Perspectives on Language Assessment Literacy: Challenges for Improved Student Learning by Sahbi Hidri, Routledge, 2020 ISBN: 978-0-367-85969-5. pp. 233

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Acknowledging the central role language teachers play in the assessment process, viewed as both consumers of testing information and independent assessors, the newly-emergent field of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) has generally been viewed 'as a useful knowledge base that incorporates unique aspects inherent in theorizing and assessing language-related performance' (Inbar-Lourie, 2017, p. 259). This edited volume seeks to further unfold the multifarious concept of LAL in both theoretical and pedagogical terms in an effort to elucidate key issues in the area, enrich current knowledge related to the use of proper assessment practices and procedures in the foreign language (FL) classroom and highlight useful avenues for future research. To this end, the book is organized into four parts with Part 1 addressing predominantly theoretical aspects of language assessment literacy in four separate chapters while subsequent Parts 2, 3 and 4 with three chapters each are strictly devoted to descriptions of specific assessment processes enhancing LAL within a variety of FL contexts worldwide. All contributions are accompanied by lists of useful bibliographical references on the topic while supplementary material related to research design, instruments and methods also appear in appendices at the end of several chapters.

Part 1 '*Language Assessment Literacy: Theoretical Foundations*' discusses the theoretical foundation of LAL and links it to the processes of teaching, learning and assessment. In this respect, Chapter 1 initially sets the scene for the ensuing discussion by defining the concept of LAL and elaborating on its saliency as an integral component of language education. The need for the proliferation of L2 assessment training programs as a sign of growing professionalization under an updated assessment framework that promotes fair language testing and professional expertise is eloquently discussed and the chapter concludes with an outline of the topics discussed in the following chapters. The issue of consistent LAL conceptualization for research and pedagogical purposes is revisited in Chapter 2 by Dina Tsagari in a systematic manner via a rigorous overview

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of seminal theoretical work on the delimitation of assessment literacy as an indispensable part of contemporary language education systems. Based on available empirical evidence, the researcher stresses the necessity for a unanimous, coherent and context-specific descriptive model for LAL development as informed by educators' perceptions and knowledge to serve as the basis for carefully designed future LAL training programs across diverse socio-culturally language learning contexts.

In Chapter 3, McCallum traces the evolution of the language testing field concluding that discrete-objective and integrative/communicative testing approaches compliment each other ensuring that language proficiency as a unitary construct is not isolated from human, social and test administration factors. Using EAP-relevant task assessments as a means of exemplification, the author succinctly illustrates how successful incorporation of the fundamental tenets of structurally-induced traditional language testing within the framework of critical language testing (CLT) can lead towards more democratic, formative and diagnostic forms of language testing. Finally, in Chapter 4, Mohammadi and Sanavi elaborate on ontogenetic and phylogenetic aspects of the concept of LAL from its origin to its current reconceptualization over the last two decades suggesting future directions to the field. The authors stress the need for ongoing and targeted research efforts specifically directed towards the proper operationalization of the LAL term, investigation of learner assessment literacy by exploring the impact of learners' awareness of assessment-related issues, restructuring of language teacher education programs with the inclusion of assessment-related modules and availability of resources addressing theoretical and practical issues for stakeholders in the language testing field.

Part 2 '*Students' Language Assessment Literacy*' focuses on students' perceptions and assessment practices in three radically different EFL contexts, providing valuable empirical evidence in favour of the idea that students' active involvement in assessment practices can foster autonomous L2 learning, allowing them to claim ownership of their progress and academic achievement. Within this framework, Abatayo in Chapter 5 views the provision of effective feedback and expansive feedforward in pedagogically meaningful ways as an opportunity to enhance assessment literacy for educators and learners alike by reflecting on his own teaching practices when providing feedback within the context of a university EFL writing course in the Sultanate of Oman. The researcher concludes that motivating learners through appropriate feedback techniques renders them active participants in the learning process with enhanced metacognitive awareness knowledge and skills to claim ownership of their own academic growth and achievement. In a similar vein, Ukrayinska in Chapter 6 explores the potential of checklists as a useful tool in the course of pre-service graduate FL teachers' assessment skills training in Kharkiv, Ukraine, for the preparation of appropriate FL skills tests for undergraduate students. Upon a critical evaluation of available ready-made checklists used for language assessment purposes, the pedagogical usefulness of checklists is empirically validated as it affords students the opportunity to track their competency development in assessment literacy training via the development of autonomous decision-making and reasoning in task selection, adaptation, design, rating scale development and evaluation. Lastly, Awadi, in Chapter 7, addresses the impacts of IELTS test preparation courses on the quality of EFL students' performance in reflective journal writing at higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates based on an analysis of students' journals reflecting on practicum experiences. Preparation courses effected a noticeable improvement in reflective writing skills boosting students' confidence towards the reflective journaling genre. While students' assessment literacy skills were found to be reinforced as learners got acquainted with different parts of the exam to ensure better performance in IELTS exams.

Part 3 comprises of chapters 8 to 10 which is titled: *Teachers' Language Assessment Literacy.* Chapter 8 is written by Aylin Sermil-Sahin. The writer operates based on the assumption that assessment *for* learning is more important that assessment *of* learning. Her study was conducted in Turkey to probe the experiences and perceptions of novice teachers. Two themes emerged from her study:

Foreign language assessment literacy- English language testing and evaluation "FLAL-ELTE concept" and "experience about ELTE". Based on her findings, novice teachers were concerned with testing rather than assessment. They believed that language assessment was synonymous with language proficiency. As for experiences, the results included but were not limited to the fact that the course content the teachers were exposed to was deemed to be sufficient and beneficial. Chapter 9 is written by Zulfiqar Ahmad on teachers' assessment of academic writing. He picks out paraphrasing as a writing strategy. The results of this study confirm previous findings that writing performance results are affected by teachers' language assessment literacy. We wish the writer were careful about citing works in his previous research. In other words, the writer has resorted to self-citations unnecessarily. Chapter 10 is written by Olga Kvasova and Vyacherslav Shovkovy. In this chapter as in chapter 9, the emphasis is on assessment for learning. The study which was conducted in Ukraine avails itself of three groups of participants, namely, university managers, teachers, and students. The writers used questionnaires to elicit information from the participants. The results of the study revealed that university managers had the most critical evaluation of test development and administration which the authors attribute to a great deal of responsibility they shoulder. Chapter 11 is written by Dianna Al Jahromi. This study was conducted in Bahrain focusing on speaking skills of university students and their anxiety level. Her findings reveal that despite the fact that students had moderate level of anxiety, they were not satisfied with the prevalent teaching practices of teachers. Chapter 12 is written by Caroline Shackleton. The study was conducted in Spain and an investigation was launched into CEFR by resorting to verbal protocol methodology. Her results confirm the validity of listening comprehension items. Although she is reluctant to use the term "construct validity" here, we believe that the study is an endeavor in construct validation, with verbal protocol analysis being an approach to construct validation. As similar study was conducted by Storey (1997) on cloze items. The use of verbal methodology is also adhered to by researchers such as Cohen and Upton (2007). Chapter 13 is penned by Tim Murphy. Basically the whole chapter revolves around the notion of asking questions. He writes, "…questions are the sparks that light the interactional fire' (p. 241). The bottom-line of the chapter is that activities encompassing asking element can promote language assessment literacy. The good thing about this chapter is that Murphy resorts to his own papers to substantiate the need for asking questions and concludes, "We should be testing and teaching ways of asking, not simply information" (p. 254). All in all, this chapter is penned in a reader-friendly manner in that technical terms are avoided. Having said that, the chapter seems incongruent with the rest of the book which leans more towards using research findings to substantiate claims made.

All in all, the edited volume is a nice attempt on the part of the editor who juxtaposes less well-known writers and seasoned professionals like Tim Murphy. As shown in the title, the book is global in nature in that many parts of the world are represented in the book. We believe that some chapters like chapter 11 are not directly related to language assessment literacy while some other chapters like chapter 10 are quite pertinent in this regard. In other words, the book fails to deal with language assessment literacy as a construct which needs to be operationally defined. Some chapters, albeit containing useful information, have little to do with language assessment literacy.

References

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