Perspectives on classroom writing assessment literacy in ESL/EFL contexts

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Abstract

Despite the importance of writing assessment in ESL/EFL classrooms, it is not getting enough attention either from teacher education program designers or from teachers themselves. It is commonly believed that assessment courses do not have much to offer to classroom teachers compared to high stake tests. Some classroom teachers avoid learning about writing assessment skills and knowledge because they are against their beliefs or because they feel overwhelmed with the effective assessment guidelines. As for teacher education courses and graduate programs, they include either limited or no instructions about writing assessment literacy (Crusan, 2010; Weigle, 2007). This paper investigates second and foreign language teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about writing assessment and the role of teacher education in improving teachers' writing assessment literacy. My discussion shows that classroom teachers have some beliefs and knowledge about writing assessment and that these beliefs may influence their classroom practices. It also throws light on the importance of assessment literacy in improving teaching and learning and therefore calls for including assessment literacy in teacher education programs.

Keywords: *Second language writing, classroom writing assessment, assessment literacy, assessment for learning, formative assessment, written corrective feedback, second language teacher education, teachers' beliefs*

1. Introduction

1.1 Classroom writing assessment

Writing plays a central role in learning second/foreign languages. Research has shown that some assessment activities like frequent and immediate feedback can improve the quality of writing and learning in general (Ellis, 2009; Lee, 2017). Classroom writing assessment can be used in L2 classrooms to provide learners with their final scores and to gauge their output (Lee, 2007). This product-based assessment in which the teacher plays a dominant role as an assessor of his passive learners' performance, is referred to as assessment of learning (AoL) (Carless, 2011). Although AoL is thought to be a traditional type of assessment that is used mainly in standardized tests, it is still implemented in ESL/EFL classrooms today (Lee, 2017). L2 classroom writing assessment can also be process-oriented in which teachers play the role of mediators who help their learners improve their writing by providing them with effective frequent feedback while learners themselves are engaged in a continuous process of revising and editing (Lee, 2017). This type of assessment is referred to as formative assessment or assessment for learning (AfL) and it "can be used as a part of instruction to support and enhance learning" (Shepard, 2000, p. 4). AfL activities such as constant feedback, allow teachers to frequently evaluate learners' progress and adapt their classroom instructions accordingly. Other AfL practices like peer assessment, self-feedback, and student portfolio give the learners the opportunity to monitor and improve their own learning in a self-regulated environment which can promote learner autonomy and motivation to write (Lee, 2017).

1.2 Theoretical framework

Changes in teaching and learning theory in the early 21st century from behaviorism to social constructivism brought new changes to the field of teaching and learning, as well (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). These changes led to the reconceptualization of assessment principles and practices and the emergence of AfL. From a social constructivist perspective, learning is described as an activity that is socially and culturally constructed, teachers are described as mediator facilitators and learners are described as active participants in the learning process (Lee, 2017). L2 classroom assessment has also been influenced by the sociocultural theory. From a sociocultural framework, assessment is seen as an important tool for writing development and learning development in general (Lee, 2017). Research suggests that writing assessment should be accommodated to the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD) which refers to the "distance between the actual developmental level determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development determined through problem-solving in collaboration with more capable peers or seniors" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, assessment can function as a scaffolding tool in which the teacher uses assessment practices like frequent feedback to understand what the learner can achieve on their own

and what they can achieve with the guidance of the teacher, peers, or technology tools to help them improve (Lee, 2017). In this collaboration, learners are engaged in a process of meaning-making and an ongoing evaluation of their output, which can improve the quality of their writing and lead to developing their ability to "monitor, evaluate and regulate their own learning" (Nicol, 2010). Consequently, more capable facilitators like teachers, provide frequent support to their learners by encouraging and redirecting them when necessary (Lee, 2017). In a nutshell, classroom assessment from a sociocultural framework is seen as a dynamic activity that informs classroom instruction and aims for improving learners' development while considering different learners' ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2004).

1.3 Effective writing assessment guidelines

Lee (2017) suggests a list of assessment guidelines to assure the efficient implementation of AfL. First, he argues that assessment should be integrated with learning and teaching and students need to be aware of the learning goals and assessment rubric at early teaching stages (Lee, 2017). Second, he emphasizes on the importance of using formative assessment. Simply put, learners should be given the opportunity to draft, receive frequent feedback and edit their output multiple times to improve their writing and learning (Lee, 2017). The last principle is that of providing constructive effective feedback. Lee argues that teachers need to provide their students with "quality" feedback and need to show the ability to adjust feedback types that they use based on pedagogical considerations like the students' needs or levels (Lee, 2017, p. 16).

Despite the importance of classroom writing assessment in improving teaching and learning, AfL is not always effectively implemented in EFL/ESL classrooms for many reasons. First, research has shown that most L2 writing teachers lack assessment literacy as they have not received sufficient training in implementing AfL principles in their classrooms (Crusan et al., 2016). Second, teachers may hold some beliefs about writing assessment and these beliefs can contradict AfL principles and activities which may hinder teaching and learning. Finally, second language teacher education (SLTE) programs are thought to provide little about writing assessment literacy compared with writing instruction and other aspects of teaching and learning. In this paper, I examine writing assessment literacy and its importance in enhancing teaching and learning in ESL/EFL classrooms. The second major objective of this paper is to explore what teachers believe and know about writing assessment and how these beliefs can influence classroom practices. Finally, I discuss the role of SLTE programs in improving writing assessment literacy. Consequently, the research questions are as follows:

- What is writing assessment literacy and why is it important?

- What are second language writing teachers' beliefs, practices, and knowledge about classroom writing assessment?

- What is the role of teacher education in improving writing assessment literacy?

2. Discussion

2.1 The importance of assessment literacy

Assessment Literacy (AL) has been defined as "mastery of knowledge, skills, and principles in planning and developing well-constructed assessment tasks, from which useful assessment data are interpreted and utilized to inform pedagogy and learning", and it also includes "assessment knowledge of designing, implementing, grading, and providing feedback for improving student learning" (Lam, 2019, pp. 78–79). Research suggests a list of skills that teachers need to master to become successful assessors. First, L2 teachers need to be familiar with the different steps of quality assessment design including validity and reliability to be able to evaluate their students' learning and improve classroom practices. Validity is considered "the essential quality of a good assessment" (Green, 2014, p. 75), and it refers to the evidence collected before, during, and after designing the assessment to prove that the interpretation of the assessment data can be valid and trusted in making future decisions (Green, 2014). Assessment reliability, also referred to as "scoring validity" can be granted when the test score reflects the test takers' skills and abilities and when test takers receive the same scores if they take other versions of the test or if their performance is evaluated by other assessors (Knoch & Elder, 2013, p. 51). Second, test users need to make sure that the designed assessment treats all test takers fairly and that interpretations of test results will bring about benefits in society. In general, assessment should be consistent and meaningful in terms of score interpretation for all test takers. The test should also be free of bias against all test takers in terms of content and constructs by avoiding favoring one group of assessees over another (Green, 2014). Third, writing teachers should be able to produce good quality rubrics that are appropriate for providing evidence of the learners' skills and abilities (Knoch & Elder, 2013). Lee (2017, p. 150) has suggested at least seven assessment essentials that writing teachers should be aware of and capable of doing for them to be assessment literate. For example, he suggests that classroom teachers should be able to:

- understand the different purposes of classroom writing assessment and use that to maximize students' learning;

- utilize feedback effectively to improve student learning;

- involve students in self-assessment, peer assessment, goal setting, self-monitoring and self-reflection;

- employ different classroom writing assessment tools to maximize student learning, e.g., teacher feedback forms, error ratio analysis, the error log, peer feedback, and portfolio assessment;

- design effective classroom writing assessment tasks to evaluate student writing, e.g., technology-enhanced writing tasks;

- use assessment effectively to motivate students and help them learn;

- make use of classroom assessment to improve instruction

In this paper, Assessment Literacy (AL) will be used to refer to teachers' knowledge and implementation of effective assessment quality, principles, and skills that are used to improve teaching and learning in second and foreign language writing classrooms.

Research has shown that assessment literacy can have positive consequences on teachers, learners, teaching and learning, and society. For Example, it has been claimed that poor assessment literacy can lead to designing unfair poor quality assessments which is why "writing teachers must be adequately prepared to construct, administer, score, and communicate the results of valid and reliable classroom tests" (Weigle, 2007, p. 195). Moreover, it has been recommended that L2 teachers need to be adequately prepared to design fair assessments that reflect test takers' true writing abilities and skills, create rubrics, and make fair judgments about the assessee's levels as these results can be used to make important decisions that can directly impact students' future like placing a learner at the right level (Popham, 2009). On the other hand, unsuccessful assessment practices can have negative impacts on learners like wasting time, money, and effort in addition to losing self-confidence and motivation. In general, it is widely agreed that poor assessment literacy can "cripple the quality of education" (Popham, 2009, p. 4) and that even efforts made by educational institutions to provide learners with modern equipment and useful materials to improve learning, would be fruitless if teachers are not assessment literate (Mellati & Khademi, 2018; Popham, 2004; Weigle, 2007;).

Furthermore, it has been argued that successful implementation of AfL allows teachers to frequently monitor their student's progress and engage them in the learning process. In addition to this, assessment literacy is said to help teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their practices, and adjust their classroom instruction and teaching materials accordingly to meet their students' needs which enhances both teaching and learning (Mellati & Khademi, 2018).

It is also commonly believed that developing teachers' skills and abilities of rating and providing constructive feedback can increase their self-efficacy and confidence and thereby improves theaters performance (Dempsey et al., 2009).

Finally, poor assessment literacy is thought to have a negative impact on society. Along with this, Taylor (2010) states that second and foreign language students today learn English to get a better job, to take high-scale tests, or enroll in international universities, and if classroom assessments are developed, scored, and interpreted by writing teachers who lack the adequate training, knowledge, and skills to do so, score outcomes may be used inconsistently to make poor decisions that can have negative impacts on society.

2.2 L2 teachers' practices knowledge and beliefs about writing assessment

There is evidence in research that teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching, learning, and assessment can inform their practices in writing assessment (Munoz, 2012). It has been also argued that teachers' beliefs about assessment can influence students' learning outcomes (Brown, 2004). Consequently, it is important to explore what teachers think and know about assessment and how these beliefs inform their practices. Some empirical studies were carried out to investigate second language teachers' knowledge, practices, and beliefs about assessing writing.

Earlier in 1992, Pajares (1992) claims that beliefs are constructed in the early stages of life through the process of enculturation and social construction and thereby they influence people's perceptions (towards themselves and the world) and actions. He then draws from findings in education and suggests that teachers' beliefs are no different than other kinds of beliefs and that by the time teachers start their career, the beliefs that they have constructed as previous learners become very powerful and resistant to change (Pajares,1992; Johnson, 1999). In L2 context, teachers hold some beliefs about writing assessment. Munoz et al. (2012) conducted a study to investigate sixty-two foreign language teachers' beliefs and implementation of a new oral and written assessment system at a university in Colombia. For the assessment of writing, teachers use the "assessment of writing system" which consists of a set of writing rubrics aligned with standards to be used for each course. In addition, it contains suggested tasks, writing conventions to check grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling problems, and some guidelines for teaching and assessing writing. Teachers' beliefs were examined in four areas based on Brown' (2004) four conceptions of assessment purposes. These conceptions state that; 1) "assessment improves students' learning and the quality of teaching", 2) "assessment can be used to account for a teacher's, a school's, or a system's use of society's resources ... to demonstrate that they are doing a good job", 3) "students are held individually accountable for their learning through assessment" and 4) "assessment has no legitimate place within teaching and learning". Data were collected through surveys, writing reports, and interviews. Data analysis revealed that

participant teachers hold positive beliefs about assessment and they think that assessment can be used to improve teaching and learning. The findings also showed that though the teachers think that assessment serves formative purposes in that it can help them acknowledge the changes that they should make to improve their classroom practice, they showed a preference to use traditional summative assessment (AoL). In fact, they reported some challenges they encountered when using formative assessment due to a lack of understanding of the new assessment approach and how to use assessment results to improve teaching and learning. This study showed a dissonance between the participants' expressed beliefs and real classroom practices. However, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on teachers' beliefs about writing assessment as it only investigates teachers' beliefs and knowledge regarding using assessment to enhance learning and teaching but it did not explore teachers' beliefs and knowledge in other essential issues like assessment quality, rating, using rubrics, etc.

Crusan et al. (2016) conducted a study to investigate what second language teachers know about writing assessment, how they have learned what they know, their beliefs about writing assessment, and their classroom practices. A survey with 54 items was created based on researchers' and scholars' (Malone, 2013; Mertler, 2009; Popham, 2009; Scarino, 2013; Stiggins, 2002; Taylor, 2010 as cited in Crusan et al., 2016, p. 47) recommendations about the most important aspects of assessment literacy that writing assessment teachers should know. The survey included multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended response items. The findings revealed that most teachers think that assessment is an interesting and essential part of teaching. Almost half of the participants believe that using rubrics is important in helping their students understand feedback while 27% of them think that their students do not pay attention to rubrics. In terms of scoring, findings reveal a discrepancy in the participants' beliefs as more than half of them think that scoring is not accurate while the same percentage think that scoring is not subjective. Most of them think that reliability in scoring is difficult and that rater training is not helpful. In terms of assessment methods, the majority of the participants think that portfolios and self-assessment are good tools for writing assessments. What was surprising in the generated data however was that 70% of the teachers believe that multiple-choice items are suitable for assessing writing while only 35% think that essay exams are more appropriate. In terms of practice, data analysis revealed the majority of the participants use AfL tools including process writing, formative assessment, and multiple drafting. Finally, teacher participants reported that the rubrics they use in class are either adopted from standardized tests or are locally developed and that when assessing their students' writing they use multiple-choice tasks in addition to other performance-based tasks.

Results from this study revealed that the teachers hold some knowledge about writing assessment. The findings also confirmed claims that teachers' beliefs and knowledge influence their classroom practices.

However, there is evidence in research that there is a difference between teachers' beliefs and actual classroom practices (Borg, 2001). Consequently, further research is needed to explore how teachers' beliefs inform their practices through qualitative data collection including interviews, classroom observations, and/or video recording of teaching episodes.

Lam (2019) carried out a study to examine Hong Kong secondary school teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices in classroom-based writing assessment. Sixty-six teachers responded to surveys that include questions about their knowledge (assessment theories, understanding of and rationale behind using AoL, Assessment for Learning and AfL and Assessment, and the challenges they may encounter when learning about writing assessment theories), beliefs (opinion of nature, purpose, and effectiveness of alternative writing assessment) and practices (frequency and types of writing assessment assigned to students, types of feedback provided and their effectiveness) in writing assessment. Interviews were conducted to gather more data about teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. Three of the teachers who were interviewed were observed twice to see how they conduct classroom-based writing assessments. During the observed episodes, students were taught how to compose argumentation using multiple drafts, self-assessment, peer assessment, and the portfolio approach. The findings revealed that the teachers are knowledgeable about classroom assessment but not in theories of reliability and validity. The participants held positive beliefs about classroom assessment, were confident in using assessment to enhance writing performance, and attempted using process writing, conferencing, portfolio assessment, and rubric-referenced assessment in their classrooms. However, the data also showed that teachers think that they are not assessment literate as they have a limited understanding of AfL. This was confirmed later after observing writing assessment episodes. Indeed, Lam (2019) reported that teachers were not ready to take up their new roles as writing assessors and that despite attempts to use post-writing activities, assessment results were not used to enhance teaching and/or learning.

The three studies showed that though writing teachers hold positive beliefs about AfL and think that it can enhance teaching and learning, most of them were unable to implement its principles and practices either because they were not confident enough or because they did not know how to use assessment results to improve their instruction and their students' writing outcomes. Consequently, all the researchers in the studies discussed above recommended that teachers need to improve their assessment literacy through teacher education and professional development.

2.3 The role of SLTE in improving writing assessment literacy

Teacher education refers to the "mastery of subject-specific knowledge and skills, which govern what teachers think and do when carrying out a change in their pedagogical and assessment practices" (Wilson

& Berne, 1999 as cited in Lam 2018, p. 100). There is limited research that investigates the role of teacher education in improving classroom writing assessment literacy (Lee, 2017). It is also commonly agreed that second language teacher education programs pay no or little attention to assessment development (Stiggins, 2002).

Dempsey et al. (2019) explored the effects of using an internet-based critical thinking tool on pre-service teachers' proficiency progress in writing assessment, their confidence for writing assessment, and their writing assessment skills, knowledge, beliefs, and practices. The researchers tracked potential progress in teachers' knowledge of the writing rubric and in assessment skills and their self-efficacy for assessing. Participants were provided scaffolded practice with authentic writing assessment tasks and were later asked to reflect on the experience and on what they had learned. The findings revealed that writing teachers made significant progress in building conscious recognition of the declarative rules underlying an analytic writing assessment system and they showed significant increases in self-efficacy for assessing writing tasks. Moreover, the study revealed that expert feedback helped teachers improve their writing assessment knowledge and practices as well as their ability to assess authentic students' assessments. It also showed that online professional training can help enhance teachers' confidence, a trait that its absence can impact teachers' decisions and practices of writing assessment in the classroom. However, the findings only showed the progress of the participants during the course but there is no evidence that this progress will be seen in real classroom contexts on a long-term basis or if it leads to better learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study only focuses on improving teachers' skills and knowledge in rating writing assessments and in improving their self-efficacy towards assessment but it did not touch upon other skills and challenges that are thought to be essential in teaching teachers about writing assessment. Researchers also reported that the participants did not use "think about" tasks so often. Consequently, if this tool is incorporated with face to face teacher education program (in which features like "think about" and other activities are guided by teacher educators) instead of a stand-alone course, it may lead to better teaching and learning outcomes.

Mellati & Khademi (2018) conducted a study to investigate teachers' assessment literacy development and its impact on their current assessment practices, and on their students' learning outcomes. Both ESL teachers and learners participated in the study. As for learners, they were divided into two groups: The first group was taught by teachers with high assessment literacy, and the second group was taught by teachers with low assessment literacy. Data analysis showed that AL has a statistically significant impact on teachers' assessment practices, and on learners' writing achievement and abilities. The findings also revealed that there is a great difference between classroom practices taught by assessment literate and illiterate teachers. Assessing literate teachers' practices were characterized by setting goals based on learners' interests,

dynamic assessment through classroom assignments, and giving feedback. Writing assessment literate teachers claimed that their practices were the result of effective teacher education. On the other hand, writing assessment illiterate teachers reported other reasons for their failure in implementing formative assessment in the classroom like time constraints and limited knowledge in some aspects of assessment. The findings strengthened our confidence in the importance of teacher education in improving teachers' knowledge and learners' writing outcomes. However, it is worth mentioning that the study only focused on the impact of teacher education on improving teachers' knowledge about using dynamic assessment to improve learners' achievement, while other aspects that are considered essential in writing assessment literacy (like knowledge of feedback, error correction, assessment quality, and rating) were absent from the study. Further investigation of these aspects is required to determine the effectiveness of teacher learning in improving teachers' knowledge and skills in all writing assessment aspects.

In another case study, Lam (2018) investigated the impact of teacher education on the trial of portfolio assessment and the influence of school contextual factors on implementing this approach. Portfolio assessment includes self-assessment, learner reflection, continued monitoring, and reviewing of composing process (self-regulated learning). Two experienced teachers; Willy and Winifred from two different local schools in Hong Kong participated in this study. The findings revealed that the impact of teacher education programs depends on how teachers internalize the connection between theory and practice and make knowledge transfer as part of professional development. Willy failed to understand the pedagogical rationale of portfolio assessment (such as using self-reflection to align teaching and assessment of writing to improve learning) and he only carried it out as a set of technical procedures because he followed the practices of portfolio assessment uncritically and without taking his students' preferences and the school system and context into consideration. On the other hand, Winifred developed a "transferring approach" to try and evaluate what she learned in the teacher development course in her classroom context by performing school-based collaborative inquiry.

This study showed that teacher education could help teachers understand writing assessment and improve their practices if they can implement it with a critical eye in their classroom. However, this study did not report on the impact of the implementation of the portfolio assessment on learners' outcomes. It was only based on the researcher's conclusions hence if supported with data about learners' achievement as a result of the implementation of this approach, findings could be more accurate. Finally, Willy's inability to implement formative assessment could be attributed to the failure of the teacher education program to prepare student teachers for such a challenge.

Lee (2010) investigated writing teachers' perspectives on their progress during a writing teacher education

program in a small-scale study. Data were collected through interviews and classroom research. The study showed that the teacher education program helped teacher participants to challenge some of their old beliefs and practices about assessment and feedback and instead adopt new student-centered approaches that encourage peer feedback. The findings also highlight the role of teacher education practices like critical reflection and narrative inquiry in helping student teachers relate theory to practice and realize the importance of classroom specificities and context.

3. Conclusion

My discussion has confirmed claims in literature that most L2 classroom teachers hold some beliefs about effective writing assessment and that these beliefs may contradict AfL principles and practices and can thereby influence classroom instruction, learning, and teaching. My discussion has also revealed that second language teacher education can be effective in improving classroom teachers' writing assessment literacy if certain principles are put into practice.

First, drawing from a sociocultural and social constructivist framework, teacher education pedagogies need to shift to a "learn to teach" (Freeman & Johnson) pedagogy. In other words, as teachers' beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning are socially constructed from previous learning experiences and through interaction with peers, teachers, and communities, learning to teach in teacher education programs should follow the same process of experiential learning. Simply put, raising student teachers' awareness of their beliefs and helping them challenge and rethink these beliefs should be the primary goal of teacher education programs (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Research in teacher education has suggested using critical reflection tasks, (Wallace, 1991; Crandall, 2000; Farrel, 2009), group discussions (Singh & Richards, 2006), teacher narrative, and storytelling (Crandall, 2000; Xu & Connelly, 2009) and peer coaching and collaborative teaching (Vacilotto & Cummings, 2007) to help student teachers reflect on their beliefs. In L2 writing assessment context, reflection is considered essential in improving assessment literacy (Lam, 2018, Lee, 2010). Without implementing these strategies in teacher education pedagogies, these courses will remain ineffective, and writing teachers will end up with a new set of principles and theories that they are unable to implement in their actual classrooms as "development implies change, and fruitful change is extremely difficult without reflection" (Wallace, 1991, p. 54).

Second, the analysis of the studies presented in this paper shows that teacher education programs should include all important assessment principles and practices that allow writing teachers to create, administer, and use the data of the assessment properly and fairly to make important decisions about teaching and learning.

Third, my discussion revealed the importance of preparing writing teachers for assessment context specificity. Student teachers need to understand that the assessment-specific context in which it takes place like students' goals and the institution policy, need to be taken into consideration (Davies, 2008). As Scarino (2013) aptly puts it, assessment is "situated in distinctive institutional and policy contexts that confer on the assessment process particular characteristics and requirements" (p. 311). Consequently, for teacher education and professional development to be effective, it should be comprehensive of all assessment principles and practices, adaptative to different teaching contexts, and continuing.

4. Implications, limitations, and recommendations for further studies

This research has some implications for writing assessment teachers, teacher education program designers, and researchers.

Findings from this review can help writing assessment teachers realize the importance of developing writing AL in improving their performance, raising their confidence, and improving their learners' writing outcomes. It may also help them realize that some of their beliefs and prior knowledge are powerful and may negatively impact their teaching and assessment practices. This may encourage them to reflect on their practices and exchange and discuss their beliefs not only in teacher education programs but also in informal contexts with their colleagues.

Furthermore, this review can encourage researchers to conduct more empirical studies to evaluate in-depth the effectiveness of teacher learning programs in improving teachers' writing AL.

Finally, discussing the importance of writing AL and its mutually informing relationship with learning can help teacher education program designers realize the importance of including writing assessment in their courses mainly that this review reveals that second and foreign language teachers lack writing AL and hold some wrong and contradicted beliefs that may impact not only assessing their students but also their learning outcomes.

Although this review has some implications, it is difficult to draw accurate conclusions from the studies discussed above. Regarding teachers' practices, knowledge, and beliefs about writing AL, further research is needed to examine the relationship between teachers' expressed beliefs and classroom practices. As for teacher education programs, it is also difficult to draw conclusions about the role of teacher learning and education in improving writing assessment literacy based on these studies for many reasons. First, all the studies focused on improving teachers' writing literacy in specific areas in writing assessment (like scoring and using assessment to improve learning and teaching) but they did not cover other aspects that are said

to be essential (like improving teachers' knowledge and skills in assessment quality; validity, reliability, and fairness, giving feedback, interpreting results, etc.). Second, all the studies discussed above except for the first one did not provide a description of the content and pedagogy of the teacher education courses and without this information, it is difficult to say if the challenges encountered by some participants were caused by the limitations of the program itself or other factors. Finally, it is worth mentioning that there is a death of empirical studies that investigate the role of teacher education in improving writing assessment literacy and these studies cannot be accurate representations of the effectiveness of these programs. Consequently, further empirical studies are required. I suggest conducting a longitudinal empirical study that investigates the impact of taking a teacher education program on teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and practices in writing assessment. Data can be collected quantitatively from a large representative sample and it should be supported with qualitative data through interviews and classroom observations of teachers to observe any potential changes in the teachers' AL not only in theory but also in practice. In addition to this, their students' writing outcomes could be evaluated to measure any possible progress.

Furthermore, as classroom assessment has not received sufficient attention in teacher education programs, there were attempts from researchers, scholars, and teachers to fill this gap by providing teachers with skills and knowledge that they need in educational assessment (Popham, 2009). Weigle (2007) provides some criteria to help teachers develop writing assessment that meets the qualities of effective assessment and this includes the quality of reliability, validity, and applicability. In addition to this, she suggests some skills that teachers need to learn to improve their AL and which include "setting measurable objectives, deciding how to assess objectives, setting tasks, and scoring," etc. In addition to this, writing assessment teachers can always improve their literacy by relying on other effective resources like the regional associations of language testing specialists that hold annual conferences, assessment-related sessions held in international conferences such as TESOL, and other books and research that discuss assessment issues in clear terminology (Weigle, 2007). Until teacher education programs begin integrating writing AL in their programs, writing assessment teachers can rely on these resources and recommendations to improve their writing AL.

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