, and a great deal of teachers are not completely familiar with this concept and its related forms. One of the facets of assessment literacy that is largely, if not completely, ignored especially in EFL contexts is the question of what skills and knowledge do language teachers need to be regarded as competent and qualified assessment practitioners? To put it another way, it goes without saying that classroom assessment is often regarded as a professional requirement analogous to other probable professional skills including content knowledge or classroom management. In fact, assessment literacy is an almost newly concept which is dealt with in the language assessment domain and needs much more research studies to reach a better understanding of the issue since it might indicate the success or failure of a teacher, instructor, or tester on his/her career.

In addition, teachers are required to be adequately competent and knowledgeable in assessing of their learners and students. However, it is not completely clear and there is no comprehensive agreement on what these knowledge and competence are and how and to what extent they should be acquired. Furthermore, there is no agreement on the point that if native and non-native teachers should be equally competent in assessment literacy or not. Does teacher’s experience play any role in the assessment literacy of teachers or not?

Consequently, the present study was an attempt to fill such lacuna by seeking the perceptions of both English native and non-native teachers with respect to the assessment literacy while considering the experience of the teachers.

A great deal of researchers conducted studies on assessment literacy. For instance, Alkharusi (2011) explored teachers’ self-perceived assessment skills while considering their gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training. The population of this study was 213 Omani teachers from Muscat public schools. The researcher made use of a 25-item Self-Perceived Assessment Skills Scale as the instruments of the study. Following the analyses of the data, Alkharusi (2011) found that there were statistically significant differences on the self-perceived assessment skills pertaining to teachers’ gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training.

Hailaya (2014) scrutinized teachers’ assessment literacy and its possible effect on learner achievement and aptitude through the intervening variables at the teacher and learner levels. Besides, it was intended to check the influences of demographic variables as well. The sample of the study consisted of 582 teachers and 2,077 learners from Grade Six, Second Year and Third Year high school classes in the province of Tawi-Tawi, Philippines. The study enjoyed a mixed methods design using quantitative method and qualitative method. Following the analyses of the data, Hailaya (2014) found that the elementary and secondary school instructors had moderately low assessment literacy. Additionally, the Grade Six, Second Year, and Fourth Year high school learners largely demonstrated positive “perceptions of assessment” and positive “attitude towards assessment”.

Additionally, Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015) inspected the association between Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment literacy, their teaching experience, and age. The population of this study was 658 EFL teachers who were nominated to complete a researcher made assessment literacy inventory which has gone through the validation and reliability processes. By running the needed statistical analyses, Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015) found that Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment literacy and teaching experience were significantly correlated. Above the beyond, a positive association between Iranian EFL teachers’ assessment literacy and their age was revealed.

Xu and Brown (2017) scrutinized the assessment literacy level of Chinese university English teachers and the effects of their demographic characteristics on assessment literacy performance. To accomplish these goals, 160 Chinese university English teachers took part in this study. By running the needed statistical analyses, Xu and Brown (2017) found a basic level of assessment literacy in certain dimensions. Moreover, no single demographic characteristic had a significant impact on teachers’ assessment literacy performance. In contrast, statistically significant results were found only for two interaction effects (i.e., region by university and qualification by university).

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

To what extend are native teachers’ perceptions on assessment literacy related to the teaching experience??

To what extend are non-native teachers’ perceptions on assessment literacy related to the teaching experience?

What are the perceptions of native and non-native English language teachers towards assessment literacy?

Method

Participants

In order to gather the required data, 100 native and non-native English teachers from ESL and EFL contexts were selected on the basis of a combination of availability sampling and snowball sampling procedures. Moreover, the sample consisted of both male and female with at least about 5 years of teaching and assessment experience. The main reason for the five-years teaching experience precondition was that the researcher ensured they were adequately familiar with different assessment procedures and their plus and minus points so that the gathered data and findings would be approached more reliably.

Instrument

In order to collect the data, two approaches were utilized in the collection of data. The first instrument of the present study was Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory developed by Cynthia Campbell and Craig Mertler (2004) which consisted of five Scenarios, each followed by seven questions. The items of this questionnaire were connected to seven Standards for Teacher Competence in the Educational Assessment of Students. In other words, it consisted of 35 multiple-choice items that are given under the five classroom-based scenarios. Each scenario has seven items which are aligned to the used standards. Each item has four options containing one correct answer and three distractors.

Additionally, as the Assessment Literacy Inventory was applied to the new group of samples and in a different context, it was necessary to modify its scenarios and items to make it appropriate and useful. However, in modifying the scenarios and the items, only some names and irrelevant situations were changed or rephrased to contextualize the Assessment Literacy Inventory. Besides, in rephrasing the inappropriate situations, a care was taken to ensure that rephrased situations were parallel to the original scenarios to preserve the integrity of the instrument.

Moreover, to validate the instrument, three specialists in TEFL were consulted regarding the statements constructed in the questionnaire so that these statements would be concise statements. Then, to check the internal reliability of the questionnaire concerning classroom assessment literacy, the questionnaire was piloted on fifty participants, and their reliability which were estimated based on Cronbach's Alpha Level were ($\alpha = .79$) which indicated a good level of conceptual relatedness among items. Also, according to Campbell and Mertler (2004), the reliability of the original instrument was (KR20) of .74.

The second instrument were a semi-structured interview to know about the perspectives of the participants on the understudied issue. It was a one-to-one interview within the sample population that functioned as qualitative data and improved the reliability and applicability of clarifying quantitative outcomes along with gathering instructors' views connected to skills. Based on Creswell (2007), by using this method, the investigator would be able to recognize what are revealed and gathered the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes.

Then, the researcher either distributed the questionnaire among the teachers or sent it by E-mail to them. Having multiple-choice answering format, they were instructed that if they agree with a statement, put a tick by it. A person's score on the scale is calculated by summing the number of responses the person gave, which was widely used and very common in survey research. No time limit was set for taking this instrument so that the participants could take it carefully and without any negative feeling such as anxiety. Next, in order to have an interview, 10 teachers were volunteered to participate. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Interview times were offered to participants during work days only, before, during teacher planning time, or after student school hours.

In order to analyze the gathered data, as with the quantitative part, descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations were used by running Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). As with the qualitative part of the study, no statistical analysis was required. Instead, the perspectives of the participants were qualitatively interpreted and examined. Coding of data was performed in order to identify selected themes. Data was transcribed from the interview audiotape to a personal computer.

Results

In order to check the statistically significant relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience, the researcher calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 1 exhibited the results, and descriptions related to the results are presented in following.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Between Native Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience

		Total	Experience
Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.572**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	50	50
Experience	Pearson Correlation	.572**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	50	50

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Nativity = Native

Based on the results of Table 1, there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. In fact, the correlation coefficient was .57 and the significant value was less than 0.01. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience, $r = .57$, $n = 50$, $P < 0.0001$ with an effect size of .32, indicating 32 percent of shared variances between native teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experiences.

Then, to demonstrate it graphically, scatterplot was used to display the nature of the relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Figure 1 presented the results of scatterplot.

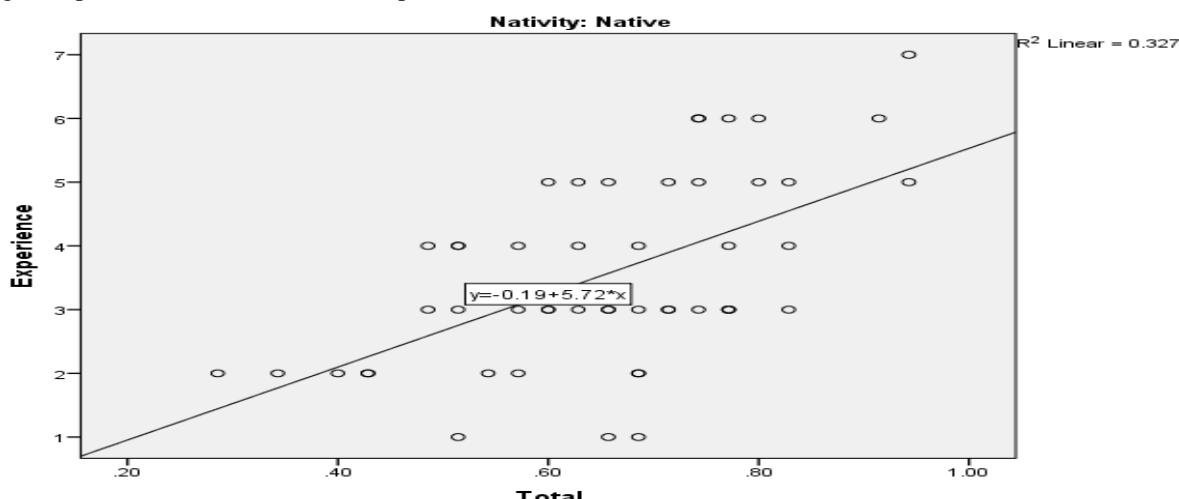


Figure 1. The Relationship between Native English Language Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience

The second research hypothesis specified that there is not any statistically significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. To reject or retain this hypothesis, the researcher employed Pearson correlation coefficient. Table 2 unveiled the results, and descriptions related to the results are offered in following.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Non-Native Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Assessment Literacy and Their Experience

		Total	Experience
Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.023
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.876
	N	50	50
Experience	Pearson Correlation	.023	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.876	
	N	50	50

Nativity = Non-Native

As demonstrated in Table 2, the correlation coefficient was 0.023 and the p-value (0.87) which was far above 0.0001 indicating that there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience.

In order to assess the perceptions of native and non-native English language teachers concerning assessment literacy, the researcher evaluated the results of interview. By analyzing the participants' responses to questions of interview, the researcher extracted seven codes:

- Classroom Observations,
- Assessment Consistency,
- Formative Assessments,
- Summative Assessment,
- Higher-Order Thinking Skills,
- Lack of assessment literacy of coursework, and
- Lack of Technology Assessment Literacy.

Furthermore, these codes are classified based on three main themes (see Figure 2):

- Assessment Assumptions,
- Assessment Targets, and
- Lack of Professional Development.

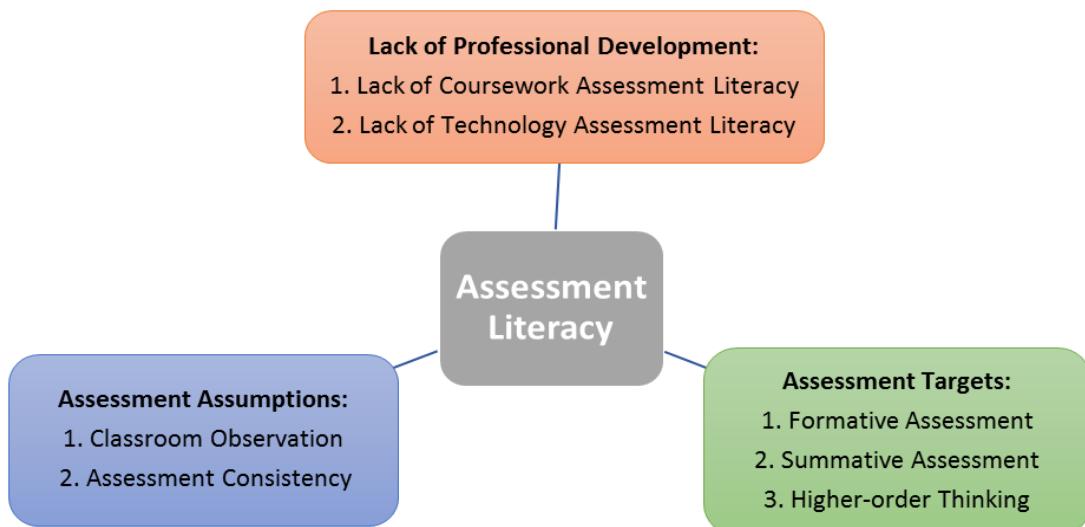


Figure 2. Extracted Themes Regarding Assessment Literacy

With respect to the assumptions of assessment, there was a considerable diversity in the perspectives of teachers concerning assessment. Two common codes which extracted from teachers' perspectives were *observation of the classroom* and *consistency of the assessment*. In fact, a majority of teachers believed that a teacher's informal assessment of a student based upon many observations would usually be more accurate than the data resulting from a lesser number of more formal assessment, or on any formal assessment. The following excerpt specified how the interviewee justified this idea:

...to measure the students properly, the teachers do not put an overreliance on assessments. They should be more reliant on observations in developing an accurate assessment picture of a student's ability.

Moreover, most of the teachers maintained that assessment should be consistent and comprises the attainment of analogous consequences. Indeed, an assessment process would be reflected to convey reliable consequences if evaluators measuring candidates against the same unit of proficiency in diverse contexts made analogous assessment decisions. The following excerpt indicated how the interviewee justified this idea:

...if a student was not successful on an assessment or even on multiple assessments, then there must be something innately defective with the assessment.

As for assessment targets, basic knowledge and skills were targets that teachers assessed, while higher-order thinking practices were least formally and informally assessed. In addition, teachers claimed that there are many valuable educational outcomes worthy of assessing and they are willing to try and assess all of them and to even form a final grade. The following excerpt clarified how the interviewee justified this idea:

...I usually consider the scores of formative and summative assessments and also the students' desire to have cooperation and other non-achievement factors such as attendance in class and his or her effort as valuable factors in determining a final grade.

Another interviewee insisted on higher order thinking skills. The succeeding extract was selected from the interpretation that the interviewee made on the concept of higher order thinking skills:

...assessment should be in a way that requires the learners be unfamiliar with the questions or tasks they are asked to answer or perform and that they have sufficient prior knowledge to enable them to use their higher order thinking skills in answering questions or performing tasks.

The third theme that was apparent in the coding of the interview data was the lack of professional development on matters of assessment. According to teachers' perspectives, lack of coursework assessment literacy and lack of technology assessment literacy were two main factors which hinder their professional development on matter of assessment. With respect to the lack of coursework assessment literacy, an interviewee claimed that:

...In many pre-service programs, the coverage of assessment literacy in course work is incomplete and superficial, leaving graduates unprepared to effectively meet the demands of today's educational environment.

Another interviewee contended that:

...Insufficient effort has been made to "unpack" existing, assessment-related standards to provide meaningful guidance for the development of pre-service program curricula, instructional materials, and student teaching experiences to enable candidates to build a solid foundation in assessment literacy upon graduation and certification.

Furthermore, as for lack of technology assessment literacy, many teachers asserted that technology can be utilized in order to support actions including peer review to assist improve assessment literacy. The following excerpt stated how the interviewee justified this idea:

...Text matching tools that generate an originality report for each assignment can be used to support the development of academic writing skills such as appropriate referencing and citation. Using the tools in a formative way with students can be more productive than simply using them to assist with the detection of plagiarism.

Another interviewee specified that:

...Providing online information about assessment criteria and marking rubrics and so on makes the information readily accessible to students.

Discussion

Consistent with the results, there was a positive relationship between native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. Besides, there was 32 percent of shared variances between native teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experiences. In fact, native English language teachers' perceptions towards assessment literacy could be affected by their years of experience since teachers' prior language teaching experience influence teachers' beliefs about assessment literacy. In other words, by the increase of teaching experience of native English language teachers, their knowledge of assessment literacy increases, too.

The findings of this study were in line with Alkharusi (2011) who inspecting teachers' self-perceived assessment skills while considering their gender, subject area, grade level, teaching experience, and in-service assessment training. He found that there was statistically significant difference on the self-perceived assessment skills pertaining to teachers' teaching experience. Similarly, Hailaya (2014) scrutinized teachers' assessment literacy and its possible effect on learner achievement and aptitude through the intervening variables at the teacher and learner levels. He found that longer teaching service/experience as determined by the number of years positively influenced teaching practices, including those related to structuring and student-oriented activities and assessments.

Additionally, in keeping with the findings, there was not any significant relationship between non-native English language teachers' perspectives regarding assessment literacy and their experience. In fact, the results also claimed that teaching experience could not affect on the non-native teachers' point of view on assessment literacy. Indeed, the level of non-native teachers' years of experience was not an indicator of their perspectives towards assessment literacy. In fact, it was expected that older teachers, who had more experiences

than younger teachers, had some different perspectives toward assessment literacy; however, they had the same perspectives.

The findings of this study were not in an agreement with Zolfaghari and Ashraf (2015) who scrutinized the association between Iranian (Non-native) EFL teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching experience. They found that there was a highly significant positive relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' assessment literacy and teaching experience. Likewise, Xu and Brown (2017) investigated the assessment literacy level of Chinese university English instructors and the impacts of their demographic features on assessment literacy presentation. They found that teaching experience had not any effect on assessment literacy performance of Chinese university English teachers.

Furthermore, the purpose of the qualitative research question was to assess the perceptions of native and non-native English language teachers concerning assessment literacy. To accomplish this goal, 10 teachers were volunteered to participate in the interview. Based on the results of interview, seven codes were classified according to three themes, namely, assessment assumptions, assessment targets, and professional development.

Based on the findings, teachers should assume the role of classroom observation and consistency of the assessment as two major assumptions of assessment. Besides, valid assessment should be designed in order to activate the higher-order thinking skills of the students. Moreover, a lack of professional development within preparatory undergraduate and school-wide planning staff development seemed to limit the amount of collaboration needed for successful assessment literacy among teachers.

The findings of this study were consistent with Davidheiser (2013) who examining high school instructors' level of assessment literacy with respect to the improvement and application of beneficial classroom assessments. He found that ten codes which were classified according to three themes, that is, assessment assumptions, assessment targets, and professional development.

Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, three conclusions can be drawn. First, native English language teachers' perceptions towards assessment literacy could be affected by their years of experience since teachers' prior language teaching experience influence teachers' beliefs about assessment literacy. In other words, by the increase of teaching experience of native English language teachers, their knowledge of assessment literacy increases, too. Second, teaching experience could not affect on the non-native teachers' point of view on assessment literacy. Indeed, the level of non-native teachers' years of experience was not an indicator of their perspectives towards assessment literacy. Third, teachers should assume the role of classroom observation and consistency of the assessment as two major assumptions of assessment. Besides, valid assessment should be designed in order to activate the higher-order thinking skills of the students.

The findings of this study have some implications. First, conducting studies like the present one contributes significantly to better understanding of the effectiveness of assessment literacy which in turn leads to achieving the process of assessment in a more effective way. Additionally, the importance of this study is doubled in EFL contexts including the present study (Iran) in that in most of these contexts the dominant approach of assessment is still in keeping with the traditional assessment in which assessment literacy of teachers is not drastically taken into consideration. However, to keep up with other developed countries (at least developed in sense of education) the need to modify traditional assessment procedures and considering assessment literacy is strongly felt.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can immensely help stakeholders such as students, teachers, policy makers, and administrators Since, based on Stiggins (1995), being assessment literate is very fundamental for them in order to recognize the difference between reliable and unreliable assessment and to execute activities consistent with suitable assessment knowledge. By utilizing the findings of this study, language teachers can become cognizant of the major role of assessment literacy in fostering the language learning. Moreover, novice teachers can make use of the findings of this study to promote their understanding concerning how their assessment literacy can be improved.

In addition, teachers' knowledge about assessment types, procedures, and precepts might be a great help for them to achieve and complete their teaching mission successfully. Additionally, through being aware of effective assessment procedures, instructors would be able to recognize and document, owing to gathered learner data, whether or not suitable progress has been revealed by learners in the classroom. If restricted progress is verified by the learners, then the gathered data can provide the justification to dispense required instructional and learning changes in order that the planned learning consequences and objectives can be accomplished.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

1. What is the core-subject area you teach?
2. How many years of teaching experience do you have as a classroom teacher: 0-3, 4-10, 11-20, 21-35?
3. How would you characterize both your undergraduate experience and professional development experience in language with regards to assessment?
4. What is your most important consideration in choosing a method for assessing student achievement?
5. When scores from a standardized test are said to be reliable, what does it imply?
6. In your opinion, what is the most effective use of an assessment that requires students to show their work (e.g., the way they arrived at a solution to a problem or the logic used to arrive at a conclusion)?
7. If one of things you wanted to learn regarding your students was if they were being encouraged to use higher order thinking skills in the class. What documentation do you feel would be most valid in helping you make this decision?
8. If you wanted to document the validity of the scores from a classroom assessment strategy that you plan to use for assigning grades on a class unit, what kind of information would provide the best evidence for this purpose?
9. Students' scores on standardized tests are sometimes inconsistent with their performances on classroom assessments (e.g., teacher tests or other in-class activities). Do you know of a reasonable explanation as to why such discrepancies would exist?
10. Throughout the country, many states are revising their school accountability programs to help explain differences in test scores across school systems. In your opinion, what are some things that need to be considered in such a program?
11. Is there anything else you would care to share regarding your experiences with assessment?