

**Book Review: Fostering Language
Assessment Literacy: Materials,
Methods, and Emerging Issues.
Edited by Frank Giraldo & Xun Yan
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By this point, language assessment literacy (LAL) has established itself as a fundamental concept in applied linguistics and language testing. Determining the scope of LAL and outlining the concepts abilities and knowledge necessary for competent assessment practice were the main goals of early research in this field (Davies 2008; Fulcher 2012). However, more recent research has focused on the contextual developmental and stakeholder-dependent aspects of LAL raising concerns about the definition of assessment literacy as well as how it is acquired applied and maintained in practice (Kremmel & Harding, 2020).

The latter question is the focus of *Fostering Language Assessment Literacy: Materials Methods and Emerging Issues*. The volume which was edited by Frank Giraldo and Xun Yan presents itself as an educational intervention in the field rather

than as another effort to improve conceptual definitions of LAL. Examining how LAL can be promoted through resources classes workshops and cutting-edge pedagogical approaches in various educational contexts is its declared goal. By doing this the volume addresses a recurring issue in LAL research: the discrepancy between theoretical explanations of assessment literacy and the actualities of teacher preparation and classroom-based assessment.

What distinguishes this volume from earlier discussions of LAL is its explicit pedagogical orientation. Rather than treating assessment literacy primarily as a conceptual or technical competence, the editors reposition it as a socially mediated process of professional learning. Nevertheless, the volume occasionally assumes that pedagogical intervention itself necessarily leads to improved assessment practice, an assumption that remains only partially substantiated by the empirical evidence presented across chapters

Throughout the volume the editors' position is expressed in a clear and consistent manner. Deficit-oriented labels like assessment illiteracy are specifically rejected and LAL is viewed as a situated and developmental construct. Rather the chapters collectively promote an understanding of LAL as a professional learning trajectory influenced by sociocultural contexts institutional limitations and teachers experiences. This approach is in line with new empirical models of LAL that reject one-size-fits-all competence frameworks and highlight variability among stakeholder groups (Kremmel & Harding, 2020).

The volume is remarkably coherent from an editorial standpoint for a collection with multiple authors. The introductory and concluding chapters successfully place individual contributions within larger discussions in language assessment and the three-part structure—materials courses and workshops and emerging issues—offers a clear organizing logic. The editors dedication to contextualization is reinforced by the fact that despite the fact that the empirical and methodological approaches differ between chapters this diversity is presented as a strength rather than a drawback.

However, the strong editorial coherence also produces a certain degree of conceptual uniformity. While the contributors consistently endorse situated and developmental understandings of LAL, relatively little space is devoted to theoretical disagreement or competing interpretations of assessment literacy. As a result, the volume occasionally privileges consensus over intellectual tension, limiting opportunities for deeper theoretical debate.

The design and use of materials to promote LAL is covered in the volumes first section. This topic has not gotten much attention in the literature which has tended to favor formal courses and workshops (Fulcher, 2020). The chapters in this section present a strong argument for considering resources as mediational tools that influence how teachers understand and apply assessment concepts rather than as impartial

repositories of assessment knowledge. These chapters are noteworthy for consistently relying on needs analysis and practitioner input. Since LAL development is seen as dialogic rather than transmissive materials are created with teachers rather than for them. This method gives the reported findings ecological validity and is in line with modern viewpoints on teacher professional development. Critically speaking, however, the section does a better job of proving that materials matter than it does of explaining how design principles might apply outside of the particular contexts examined. Readers looking for more explicit cross-chapter synthesis may find themselves doing some of the conceptual work on their own even though this limitation may be unavoidable in context-sensitive research. In addition, several chapters implicitly frame materials as inherently facilitative of LAL development without sufficiently interrogating how institutional constraints, curriculum mandates, or assessment cultures may restrict teachers' ability to implement newly acquired assessment knowledge. Consequently, the relationship between resource design and actual classroom transformation sometimes appears more optimistic than critically examined.

The second section focuses on LAL workshops and courses a well-known topic in assessment literacy research. Crucially the chapters refrain from practicing familiar course material (e. g. (g)). Instead concentrate on pedagogical design participant engagement and delivery methods (validity reliability scoring). A growing understanding that exposure to assessment concepts alone does not ensure significant professional learning is reflected in this change in emphasis (Fulcher, 2020).

A number of chapters look at large-scale and online formats such as a massive open online course (MOOC) for language instructors. Given the growing importance of digital professional development in language instruction these contributions are especially pertinent. Although online environments are demonstrated to provide scalability and access they also raise enduring issues with interactional depth feedback and sustained engagement. As a result, the analyses presented are suitably cautious. As a result the volume steers clear of both excessive optimism and blind enthusiasm for digital LAL initiatives. Throughout this section the significance of task-based reflective and collaborative learning is emphasized. The positioning of teachers as active sense-makers as opposed to passive recipients of assessment knowledge is in line with current perspectives in teacher education and language testing. However, it should be noted that self-reported learning perceptions are a major component of the empirical evidence presented. Although such data are useful the volume provides little insight into how long-term changes in assessment practices result from participation in LAL courses—a limitation that is acknowledged but not thoroughly examined.

This methodological reliance on perception-based evidence reflects a broader tendency within LAL research to prioritize attitudinal change over observable assessment behavior. Although participants frequently report increased confidence and awareness following LAL interventions, the volume provides comparatively

limited evidence demonstrating whether these developments result in sustained improvements in assessment validity, feedback quality, or classroom decision-making practices

Perhaps the most forward-looking part of the book is the third section which focuses on new problems in LAL pedagogies. The book goes beyond its customary focus on in-service teachers by concentrating on teacher educators LAL assessment for young language learners and critical language assessment literacy (CLAL). It is especially appreciated that teacher educators are included.

This group has gotten comparatively little consistent attention in LAL research despite their crucial role in indirectly influencing assessment practices. These sections chapters present a strong argument for considering LAL as a cumulative recursive process that applies to a variety of professional roles. In a similar vein, the focus on evaluation for young students emphasizes how inadequate it is to merely apply adult-oriented assessment frameworks to early language instruction. This contribution emphasizes the importance of differentiated assessment literacies and expands the scope of LAL inquiry. At the same time, the volume's treatment of diversity among learner populations could have been extended further through greater engagement with multilingual, transnational, or under-resourced educational settings. Although contextualization is repeatedly emphasized, much of the discussion still reflects institutional environments where professional development opportunities and assessment infrastructures are relatively accessible

The chapters on social justice and critical LAL address an aspect of assessment literacy that has long been recognized in theory but frequently ignored in practice (Davies, 2008; Fulcher, 2012). The volume supports the claim that LAL cannot be reduced to technical proficiency alone by emphasizing issues of power justice and ethical responsibility. From an LTIF standpoint this criticality engagement is both appropriate and essential. However framing these subjects as emerging issues begs the question of what is still outside the purview of the volume. While digital delivery is discussed automated assessment and artificial intelligence—two rapidly emerging fields—get less attention. As a result readers may see this section more as a selective indication of promising directions than as a thorough map of emerging issues. When considered as a whole, *Fostering Language Assessment Literacy: Materials Methods and Emerging Issues* is a careful and well-considered addition to the literature on LAL. Its main strength is its consistent emphasis on professional learning and pedagogy which has frequently been eclipsed by conceptual and technical issues in language testing research. The volume advances an understanding of LAL as a socially situated and developmental construct by emphasizing context stakeholder voices and reflective practice (Kremmel & Harding, 2020). Even so, the volume occasionally reflects an unresolved tension between conceptual flexibility and practical applicability. By emphasizing the contextual and dynamic nature of LAL, the contributors successfully resist reductive competence models; however, this same flexibility sometimes makes

it difficult to determine how LAL development should ultimately be evaluated, measured, or operationalized across educational contexts.

It is best to view the volumes limitations—most notably its reliance on self-report data and its primary focus on teachers and teacher educators—as reflections of more general difficulties in LAL research rather than as flaws specific to this book. In fact the studies presented here highlight the conceptual and methodological work that needs to be done if assertions regarding the effects of LAL pedagogy are to be more solidly supported. All things considered, Giraldo and Yans edited collection is successful in redefining language assessment literacy as an educational endeavor as opposed to a static body of knowledge. Researchers studying language testing teacher educators and graduate students interested in professional development and assessment literacy will all find it extremely pertinent. It provides a detailed and nuanced explanation of how LAL can be promoted in practice even though it is not meant to be an introduction. In doing so, it significantly adds to the ongoing discussions surrounding language testing and assessment. Its most valuable contribution lies not merely in cataloguing pedagogical initiatives, but in reframing LAL as an ongoing process of negotiation among teachers, institutions, ideologies, and assessment practices. Although certain methodological and technological dimensions remain underexplored, the collection succeeds in advancing a more nuanced and pedagogically grounded understanding of language assessment literacy within contemporary applied linguistics scholarship.

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