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**Middle School Teachers' Assessment Literacy:
Teachers' Perceptions and Practices**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in
didactics of foreign languages

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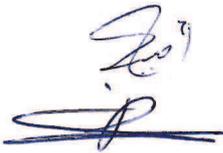
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Declaration

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Middle School Teachers’ Assessment Literacy: Perceptions and Practices**” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized first name and a surname, with a horizontal line underneath.

Date

September 16th, 2021

Dedication

To the people who believed in me, gave me invaluable pieces of advice, encouraged and supported me consistently:

To my family members

To my friend Melissa

I dedicate this work

And as many letters as this research holds

*I am immensely grateful to my wonderful partner “**Yassamine**”*

Amina

To the memory of my father

To my mother

To my sisters and brothers

To my amazing partner “**Amina**”

I dedicate this work

Yassamine

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate all praise be to Allah. Nothing was there when He was; nothing will be there when He will be. He is the beginning. He is the end.

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Abstract

Effective language teaching and learning hinge upon a number of fundamental elements, one of which is teachers' assessment literacy. Adequate assessment literacy levels establish a solid base for appropriate classroom assessment practices. This evidently promotes the academic achievements of the teacher and the student alike. The study in hand attempts to appraise middle school teachers' preparedness and perceptions of their assessment literacy as well as to investigate their assessment practices in a curriculum that is competency-based. To achieve the aims of the study, the quantitative paradigm was opted for. Accordingly, the data were gathered through the use of a questionnaire administered to thirty five randomly selected middle school teachers in Jijel. The findings indicated that the majority of teachers have an average assessment literacy level and reported the need to receive in-service training in language assessment. Furthermore, the teachers' assessment practices are partially compatible with the principles of Competency-based Language Teaching. While most of the teachers reported using assessment to enhance and support learning through using different formal and informal tools and involving students in the assessment process by engaging them in self- and peer-assessment activities, they still rely mostly on traditional classroom assessment procedures. Based on the results obtained, some pedagogical recommendations and suggestions are provided.

Key words: Assessment, assessment literacy, assessment practices, the competency-based curriculum, middle school, perceptions.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AL: Assessment Literacy

BEM: Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen

CBA: Competency Based Approach

CBLT: Competency Based Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ENS: École Normale Supérieure

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

LAL: Language Assessment Literacy

LMD: Licence Master Doctorat

TAL: Teachers' Assessment Literacy

AFT: The American Federation of Teachers

NCME: The National Council on Measurement in Education

NEA: The National Education Association

TIE: The Institute of Technology of Education

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1. Background of the Study

Assessment is a critical process where teachers are required to check out students' performance and progress. Its primary importance can be shown on the hugely influential role it has on learning. Fredericksen and Collins (1989) stated that "the goal of assessment has to be, above all, to support the improvement of teaching and learning" (p.32). This implies that sound assessment practices are called for if this goal is to be realized. Hence, assessment literacy is a vital criterion in determining the quality of learning and teaching, poor or excellent. Adequate levels of assessment literacy enable teachers to be equipped with a number of important skills including gathering information, familiarizing students with their levels of learning and understanding, formulating "immediate and long-term goals" based on assessment information, and making needed adjustments to instruction (Seigel & Wissehr, 2011, p. 374). Conversely, the lack of assessment literacy can prevent from performing various assessment tasks and can be a potentially serious problem for both teachers and students.

Recently, researchers have made major efforts in the entity of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL). In an attempt to uncover issues such as assessment training needs of teachers and stakeholders, teachers' perceived confidence and attitudes towards assessment practices and theories, as well as their background knowledge; different surveys and questionnaires were proposed. DeLuca and Klinger's (2010) study mainly aimed at investigating teacher candidates' perceived confidence levels in assessment practice, theory, and philosophy. The findings of the study revealed that the teacher candidates reported to have relatively high confidence levels in several theoretical and practical aspects of assessment. Yet, the findings also supported the need to develop teacher assessment literacy through the direct instruction in specific aspects of assessment. Fulcher (2012) developed and delivered an online survey instrument to discover language teachers' assessment training needs. Based on the findings of

his survey, Fulcher (2012) called for an approach to assessment literacy to meet the needs of the teachers regarding the knowledge, skills, and principles of assessment within a larger historical, social, political, and ethical framework. Through an international survey administered in Survey Monkey, Crusan et al. (2016) investigated second language teachers' writing assessment literacy (backgrounds and perspectives). The results of the study revealed positive views of the teachers regarding their knowledge of writing assessment despite their lack of confidence in some of their assessment abilities (e.g., rubric creation). Another recent survey was conducted by Harding and Kremmel (2019) through an empirical investigation of LAL needs of different stakeholders. The results of the study suggested that LAL comprises a structure of nine developmental components (e.g. developing and administering language assessment, assessment principles, language structure, etc).

In the last decades, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), a framework to education which was introduced in the US and succeeded in meeting students' needs and demands, has received growing attention in many countries. In this regard, Richards (2015)(as cited in Bouchair, 2018) pointed out that “recently, competency-based frameworks have become adopted in many countries, particularly for vocational and technical education”, and that “they are also increasingly being adopted in national language curriculums” (p. 79). The CBA includes the integration of a number of skills, attitudes, and knowledge in order to master pre-determined competencies.

In the Algerian context, the CBA was adopted in the Algerian national curriculum since 2003 in an attempt to help learners build up competencies and abilities to deal with real life situations. More importantly, “the Competency-based Approach was introduced in order to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application” (Bouchair, 2018, p. 3). Assessments in the competency-based programs are aligned with tasks and activities

commonly encountered in real life. Additionally, they are an indispensable part of teaching/learning, for they provide insights about students' mastery of competencies.

2. Statement of the Problem

Through the implementation of the Competency-Based Language Teaching (CBLT), the Algerian Ministry of Education has sought to expand the degree of instruction accountability and to set high standards for students' accomplishment. However, achieving such goals requires a sound assessment system owing to the fact that assessment is deemed as a vital part of education. Furthermore, appropriate assessment procedures represent a crucial part in guaranteeing the accomplishment of instructional goals and objectives. For that matter, teachers have to be knowledgeable of the different types of assessment to be used in the classroom and aware of implementing them fairly to accommodate each and every student interests and needs. Hence, the present study seeks to obtain clear insights about the knowledge and use of assessment by middle school teachers in Jijel.

3. Aims of the Study

The present study mainly seeks to investigate the assessment literacy of middle school teachers as well as their preparedness to perform assessment tasks in a curriculum that is competency-based. Additionally, it aims to examine the assessment practices of the teachers, and the extent to which these practices are compatible with the principles of competency-based language teaching.

4. Research Questions

The piece of research in hand is conducted to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the middle school teachers' perceptions of their assessment literacy levels?
- 2- To what extent are the middle school teachers' practices compatible with the CBA principles?

5. Research Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, a questionnaire will be used. It will be administered to a sample of middle school teachers of English in Jijel with the purpose of collecting quantitative data concerning exploring teachers' awareness of their language assessment level, and investigating the compatibility of their practices with the CBA principles.

6. Structure of the Study

The present research work consists of two main chapters. The first chapter is devoted to the theoretical framework while the second is concerned with the practical part.

The first chapter is divided into two sections. The first one is mainly concerned with assessment and LAL. It includes a definition of the concept of assessment, a distinction between the terms assessment, test, and evaluation, the different types of assessment and its main principles. The section extends to define both LAL and AL, briefly discusses the importance of the latter, and finally examines the educational assessment standards for teachers. The second section, on the other hand, deals with the place of assessment in the Algerian middle school competency-based curriculum. It involves an overview of the Algerian education system, the integration of the CBA in Algeria, and the revised curriculum of 2016. It also examines the principles of assessment in CBLT and sheds light on assessment within the Algerian middle school syllabuses of English.

The second chapter is about the fieldwork. It starts with a description of the instrument and population of the research. The results obtained are then thoroughly analyzed and discussed. The chapter ends with some pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for further research as well as the limitations encountered when conducting the research.

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Introduction

Assessment is considered as a powerful tool to evaluate students' learning progress and performance with a purpose of making any possible improvements based on the results obtained. However, this can be achieved only if teachers have a decent knowledge base concerning assessment and its components and principles. The current chapter is devoted to explore key concepts of the topic. The first section focuses on introducing the terms assessment and LAL, discusses the different types and principles of assessment. It also includes definitions of both assessment literacy and language assessment literacy, and a brief discussion of its importance and sheds light on the educational assessment standards for teachers. The second section evokes the place assessment takes in the Algerian middle school competency-based curriculum. Before delving into the details of assessment in CBLT, it starts with an overview of the Algerian educational system. It also points out to the integration of the CBA in Algeria, followed by a short examination of the revised curriculum of 2016 (Second Generation Competency-based Curriculum). The last part of the section deals with the principles of assessment in CBLT in addition to a brief discussion about assessment in the middle school syllabuses.

Section one: Assessment and Language Assessment Literacy

1.1. Assessment: Definitions, Principles, and Types

1.1.1. Defining Assessment

Assessment has been primarily used to describe the process through which we can verify whether the intended learning outcomes have been met. Accordingly, teachers tend to use assessments as means for measuring students' achievements and making instructional decisions based on the results obtained. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined assessment as "a systematic approach to collecting information and making inferences about the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course on the basis of various sources of

evidence.” (p35). In other words, assessment is a process that seeks to check out students’ abilities and performance and the extent to which the teaching procedures are successful. According to the Assessment Reform Group (2002), assessment is “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers, to identify where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go, and how best to get there”(p.2). That is to say, assessment information is helpful to both the learner and the teacher since it indicates the current learning situation of the former and makes a strong basis for the latter to plan for regulation.

1.1.2. Assessment, Testing, and Evaluation

In the teaching learning environment, different terminologies can be encountered such as assessment, tests and evaluation. These terms are all used in education to refer to the process of measuring students’ progress and their mastery of the taught materials in relation to the stated goals and objectives. However, despite the important differences between them, these terms are often used interchangeably by teachers and education professionals to mean the same thing (Kizlik, 2014). Dr Kizlik (2014) argues that understanding the properties, purposes, as well as the similarities and differences between these key concepts is a "fundamental component of the knowledge base of professional teachers". And as Adom et al. (2020, p. 109) further put it, until classroom teachers' achieve this, "an effective educational assessment will remain a mirage."

The terms assessment and test are usually used as synonyms, however; it is important to differentiate between the two of them. Brown (2003) defined tests as “prepared administrative procedures that occur at identifiable times in a curriculum when learners master all faculties to offer peak performance, knowing that their responses are being measured and evaluated” (p.4). On the other hand, assessment is an ongoing process that involves a broader set of procedures (p. 4). Based on Brown’s definitions, two major differences can be noted: the first

one is that a test is a form of assessment, and the second one is that assessment occurs on a regular basis while tests occur at a given point in time. A more precise definition of language tests is provided by Hedge (2000) who stated that tests are “the specific procedures that teachers and examiners employ to try to measure ability in the language, using what learners show they know as an indicator of their ability” (p.378).

In the same vein, evaluation is another term that is also used interchangeably with assessment. It is defined by Richards and Schmidt (2002) as the “systematic gathering of information for purposes of decision-making” (p.188). According to Nunan (1992), there is a clear distinction between assessment and evaluation. He considered the former as “the processes and procedures whereby we determine what learners are able to do in the target language whereby we determine what learners are able to do in the target language” and the latter as “a wider range of processes which may or may not include assessment data” (p. 185).

1.1.3. Language Assessment Principles

Brown (2003) proposed five principles that any language test should be based on: Practicality, validity, reliability, authenticity, and washback. These principles are also applicable to any kind of language assessment.

1.1.3.1. Practicality

Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined practicality as “the relationship between the resources that will be required in the design, development, and use of the test and the resources that will be available for these activities” (p.36). Hence, both teachers and syllabus designers should be aware of the resources needed for the development of assessment tasks and the resources available in classrooms for these tasks. According to Brown (2003), the practicality of a test is determined in terms of cost (not too expensive to conduct), time (within appropriate time constraints), administration (not too complex or complicated to conduct), scoring (time-efficient and easy to score and evaluate) (p. 19).

1.1.3.2.Validity

Validity is another important consideration in assessment that deals with accuracy and correctness of methods and procedures of assessment. According to Hughes (2003), “a test is said to be valid if it measures accurately what is intended to measure” (p. 26). The validity of a test can be established through five different types of evidence; namely, content validity, criterion-related validity, construct-related validity, consequential validity, and face validity(Brown, 2003, p. 22).

1.1.3.3.Reliability

Miller, Linn and Grounlund (2009) defined reliability as the consistency of measurement i.e. the consistency of test scores or assessment results from one measurement to another (p. 107). Assessments reliability may be affected by a number of factors including the student himself (physical and psychological factors e.g. illness and anxiety), administration (conditions in which the test is administered), rater reliability (human error, bias, subjectivity, etc), and the test itself (ambiguity of items, length, etc) (Brown, 2003, p. 21).

1.1.3.4.Authenticity

Bachman and Palmer (1996) defined authenticity as “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language use task” (p. 23). Brown (2003, p. 28) considered the following ways for a test to be authentic:

- Language of the test is as natural as possible.
- Items of the test are contextualized rather than isolated.
- The topics are meaningful to learners.
- Test represents (or approximately) real world tasks.
- Thematic organization of the items.

1.1.3.5. Washback

Richards and Schmidt (2002) defined washback as “the positive or negative impact of a test on classroom teaching and learning” (p. 586). That is to say, if the assessment has a positive washback, it will result in having positive attitudes and willingness of working from both teachers and learners. On the other hand, if the washback is negative, the assessment may not have any beneficial consequences.

1.1.4. Types of Assessment

Assessments can take multiple forms: formal and informal assessment, summative and formative assessment, peer and self-assessment.

1.1.4.1. Formal and Informal Assessment

According to Brown (2003), “Informal assessment can take a number of forms, starting with incidental, unplanned comments and responses, along with coaching and other impromptu feedback to the student” (p.5). Thus, informal assessment appears in the form of unplanned, spontaneous comments on students’ performance and “can be used at any time without interfering with instructional time” (Navarrete et al., 1990, p.5). It can include such expressions as “Nice job”, “you can do more”. On the other hand, “formal assessments are systematic planned sampling techniques constructed to give teachers and students an appraisal of student achievement” (Brown, 2003, p.6). Both formal and informal assessments are not intended to make final decisions about students, but they rather are “indicative of the student’s performance on the skill or subject of interest” (Navarrete et al., 1990, p.5).

1.1.4.2. Formative and Summative Assessment

The term formative assessment has been defined by different scholars. Black and William (1998) considered formative assessment “as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (pp. 7-8). Popham (2018)

stated that “formative assessment is a planned process in which assessment-elicited evidence of students’ status is used by teachers to adjust their ongoing instructional procedures or by students to adjust their current learning tactics” (p.275). On the other hand, Cizek (2010) considered any assessment to be summative if it meets two main criteria: “(1) it is administered at the end of some unit (e.g. unit, semester, school year); and (2) its purpose is primarily to characterize the performance of a student or a system (p.3). While formative assessment has a “make-better” measurement purpose, summative assessment focuses more on answering “instructional quality questions”(Popham, 2018, p.276).

1.1.4.3. Self-Assessment and Peer Assessment

Another useful distinction is the one that exists between self and peer assessment. The former is defined by Andrade (2010) as “a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly” (p.93). According to him, research on this type of assessment has proved the effectiveness of actively engaging students in self-assessing activities as they secure noticeable benefits and improvements (pp. 93-94).

Peer assessment is, however, “an educational arrangement where students judge a peer’s performance quantitatively and/or qualitatively and which stimulates students to reflect, discuss and collaborate” (Strijbos & Sluijsmans, 2010, p.265). This type of assessment can be a useful tool through which students will help each other in identifying their strengths and weaknesses, encouraging collaborative learning, and developing their cognitive abilities with the intention of improving the performance or product (Topping, 2010, p.62).

1.1.4.4. Traditional and Alternative Assessment

Traditional assessment generally refers to formal, standardized tests that require students to recall previous knowledge and apply it when needed, such as multiple-choice, true-false, fill in the blank, shorts answers, essays, etc (Dikli, 2003; Quansah, 2018). Teachers most often

rely on this type of assessments in the classroom, as they are "more objective, reliable and valid" (Dikli, 2003, p. 16). However, this type of assessment often relies on the memorization of facts, and therefore focuses only on the lower-order cognitive skills of the learner (Simonson et al. 2000). Bailey (1998) further argued that this type of assessment is often inauthentic, and offers no direct feedback to learners. For this reason, traditional assessments are often criticized as they "might not be able to stimulate students' motivation to learn, or to truly assess their language ability during their learning process." (Phongsirikul, 2018, p. 61).

Due to such criticism, there has been a growing interest in the application of alternative assessments, assessments that measure the learner's ability to apply their knowledge in real-life contexts. According to Simonson et al (2000, p. 232), there are three approaches in alternative assessment: Authentic assessment which includes "tasks that stimulate real world challenges" (e.g. role plays), performance-based assessment where the learner is expected to know how to perform a skill (e.g. portfolios, group discussion), and constructivist assessment where the learner is encouraged and invited to use their existing knowledge, construct new idea and thoughts, think about their learning so as to strengthen their cognitive abilities. Alternative assessments are considered to be more authentic as they reveal what "students can do with language" and not only what they know about it (Phongsirikul, 2018, p. 62).

1.1.4.5. Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment is defined by Cheng, Rogers, and Hu (2004) as "the process by which inferences are drawn about the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours possessed by each student in a class" (p. 361). It is mainly concerned with "gathering useful information that the teacher can use to support student language learning" (Rea-Dickins, 2000, p. 384). It holds a particularly important role in the teaching-learning process as it serves as the main source of information for students about their learning; Students can use information from classroom assessments to identify their shortcomings and make improvements in their work

(Black & William, 1998; Brookhart, 2003). In this regard, students have a particular relationship to classroom assessment that they do not have with external assessments (Brookhart, 2003, p. 7).

As Brookhart (2003) puts it, "Good classroom assessments are not only measures of learning, but genuine episodes of learning themselves" (p. 9). For teachers, this type of assessment serves as the main source of information about their students learning needs; they can use classroom assessment to motivate and engage their students (Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002). Most classroom assessments are formative in nature, for they help teachers obtain information about their students' progress that can be used to provide them with feedback as they progress through the course. The information can also be used by teachers to plan instruction, and diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their own teaching and instruction (Cheng et al. 2004).

In sum, classroom assessment can serve multiple purposes. It helps planning and evaluating instruction, diagnosing students' difficulties and providing them with feedback to placing students, grading and evaluating their performance.

1.2. Language Assessment Literacy

1.2.1. Defining Assessment Literacy

Teachers are aware of assessment as being a significant part that is inextricably linked to their profession (Butt, 2010). In the same vein, research on teachers' assessment practices and actions has always demonstrated their substantial contribution to learners' educational progress. However, Stiggins (1995) stressed the view that the efforts of schools to improve students' achievements are not productive unless stakeholders fully understand and master the basics of sound, reliable assessment, or what he described as being "assessment literates" (p. 238). In this regard, Cizek (2005) claimed that "the mastery of fundamental assessment principles would appear to be an effective (and cost-effective) route to improving student

achievement” (p. 21). A lack of assessment knowledge, on the other hand, might have crucial impacts on students’ learning progress.

Since it was first introduced, teachers’ assessment literacy (TAL) has become the topic of many studies and discussions as researchers tried to propose a working definition to the term and the areas it covers. Nonetheless, Fulcher (2012) argued that “there is little agreement on what assessment literacy might comprise” (p. 115). In general, assessment literacy is viewed as “the knowledge and skills required for performing assessment-related actions” (Inbar-Lourie, 2012, p. 1). For Stiggins (1991) the term assessment literacy refers to “the knowledge assessors need to possess”. Popham (2011) expanded the definition of the term and considered it as “an individual’s understandings of the fundamental assessment concepts and procedures deemed likely to influence educational decisions” (p. 267).

1.2.2. Defining Language Assessment Literacy

Assessment literacy (AL) is a general term, whilst Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) is an area of research within the former that “might need to be considered separately due to the unique complexities that are entailed in the testing and assessment of linguistic skills, knowledge and communicative competence” (Harding & Kremmel, 2016, p.413-414). Inbar-Lourie (2008) related LAL to being able to ask and answer questions in terms of the purpose, fitness, conditions and results of the assessment tool being used (p.389). According to Malone (2013), LAL is about the familiarity and knowledge of testing as well as the application of this knowledge within the classroom in general, and in assessing language in specific (p. 329).

Another definition by O’Loughlin (2013) stated that LAL includes “the acquisition of a range of skills related to test production, test score interpretation and use, and test evaluation in conjunction with the development of a critical understanding about the roles and functions of assessment within education and society” (p. 363). LAL may also be seen as a “repertoire of competencies” that allows for perceiving, evaluating, and even creating language tests and

interpreting their data (Pill & Harding, 2013, p. 382). Each of these definitions examines LAL with regard to the knowledge and acquisition of certain skills. However, the most detailed definition of LAL is provided by Fulcher (2012) in which he offered a wider view of the term:

The knowledge, skills and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. The ability to place knowledge, skills, processes, principles and concepts within wider historical, social, political and philosophical frameworks in order to understand why practices have arisen as they have, and to evaluate the role and impact of testing on society, institutions, and individuals (p. 125).

1.2.3. Importance of Language Assessment Literacy

The increasing interest in developing the quality of learning in general education necessitates a decent level of assessment literacy that teachers should acquire. Such a necessity is justified by the fact that teachers are the most essential factor influencing students' learning and by the crucial role of assessment in the process.

Through the acquisition of the processes, principles and concepts of assessment, teachers will be able “to explore and evaluate their own preconceptions, to understand the interpretive nature of the phenomenon of assessment” ,and also “to become increasingly aware of their own dynamic framework of knowledge, understanding, practices and values, which shape their conceptualizations, interpretations, judgments and decisions in assessment and their students' second language learning” (Scarino, 2013, p. 311).

In the same vein, Newfields (2006) stated three reasons for the importance of assessment literacy. The first reason is the inseparable part of assessment in any educational system. Noting that a considerable amount of teachers' work time is devoted to assessment activities,

teachers are required to be knowledgeable regarding educational assessment as it is in the centre of their profession. The second reason is the need of assessment literacy in understanding much of the educational literature through the use of statistical terms and concepts to critically read academic publications. The third reason is that assessment literates have the opportunity to share classroom research with a wide audience in a convincing way and to correctly communicate the achievements of their students with the different stakeholders (peers, parents, administrative, etc.) (Newfields, 2006.p. 49).

6.2.4. Assessment Standards for Teachers

In order to make sure the potential educational benefits of assessment are fully met, measuring and supporting teachers' assessment literacy has been the focus of educational policy and research since the early 1990s. Since then, multiple assessment standards across the world have been developed to try and help teachers develop proper assessment competency and to address "the inadequacy with which teachers are prepared for assessing the educational progress of their students" (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990).

Recognizing that "student assessment is an essential part of teaching and that good teaching cannot exist without good student assessment" (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990), the American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association jointly developed in 1990, the "Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students." These Standards define assessment as "the process of obtaining information that is used to make educational decisions about students, to give feedback to the student about his or her progress, strengths, and weaknesses, to judge instructional effectiveness and curricular adequacy, and to inform policy" (AFT, NCME, & NEA, 1990).

More recently, Brookhart (2011) proposed an updated list of the standards that "reflect current teacher assessment needs" (p. 3). She argues that the first step for teachers to be able

to design quality assessments is to “understand general principles about how students learn”; in addition, teachers “must understand deeply the content area(s) they teach” (p. 6).

Summarizing the different studies and standards of assessment developed throughout the years, the aspects that comprise the knowledge and skills teachers need to have in order to be considered assessment literates can be categorised as follows:

a. Choosing appropriate assessment methods: It refers to teachers’ knowledge about the different forms of assessments (summative vs. formative, classroom-based vs. Standardized, Traditional vs. Performance assessments, etc.), and their ability to choose the appropriate methods to use in the classroom, for instance, choosing appropriate form of assessment based on clearly stated instructional goals, using rating scales/ checklists while observing students’ performance in class, etc.

b. Constructing and administering assessments: Teachers should know how to construct and score sound assessments that are aligned with instructional goals grounded in the curriculum. While designing and administering tests (or other assessments), the teacher has to ensure the information obtained is accurate, dependable and supports students’ improvement.

c. Analysing and interpreting assessment results: Teachers have to be able to interpret and analyse assessments results, and then use them to instructional decision making. This is best illustrated by the adjustments that can be made to instruction and the remedial activities that can be developed to support students’ learning based on assessment results if well-interpreted.

d. Communicating assessment results: It involves the ability to provide stakeholders with information about the processes and purposes of assessments as well as the ability to describe and clarify assessment results to students and others who need to know with reference to the grading procedures used. Yet, the teachers should be aware of several

issues when communicating assessment results such as the privacy and confidentiality of their students.

e. Establishing the principles of language assessment: It refers to the knowledge and understanding of the psychometric properties (e.g. validity and reliability) and other principles of assessment (e.g. authenticity) in addition to the ability to establish them for the sake of obtaining accurate results and outcomes.

f. Assessment for learning: Teachers should have adequate understanding of formative assessment, its uses, and purposes. Further, educators need to be aware of its importance to promote learning, and they should be competent enough in using its information to provide feedback to their students regarding their performance.

g. Student involvement: Teachers need to know when and how to involve students in the assessment process for instance through self-assessing their work or through assessing each other's work. Consequently, a teacher has to be knowledgeable about such types of assessment so that s/he can train learners to use them properly.

h. Assessment ethics: Teachers need to ensure that the rights and privacy of their students are protected during the assessment process and need to be able to identify ethical issues in their assessment practices and address them properly. For instance, the teacher must neither use assessments as a sort of punishment to the students' inappropriate behaviours nor teach only to the test to prepare students for tests. In addition to that, teachers should also be aware of students' diversity in their levels of understanding, needs, demands, etc. Thus, they should also know how to employ fair assessment practices and strive to create unbiased assessment environments and conditions for his students.

In order to achieve these standards, strong emphasis needs to be put on presenting teachers with proper assessment education as well as providing them with opportunities to develop

their assessment competency. As Stiggins (1995) stated, these standards are not negotiable, and teachers and test makers should strive to meet them at every opportunity (p. 242). However, research shows that this is rarely the case due to "fear of assessment and evaluation, insufficient time to assess properly, or public perceptions of assessment practices" (Mertler, 2004, p. 41).

Section Two: Language Assessment in the Middle School Competency Based English Curriculum in Algeria

2.1. The Algerian Educational System

Since its independence in 1962, education has been one of the main priorities of the Algerian government in an effort to form future generations, and prepare them to take part in the economic growth of the country. Thus, the Algerian educational system has been the scene of numerous changes and revisions throughout the years, introducing new teaching and learning methods to respond to the challenges imposed by a rapidly changing world. Education in Algeria is compulsory from the age of 6 to 15 and is divided into three cycles: primary, middle, and secondary school.

The first educational stage, the primary school, lasts for five years. The focus in this period is on teaching children the basics (reading, writing, and numeracy). At the end of the five years, students pass a national exam in order to advance to the middle school. The latter is a period of four years in which students are introduced to new subject matters including English from the very first year. Pupils are called to take a final examination known as the BEM by the end of this period. Students who succeed in this exam will be admitted to the first year of secondary school either in the scientific stream or letters stream. Secondary school is a period of three years where education is no longer compulsory. Students take the baccalaureate exam at the end of this stage and upon their eventual success they can enrol in institutions of higher education to complete their degree.

The Algerian government has sought to introduce new teaching and learning methods that would modernize the system and respond to the society's needs in a globalized era. In the light of this, English has played an important role in the educational system shaped with the aim of forming future generations who are competent users of the language.

2.1.1. Teacher Education and Training

Teacher training can be considered as a preparatory program students undergo to master the skills and knowledge needed to ensure the betterment and effectiveness of their classroom practices as future teachers. In the Algerian context, teacher training in the past was insured by the Institute of Technology of Education (ITE); a training institution established in the early 70s by the Algerian government to form qualified teaching personnel. After almost three decades, the responsibility of training teachers was allocated to higher education institutions known as the "The Higher Education College for Teachers" (Ecole Nationale Supérieure or ENS). This initiative aimed mainly to "train and develop teachers according to the principles underlying the reforms of the educational system, to meet the demands of the new curriculum" (Bellalem, 2008, p. 64) (as cited in Fadel, 2018).

In addition to the ENS, the English departments of several universities in Algeria offer training to aspiring teachers. Therefore, middle school teachers of English are required to hold at least a bachelor degree (LMD Licence or four-year Licence from ENS). It is worth noting that both the bachelor degree of the previous classic system (four years of instruction) and the master degree of the current LMD system are also considered for a middle school teaching position.

During the years of instruction, students are educated in various areas of study including assessment and evaluation. This is especially important under the new reform adopted by the Algerian ministry of education, namely the CBA, where assessing students' competencies requires "a more complex assessment system, using a variety of methods for an appropriate

assessment of the competency components, viz knows, know-how-to-do and know-how-to-be” (Benabed, 2017, p. 89).

2.2. The Educational Reform of 2003: Integration of the CBA in Algeria

The CBA emerged in the United States in the 1970s. Gervais (2016) defined it as "an outcome-based approach to education that incorporates modes of instructional delivery and assessment efforts designed to evaluate mastery of learning by students through their demonstration of the knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, and behaviours required for the degree sought" (p. 2). In this approach, educational goals are defined "in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours" referred to as competencies (Richards & Rodgers. 2001, p.141). In this regard, Richards and Rodgers (2001) defined the concept competencies as follows: “competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required for effective performance of real-world task or activity” (p. 144). This definition reveals that competencies include the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to perform a task, and that the main aim of the CBA is to prepare students to use these competencies commonly encountered in everyday life (Auerbach, 1986; Docking, 1994).

Moreover, the teaching and learning process in this approach has been shifted from being teacher-centred to being student-centred, as Griffith (2014) stated “Classes must be student-centered with a focus on what students can do [...] Students must demonstrate that they can accomplish specific tasks that are likely to be encountered in the real-world using the target-language” (p.3).

The implementation of this approach in the specific area of language teaching is referred to as Competency-based Language Teaching (CBLT) which is extensively utilized (Griffith et al. 2014). This approach to teaching has numerous advantages among them the clear specification of expected outcomes and the continuous feedback which plays an important

role in improving students learning and motivation by providing meaning to the content being learned, as well as in raising their self-esteem by involving them directly in the classroom activities(Boillos, 2018; Löfgren, 2013; Sturgis & Casey 2018).

The CBA was adopted in developed countries since the 1970s and 1980s. Nonetheless, according to Bouchair (2018, p. 115), “it was not until the beginning of the new millennium that African countries, including Algeria, opted for the implementation of the CBA, which was considered as the magic solution to foster quality education”.

This new approach was introduced in the Algerian EFL curriculum in 2003 in an attempt to promote new teaching methods in the areas of science, physics, mathematics and foreign languages (Bouhania, 2020, p. 586). Concerning the English language, the main aim of the Ministry of Education was to form "competent users of English" and to revitalize EFL teaching in Algeria as the old methods proved unsuccessful (Benadla, 2012, p. 145).

Despite numerous drawbacks and the unpreparedness of most teachers back then, this approach "proved to be fruitful, giving tangible results in terms of the learners' level, i.e. a second year middle school learners' linguistic level is remarkably better than a former ninth year fundamental school learners' ability to use English" (Benadla, 2012,p.147). Both the teacher and student’s role changed considerably in the competency-based curriculum where the first must no longer be satisfied with providing knowledge but must guide, help and encourage students to take part in and complete their own training (Bouhania, 2020; Ministry of National Education, 2016). The teacher must also create a positive environment for students to learn without the fear of failure. On the other hand, students are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning with the support of the teacher, taking every opportunity to practice and improve their communication skills in English (Benadla, 2012; Ministry of National Education, 2016).

2.3. The Revised Curriculum of 2016: The Second Generation Competency Based Curriculum

The Algerian Educational system has been the scene of many educational reforms across the years in an effort to adapt and respond to the current needs of society. Arguably, the most influential of these reforms is the 2003 "First Generation Reform" that saw the introduction of the CBA as a new approach to teaching and learning. However, some drawbacks have seemed to prevent the success of achieving the principles of this approach; consequently, another curriculum has been introduced in 2016 for the first year middle school also known as the Second generation curriculum. It brought a considerable amount of changes as an attempt to bridge the gaps highlighted in the 1st generation curriculum.

The new reform has focused on a set of principles such as:

1. The development of communication competence in English: the goal is to prepare the learner for oral and written communication.
2. The learner is in the centre of the learning process : The pedagogical act is no longer based on the transmission of knowledge but it involves the construction of knowledge, taking into account the learner's interests, likes and dislikes, etc. ('me, my world, the world').
3. There is a constant interaction between teacher, learner, and resources, at school and outside school: The role of the teacher is to involve the child in his own learning and to help him to learn how to learn. He gives him opportunities to become autonomous at all stages of learning, and to evaluate his own performance. A good student/teacher relationship will create a favourable climate where shared values are essential to shape a good and responsible citizen. "The Curriculum of English for Middle School Education (2015, p. 56)"

The core of the reform of 2016 is the implementation of values comprising national identity and conscience, citizenship and openness to the world in concordance with the "Orientation Law on National Education No. 08-04 23" (January 2008) that set the three main

objectives of schools as being education, socialization and qualification (TaiebBen Abbas, 2017). It further saw the emergence of cross-curricular competencies and core values (TaiebBen Abbas, 2017, p. 8), which is one of the aims that the curriculum stands for. Moreover, the main objective of this reform is to make the learner a better communicator, to develop their critical thinking, and to teach a functional language in order to respond to the real-world needs of students and society. Therefore, “teaching English under the second generation curriculum is no more forwarding grammar rules, vocabulary and other linguistic knowledge, but it is to integrate a set of competencies through different tasks and activities” (Boulahia & Boumalek, 2017, p. 15).

2.4. Assessment Principles in Competency-based Language Teaching

Assessment is regarded as one of the core principles of the CBA. Competency-based assessments are aimed to help students measure their acquisitions and to demonstrate their mastery of competencies. They also seek to help teachers determine students’ learning needs, and whether "the assessments in place are measuring what they are supposed to measure" (Gervais 2016, p. 4). For this purpose, assessment in the CBA involves a "shift from an evaluation of learning to an evaluation for learning" (Benito & Cruz, 2007; p87, translated in Cañado, M. L. P. (Ed.) (2012). Furthermore, Griffith and Lim (2014) argued that assessments in the CBA must focus "on providing information about a student's progress than on providing a grade for an assignment” (p. 1).

Auerbach(1986, p. 414) identified eight features involved in the implementation of competency-based programs in language teaching, one of which is the focus on continuous and ongoing assessment. According to her model, students should be pre-tested (Diagnostic assessments) to determine what knowledge/skills they lack; after instruction, they should be retested to determine if they achieved the desired level of mastery. Otherwise, students are encouraged to continue to work on the objective and are then retested until they do. Formative

assessments guide daily instruction and help create personalized learning opportunities for students (Gervais, 2016, p. 5). They serve as a tool for learning that must be frequent and specific, and they help determine how well students are progressing along the path to competency providing important feedback about their strengths and weaknesses (Griffith & Lim, 2014, Network C.B.E, 2017). In addition, summative assessments are used to determine whether or not a student has mastered a competency, and therefore, they are usually administered at the end of a learning unit as a final test. This type helps teachers determine if a student is ready to continue to the next competency, module or graduate; it also serves to identify any gaps in learning as well as determine if any changes to the curriculum are needed (Gervais, 2016; Griffith & Lim, 2014).

To be considered valid, assessments in the CBA should be aligned with real-world applications (Bral, Cunningham, 2016, p. 119). They require students to use their knowledge and skills to complete a task that they are likely to encounter in life and the workplace (Griffith & Lim, 2014; Klein-Collins, 2013; Rambe, 2013). Authentic assessments are a key component of the CBA, where the focus is not only on what students know but also on if they're able to apply that knowledge to real-life situations (Network C.B.E 2017, p. 17). Therefore, most standardised tests are likely inadequate to assess most competencies (Klein-Collins 2013, p. 7), and as such, teachers are called to use performance-based assessments as "authentic measures of the knowledge and skills of their students" (Bral, Cunningham, 2016, p. 120).

Arguing for the importance of this type of assessment in ELT, Abedi (2010, p. 21) explained that performance-based assessments engage students in the assessments tasks and "comprehensively demonstrate their knowledge in content-based areas". They are more engaging for students, and as a result, they can greatly increase students' motivation and

effort. In line with this, Cañado (2012, p. 12) identified the traits of what they called "competency-based assessments" as such:

- Assessments need to be transparent and made known to students at the start of instruction.
- Assessments should be "process-oriented, formative, and constant". They should favour the development of higher-rank competencies over lower-order ones.
- Assessments should be authentic, involving the application of knowledge and skills to real-world contexts. Teachers should provide constant feedback to students so that "necessary readjustments and revisions can be made".
- Assessments should "favour student ownership through self- and co-evaluation".
- Assessments should be diversified, "incorporating a variety of strategies and procedures, such as long and short-answer objective tests, oral interviews and presentations, papers and projects, reports and diaries, portfolios, observation techniques, self-assessment systems, attitude scales, or global assessment sessions".
- Assessments should include a set of "descriptors and indicators based on observable behaviours, with different levels of assessment assigned to each of them in order to guarantee their mastery".

In summary, the goal of assessment in CBLT is to support instruction and improve students' learning. Therefore, assessments should always be valid and authentic, providing students with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Additionally, students' learning should be supported by teachers' constant and timely feedback based on assessment results "so that they understand exactly what they need to learn and do to reach proficiency" (Sturgis and Casey, 2018, p. 82).

2.5. Assessment in the Middle School Syllabuses

The Algerian Middle School syllabuses put a strong emphasis on the fact that assessment and the process of teaching/learning are prominently interrelated and complementary to each other. This has been made clear by the Ministry of National Education in Document D'accompagnement du Curriculum du Cycle Moyen(2016) in which it is stated that “ Assessment must be planned at the same time as teaching because it makes it possible to diagnose, regulate learning, and plan remedial activities” (p. 18). In that same regard, Sturgis and Casey (2018) believe that assessment information is not only important for helping students adjust their ways of learning but also for supporting teachers to alter and improve their teaching skills and strategies. This suggests that if the teacher is knowledgeable and aware of selecting the appropriate assessment, he will eventually arrive at the kind of information that will help the student and the teacher alike.

According to Document D'accompagnement du Curriculum du Cycle Moyen(2016), assessment is more interested in the process than in the product or result, and it puts more emphasis on the “why” than the “what” (p.18). This means that assessment should be focussed more on the teaching/learning process than on its outcomes. Further, assessment information will make it possible for teachers to continually adapt their teaching according to students' performance in order to help them improve and overcome their weaknesses. This can be done through four different types of assessment as determined in Document D'accompagnement du Curriculum du Cycle Moyen(2016). The types and their characteristics are illustrated in the following table:

Table 1.1.: Types of Assessment and their Characteristics.

Type of Assessment	Characteristics
1) L'évaluation Diagnostique (Diagnostic Assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is done at the very beginning of the school year. - Its aim is to reveal the real level of students as well as to identify their strengths and weaknesses. - Based on its results, teachers can prepare activities appropriate to students' levels.
2) L'évaluation Certificative (Summative Assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It corresponds to the logic of selection and orientation. - It is based on tests and exams. - It occurs at the ending of a term (trimester) or a school year - Reporting on each student's learning.
3) L'évaluation Formative (Formative Assessment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is done by the teacher. - Its purpose is to take into account students' errors and to regulate them in order to reinforce learning successes. - Based on its results, remediation activities can be planned for with an aim of helping students correct their deficits. - Regulation is considered as an essential part of this type (its purpose is to correct, orient, and improve learning conditions). - It can be done through different tools (e.g. journals, portfolios, questionnaires and interviews, debates and discussions).
4) L'évaluation Formatrice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is carried out by both the teacher and the student so that everyone can know what he has done and where he is in the teaching/learning process. - It consists of three types : - Co-évaluation (assessment involves both teacher and student). - Evaluation mutuelle (assessment carried out by peers where students assess and judge each other's work, "peer assessment"). - Autoévaluation (the student is given the chance to self-assess his work or performance and to make judgments about his own learning, "self-assessment").

Document D'accompagnement du Curriculum du Cycle Moyen(2016)

Table 1.1 summarizes the major characteristics of the different types of assessment included in middle school syllabuses. Accordingly, diagnostic, summative, and formative assessments are used for distinct purposes and at specific points in time. In addition, it is to be highlighted that another type of assessment by the name of "l'évaluation formatrice" is also

included in the syllabuses. The pivotal role assessment plays in supporting the teaching/learning process is shown in diversity of the types included in middle school syllabuses.

As far as formative assessment is concerned, tests are considered as the most important tools used in middle school. Tests of English are usually administered two times each term where students are assessed in different areas of language that have been tackled (e.g. grammar rules, pronunciation, writing, etc). It is worth mentioning that this year due to the exceptional circumstances of Covid-19, students took only one test. Additionally, these tests can be viewed as a preparatory step for the final examination since they have the same structure.

On the whole, teachers are instructed to regularly assess students' progress and mastery of the pre-determined competencies. Assessments then provide useful information about students' achievements that teachers can use to adjust their practices and regulate learning.

Conclusion

Assessment is more than just a test at the end of the instruction; it is a continuous process that informs and guides both teachers and learners. Teachers are required to be skillful and knowledgeable enough about assessment practices to be able to achieve the stated outcomes. In the Algerian context, two prominent reforms came to light, namely the first generation curriculum (2003) and the second generation curriculum (2016), both characterised by the adoption of the CBA. In such an approach, assessment holds an important place in supporting the learning/teaching process and the Algerian middle school English syllabuses consider assessment and teaching as two interrelated entities that complete each other.

Chapter Two: Field Work

Introduction

2.1. Research Design and Methodology

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Chapter Two: Field Work

Introduction

In accordance with the previous chapter, the one in hand, which is practical, attempts to find out whether middle school teachers are aware of the appropriate use of assessment in a curriculum that is competency based. It also sheds light on the population of the study and provides a description of the tool of investigation. The results are presented using tables followed by an analysis and discussion. Finally, the chapter concludes with providing some recommendations and suggestions for further researches, in addition to the limitations encountered in conducting the study.

2.1. Research Design and Methodology

2.1.1. Population and Sample

The study was carried out with middle school teachers in Jijel during the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The choice of the population took into account teachers' assessment practices in the 2nd generation competency based curriculum. A number of 35 middle school teachers of English at different institutions were randomly chosen to be the sample of the study.

2.1.2. Research Instrument

The questionnaire has become one of the most popular research tools since it proves its effectiveness in gathering large amounts of data in a short period of time (Dornyei, 2007). According to Dornyei (2007), "the essence of scientific research is trying to find answers to questions in a systematic and disciplined manner and it is therefore no wonder that the questionnaire has become one of the most popular research instruments applied in the social sciences" (p.101). For this reason, it was chosen as the data collection tool for the present study.

The questionnaire used in the present study aims at getting deep insights into middle school teachers' perceptions of their assessment literacy and examines their assessment practices. Thus, it is divided into four sections consisting of twenty questions designed based on the content of the literature review. The questions are either closed-ended, namely "yes" or "no", multiple choice, and a rating scale; or open-ended where the participants are required to provide further explanations. The first section aims at gathering general information through five questions (Q1 to Q5) about the academic qualifications of the participants, their years of experience, and their education and training in language assessment. The second section consists of eight questions (Q6 to Q13) and deals with the teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and skills in certain assessment areas. The third section contains five questions (Q14 to Q18) concerned with the teachers' assessment practices. The final section is devoted to further suggestions and comments as far as middle school teachers' assessment literacy is concerned.

The questionnaire was administered randomly to thirty five (35) teachers of English in eight Middle schools in Jijel, Texenna and Kaous. The administration of the questionnaire was handed on 26th May, 2021 and was handed back a week later due to the fact that teachers were busy with the final examinations. Some of them were very kind, helpful, and cooperative, while some others did not answer the questionnaire admitting that they did not have time.

2.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Section I: Background Information

1. What academic qualification do you have?

- a. ITE Certificate
- b. ITE Certificate + Bachelor Degree (Licence from UFC)
- c. Bachelor Degree (four-year licence)
- d. Bachelor Degree (LMD Licence)
- e. Bachelor Degree (ENS Certificate)
- f. Master Degree

Table 2.1.*Middle School Teachers' Academic Qualifications*

Options	N	%
a	3	8.57
b	3	8.57
c	15	42.86
d	2	5.71
e	6	17.14
f	6	17.14
Total	35	100

The addressed question was meant to identify the academic qualifications held by middle school teachers. The results obtained from the table indicate that a high portion of teachers with a percentage of 42.86% have a Bachelor degree (four years Licence). It is also observed that the number of teachers who hold a Bachelor degree (ENS Certificate) and those who hold a Master degree is the same, accounting thus for the same percentage (17.14%). Additionally, a number of 3 teachers (representing 8.57%) stated to have an ITE certificate, similarly 3 others reported to have a Bachelor degree granted from UFC. Yet, two teachers have LMD Licence. This means that a diversity of all degrees can be seen in our study.

2. How many years have you spent teaching English at the middle school level?

Table 2.2.*Middle School Teachers' Experience*

Years	N	%
2-4	7	20
5-10	8	22.86
10-15	7	20
15-20	7	20
20-25	5	14.28
25-29	1	2.86
Total	35	100

This question sought to assess the teachers' experience in teaching English at the middle school level. Participants' experience ranged from two to twenty nine years; thus, the above results revealed that 42.86% (22.86%+ 20%) taught English for a period ranging from five to fifteen years. 37.14% had an experience of more than 14 years (15-29 years) while some

teachers, with a percentage of 20%, have an experience of less than five years (2-4 years), which indicates that they are novice in teaching at the middle school. These results can lead to say that the majority of the participants are experienced teachers since they have five or more years in teaching English at the middle school level.

3. Did you take any pre-service course/lectures on language assessment?

Table 2.3. *Middle School Teachers' Pre-service Training in Language Assessment*

Options	N	%
Yes	4	11.43
No	31	88.57
Total	35	100

The third question was asked for the sake of detecting whether the teachers took any pre-service courses on language assessment. Surprisingly, the results presented above elicit that the great majority of teachers (88.57%) confirmed that they did not take any pre-service courses or lectures concerning language assessment whilst only (11.43%) participants stated the opposite.

4. Have you taken any in-service course/workshops/study days (with inspectors) on language assessment in general?

Table 2.4. *Middle School Teachers In-service Training in Language Assessment*

Options	N	%
Yes	21	60
No	14	40
Total	35	100

This question aimed to find out whether the teachers have taken any sort of education and training (with inspectors) in language assessment in general. The results yielded from the table point out that a significant number of teachers with the percentage of (60%) responded with a “Yes” while the remaining (40%) answered with a “No”. It is therefore safe to say that

the teachers who have had the training (courses, workshops, study days, etc.) might be more literate in assessment than those who have not been exposed to any kind of training.

If yes, please give details

The participants’ responses were not sufficient since the majority who answered gave irrelevant details. Apparently, much focus was on the different types of assessment that should be used. Additionally, the teachers reported that they usually have discussions with inspectors concerning their own perceptions of the types of assessment.

Surprisingly, one of the informants claimed that they were only given “handouts” about assessment without any further discussions.

5. Have you taken any in-service course/workshops/study days (with inspectors) on language assessment in a curriculum that is competency-based?

Table 2.5. *Middle School Teachers In-service Training in Language Assessment in a Competency-based Curriculum*

Options	N	%
Yes	15	42.86
No	20	57.14
Total	35	100

In the fifth question, the researchers narrowed the scope of the previous one (Q4) to include training on language assessment in a curriculum that is competency-based. As shown in table 2.5, slightly more than half of the teachers (57.14%) asserted that they did not receive any training on language assessment in a competency-based curriculum. On the other hand, a percentage of 42.86% represents those who confirmed receiving the aforementioned training. As can be seen, almost half of the teachers stated that they were deprived from the opportunity to support their knowledge and skills which might have an influence on their assessment practices that are supposed to be compatible with the CBA.

If yes, please give details

Among the fifteenth teachers who opted for yes, only 9 of them gave details about their answers. The teachers' comments indicate that their in-service training with inspectors were mainly about types and principles of language assessment in a competency-based curriculum. It is noteworthy that they were also introduced to the assessment activities included in the textbooks syllabuses.

Section II: Middle School Teachers Assessment Literacy

6. How would you rate your knowledge of the CBA?

Table 2.6. *Middle School Teachers' Estimation of their Knowledge of the CBA*

Options	N	%
a. Far above average	2	5.71
b. Above average	12	34.28
c. Average	17	48.57
d. Below average	2	5.71
e. Far below average	0	0
No answer	2	5.71
Total	35	100

This question was formulated with the aim of examining whether the teachers are knowledgeable about the CBA. Table 2.6 illustrates that almost half of the teachers (48.57%) reported to have an average knowledge while 34.28% of them thought that their knowledge was above average. Only 2 teachers appraise it as far above average, whereas an equal number of 2 others considered their knowledge to be below average. None of the teachers described their knowledge as far below average. Furthermore, it is worthy to mention that 5.71% did not answer this question. The results show that most teachers had only an average knowledge of the CBA which is still not ideal to ensure that the principles of this approach are fully and properly applied. Their knowledge of the CBA remains, therefore, inadequate.

7. How would you rate your knowledge of assessment terminology?

Table2.7. *Middle School Teachers' Estimation of their Knowledge of Assessment Terminology*

Options	N	%
a. Far above average	4	11.43
b. Above average	15	42.86
c. Average	15	42.86
d. Below average	1	2.85
e. Far below average	0	0
Total	35	100

The purpose of this question is to have a look at how teachers rate their knowledge of assessment terminology. As it is displayed in the table above, 42.86% described their knowledge as above average. The same percentage represents those who had an average knowledge, while 1 teacher (2.85%) assumed that their knowledge is below average. No teacher considered his knowledge to be far below average. The results clearly show that a significant number of teachers in our sample are not very confident about their knowledge of assessment terminology. Hence, this might negatively affect the way teachers use and view assessment since they are not completely aware of the differences between the various assessment methods and tools as well as all the different components and measures.

8. How would you rate your assessment skills?

Table 2.8.*Middle School Teachers' Estimation of their Assessment Skills*

Options	N	%
a. Far above average	4	11.43
b. Above average	13	37.14
c. Average	18	51.43
d. Below average	0	0
e. Far below average	0	0
Total	35	100

This question was asked for the purpose of determining how teachers perceive their assessment skills. Table 2.8 reveals that, a little more than half of the teachers with a percentage of 51.43% reported to have average assessment skills, while 13 teachers said that they had above average skills, only 4 teachers stated that their skills are far below average and none of them described their skills as below average or far below average. This means that the

teachers who believed to possess insufficient assessment skills outnumbered those with sufficient assessment skills. As a result, some of them might hesitate to use certain assessment methods and tools in the classroom because they are not confident in their ability to use them yet.

9- How would you rate your knowledge of the principles of assessment in the competency-based curriculum?

Table 2.9.*Middle School Teachers' Estimation of their Knowledge of the Principles of Assessment in a Competency-based Curriculum*

Options	N	%
a. Far above average	4	11.43
b. Above average	8	22.86
c. Average	22	62.86
d. Below average	1	2.86
e. Far below average	0	0
Total	35	100

With regard to their knowledge of the principles of assessment in a curriculum that is competency based, Table 2.9 shows that the majority of the participants (62.86%) claimed to have an average knowledge. Only 22.86 % reported to have an above average knowledge. A number of 4 teachers (representing 11.43%) admitted to have an excellent knowledge while one teacher revealed to possess a below average knowledge. No one described his knowledge as far below average. In general, the results reveal that most teachers seem to have an inadequate knowledge of the principles of assessment.

10. How would you rate your assessment skills in a curriculum that is competency-based?

Table 2.10.*Middle School Teachers' Estimation of their Assessment Skills in a Competency-based Curriculum*

Options	N	%
a. Far above average	2	5.71
b. Above average	11	31.43
c. Average	21	60
d. Below average	1	2.86
e. Far below average	0	0
Total	35	100

Table 2.10 shows that more than half of the teachers (60%) reported to have average skills. 31.43% claimed that their skills were above average while one teacher admitted to have a below average skills. Only 2 teachers described their skills as far above average. Yet, none of the participants' skills were far below average. Taking into account the participants' answers, most of them thought that they were not skilful enough in assessing their students under a competency based curriculum.

11. How would you describe your understanding of assessment?

The aim behind addressing this question is to discover middle school teachers own understanding of assessment. The question was answered by 25 teachers out of the total 35. However, some of the responses provided did not meet the aim that the researchers seek out. The following quotations are samples from the relevant answers given:

“For me, assessment is a method used to evaluate, measure learning progress, skill acquisition and needs after defining the learners' outcomes. It is a type of evaluation.”

“Assessment is a way to measure learners' proficiency and it helps the teacher to provide instructional feedback to help learners progress.”

“It's the operation of evaluating, testing and checking learners' learning for various purposes: diagnosing, improving instruction, evaluating previous acquisition, preparing further learning, scoring, enhancing learning.”

The most important ideas highlighted by the teachers can be summarised as follow:

- ❖ Assessment is evaluating and measuring pupils' acquisition, understanding and performance either through written or oral activities.
- ❖ It is the way of determining the level of learners.
- ❖ Assessment is the process of collecting information about students' performance for the sake of improving their learning.
- ❖ Assessment includes methods of evaluating learners through tests and exams.

After a close analysis of the responses to this question, it is noticed that most teachers tend to use the terms assessment, evaluation and testing interchangeably. This may suggest that the teachers are not fully aware of the differences between the above mentioned terms. More importantly, it also confirms the teachers' unawareness of assessment terminology (Q7).

12. How would you describe your knowledge/skills in the following areas?

In question 12, the teachers were asked to describe their knowledge and skills in different areas on a scale: **a)** No knowledge, **b)** Minimal knowledge, **c)** Basic knowledge, **d)** Adequate knowledge, to **e)** Superior knowledge.

The question consists of 12 areas based on assessment standards for teachers; consequently it is divided into 6 categories illustrated in the following tables:

1- Principles of language assessment

Table 2.11. *Teachers' Estimation of Their Knowledge about the Principles of Language Assessment*

Options		No knowledge	Minimal knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate knowledge	Superior knowledge	No answer	Total
Validity	N	0	5	10	9	6	5	35
	%	0	14.28	28.57	25.72	17.14	14.28	100
Reliability	N	0	4	15	6	5	5	35
	%	0	11.43	42.86	17.14	14.28	14.28	100
Practicality	N	0	2	12	10	5	6	35
	%	0	5.71	34.29	28.57	14.28	17.14	100
Authenticity	N	0	5	9	12	4	5	35
	%	0	14.28	25.72	34.29	11.43	14.28	100
Washback	N	6	6	7	8	3	5	35
	%	17.14	17.14	20	22.86	8.57	14.28	100

On the basis of the quantitative findings demonstrated in table 2.11, it can be observed that most of the participants had at least some basic knowledge in all the five principles of assessment. More than half of the teachers (71.43%) declared that they had basic to superior knowledge of assessment validity while only 14.28% declared having minimal knowledge. Most of the participants (74.28%) seemed to have at least fundamental knowledge of the principle of reliability while 11.43% said to have minimal knowledge. Concerning practicality, the majority of them (77.14%) had elementary to advanced knowledge. Additionally, 71.43% of teachers declared having basic to superior knowledge of the principle of authenticity but a non-negligible number of them (14.28%) declared having only minimal

knowledge about it. However, the answers on the last principle “washback” were more balanced compared to the other principles where only 8.57% declared having superior knowledge, and 42.86% declared having basic to adequate knowledge. It is worth mentioning that this was the only principle that had answers of “no knowledge” with a percentage of (17.14%). This may suggest that some teachers struggle a lot more with this particular area of language assessment. It is also worth noting that a significant number of teachers did not respond to the statements.

2- Constructing and administering assessments

Table 2.12. *Teachers’ Estimation of their Knowledge about Constructing and Administering Assessments*

Statements		No knowledge	Minimal knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Superior Knowledge	No answer	Total
Preparing sound tests and assessments	N	0	3	12	10	6	4	35
	%	0	8.57	34.29	28.57	17.14	11.43	100
Establishing the principles of language assessment	N	0	4	12	15	1	3	35
	%	0	11.43	34.28	42.86	2.86	8.57	100
Choosing the appropriate form of assessment based on clearly stated instructional goals	N	0	2	13	12	6	2	35
	%	0	5.71	37.14	34.29	17.14	5.71	100
Designing (creating) your own tests based on instructional objectives and students’ needs	N	0	1	10	10	12	2	35
	%	0	2.86	28.57	28.57	34.29	5.71	100

The results tabulated above have clearly shown that the majority of the participants are fairly confident about their knowledge concerning the construction and administration of assessments. Most teachers (80%) stated having at least basic to superior knowledge in preparing sound tests and assessments. The same number of teachers (80%) also declared having basic to superior skills and knowledge in establishing the principles of language

assessment. However, only few participants (11.43%) declared having minimal knowledge in establishing these principles, which is concordant with the findings of the previous category. A large number of participants (88.57%) declared having elementary to superior skills in choosing the appropriate form of assessment based on their instructional goals. As a response to the statement “Designing your own tests based on instructional objectives and students’ needs”, 34.29% of the teachers declared having superior knowledge, which appears to be the area they are comfortable with the most. Moreover, 57.14% of the teachers asserted having at least basic to adequate knowledge. Only one respondent (with a percentage of 2.86%) described his knowledge as minimal.

3- Analysing and interpreting assessment results

Table 2.13. Teachers’ Estimation of their knowledge about Analyzing and Interpreting Assessment Results

Statements		No knowledge	Minimal Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Superior Knowledge	No Answer	Total
Interpreting assessment scores to facilitate instructional decision-making	N	0	4	11	10	7	3	35
	%	0	11.43	31.43	28.57	20	8.57	100
Grading Formal(exams and tests)	N	0	1	5	9	15	5	35
	%	0	2.86	14.28	25.72	42.86	14.28	100
Informal: class participation, students’ daily performance, oral questioning	N	0	1	6	17	8	3	35
	%	0	2.86	17.14	48.57	22.86	8.57	100
Analysing assessment results (e.g. Computing and Interpreting dispersion measures including mean, standard deviation...	N	0	7	9	12	5	2	35
	%	0	20	25.72	34.28	14.28	5.71	100

The third category addressed teachers’ ability to grade, analyze and interpret assessment results and then use them in instructional decision making. The results demonstrated in table

2.13 indicate that the respondents are fairly confident of their skills concerning this particular area. A good number of them (80%) indicated having basic to superior knowledge and skills in interpreting assessment scores to facilitate instructional decision-making, as only 11.43% declared having minimal knowledge in this area. Grading for both formal and informal assessments and tests seems to be the area where most teachers are skillful in, as only one participant each time declared having only minimal knowledge in grading. A high portion of (82.86% and 88.57%) respectively stated having from basic to superior knowledge. Answers were again more balanced when it comes to analyzing assessment results where a percentage of 74.28% declared having basic to superior knowledge while 20% of the participants considered it as minimal. These findings clearly show that most participants are satisfied with their skills and knowledge concerning grading and interpreting assessment results, as well as in their understanding of the different measures used to analyse assessment results.

4- Communicating assessment results

Table 2.14. *Teachers' Estimation of their Knowledge about Communication Assessment*

Results

Options		No knowledge	Minimal Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Superior Knowledge	No answer	Total
Giving feedback to students based on assessment information	N	0	4	12	15	1	3	35
	%	0	11.43	34.28	42.86	2.86	8.57	100
Communicating assessment results (to students, their parents	N	1	3	11	13	4	3	35
	%	2.86	8.57	31.43	37.14	11.43	8.57	100

This category is about how the teachers estimate their knowledge about communicating the results to stakeholders. More specifically, it aims at indicating whether middle school teachers are knowledgeable enough in performing this skill. As shown in Table 2.14. 77.14% of them proclaimed having either basic or adequate knowledge in providing feedback to their students

based on assessment results. When it comes to communicating assessment results to students and stakeholders, the majority of teachers (80%) seemed to be knowledgeable enough, with 8.57% of them saying they had minimal knowledge while only one participant responded with no knowledge. It is also worth mentioning that a percentage of 8.57% did not answer this question. Based on these results, it appears that most of the teachers judged their skills in communicating assessment results and giving feedback to their students as being more than adequate.

5- Involving students in assessment

Table 2.15. *Teachers’ Estimation of their Knowledge about Involving Students in Assessment*

Statements		No knowledge	Minimal Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Superior Knowledge	No Answer	Total
Involving students in assessment via	N	1	4	8	13	7	2	35
	%	2.86	11.43	22.86	37.14	20	5.71	100
Self-assessment/Peer assessment	N	1	3	6	10	8	7	35
	%	2.86	8.57	17.14	28.57	22.86	20	100

This category apparently aims at exploring how middle school teachers describe their knowledge about involving students in assessment using self- and peer-assessment in the classroom. The results showed that 80% of the teachers rated their knowledge in using self-assessment as ranging from basic to superior. Furthermore, 68.57% declared the same regarding the use of peer-assessment. Only two teachers (with a percentage of 5.72%) stated to have no knowledge about both self and peer-assessment; however, it is worth noting that non-less than 20% did not answer this statement. These results suggest that a good number of teachers believe to have basic knowledge and skills regarding involving their students in the assessment process, however, this appears to be one of the areas where teachers seem to be the less confident in.

6- Assessment ethics:

Table 2.16. *Teachers' Estimation about their Knowledge in Assessment Ethics*

Options		No knowledge	Minimal Knowledge	Basic Knowledge	Adequate Knowledge	Superior Knowledge	No answer	Total
Assessment	N	3	5	11	6	7	3	35
Ethics	%	8.57	14.28	31.43	17.14	20	8.57	100

The last category addressed teachers' knowledge of assessment ethics. The findings presented in the above table showed that most of the participants have at the very least fundamental knowledge about this particular area of assessment. Almost half of the teachers (48.57%) rated their knowledge as being basic or adequate. 20% of participants described their knowledge as superior, while a total of 22.85% declared having minimal to no knowledge (14.28% and 8.57% respectively). Only three teachers did not answer the statement.

On the whole, the results from question 13 indicate that the teachers in the sample appear to have sufficient knowledge in most of the areas covered. Their knowledge of assessment principles is elementary but can still be considered as acceptable; however, a significant number of teachers seem to struggle with washback. The same can be said about teachers' knowledge in designing, administering, scoring and interpreting assessment results, as these seem to be the areas where the teachers are comfortable with the most. Concerning analyzing assessment results, which is an essential skill to have if one wants to properly make value judgments about students learning, some teachers reported to have from basic to superior knowledge. The majority of the participants appeared to be knowledgeable concerning communicating assessment results to students and stakeholders as well as in their knowledge of assessment ethics. As regards involving students in the assessment process either through peer or self-assessment, most teachers have basic to superior knowledge even though a

significant number of respondents chose to not answer the question for reasons that are beyond our understanding.

13. Do you think that in-service teachers should receive training in language assessment?

Table 2.17.*Middle School Teachers’ Perceptions of receiving In-service Training in Language Assessment*

Options	N	%
Yes	30	85.71
No	3	8.57
No answer	2	5.71
Total	35	100

Question 13 sought to determine the teachers’ perceptions of whether in-service teachers should receive training in language assessment. The results in Table 2.17 display that a considerable number of participants representing 85.71% believed that in-service teachers should receive training in language assessment while only 8.57% of them saw that there was no need for such training. Yet, 5.71% have not answered the question. These results indicate that the majority of participants were aware of the importance of assessment; consequently, they highly insisted that in-service teachers should receive training in such area.

Section III: Teachers' Assessment Practices

14. What goal(s) do you usually assess your students for?

Table 2.18.*Middle School Teachers’ Assessment Goals*

Options	N	%
Grading	16	12,8
Evaluating previous learning	30	24
Diagnosing	24	19,2
Improving instruction	14	11,2
Preparing for a coming lesson	19	15,2
Enhancing learning	20	16
Others	2	1,6
Total	125	100

-Multiple Choice Question

In this question, the teachers were given a set of options from which they were supposed to select the goals they usually assess students for. From the goals suggested, evaluating

previous learning comes first with the highest percentage (24%), followed by diagnosing (19.2%), enhancing learning (16%), and preparing for a coming lesson (15.2%). Nonetheless, grading and improving instruction were the least chosen options with the percentages 12.8% and 11.2% respectively. Only two teachers suggested other goals for assessing students including “making judgments about the students’ achievements in the learning process” and “to enhance their ability to react in situations of integrations”. The results clearly indicate that most of the teachers assess with the goal of evaluating students’ understanding/performance regarding the previous learning points.

15. In addition to the end-of-term examination, what other measures do you usually use?

Table 2.19. *Middle School Teachers’ Assessment Measures*

Options	N	%
Tests	28	18,42
Written quizzes	14	9,21
Oral questioning	23	15,13
Homework performance	23	15,13
In-class assignments	11	7,24
Project work	21	13,82
Responses of students in class	22	14,47
Oral tests	4	2,63
Others	5	3,29
No answer	1	0,66
Total	152	100

-Multiple Choice Question

The results displayed in Table 2.19, revealed that tests are the most used measures (18.42%) for assessing students, followed by oral questioning and homework performance (15.13% for each), students’ responses (14.47%) and project work (13.82%). Yet, the remaining measures were the least chosen ones (in-class assignment, oral tests). Interestingly, five teachers proposed other types of assessment activities such as songs and games, quick summaries about the previous lesson, role plays, and “communicative tasks (generally mini-plays)”. It is worth mentioning that only one participant did not answer. Thus, the results imply that in addition to tests, the teachers used distinct measures to assess their students.

16. What types of assessment do you usually focus on?

Table 2.20. *Types of Assessment Middle School Teachers Focus on*

Options	N	%
Multiple choice questions	26	14,29
True/ false	25	13,74
Fill-in the gaps	21	11,54
Writing paragraphs	31	17,03
Short answers	23	12,64
Oral discussion	17	9,34
project presentation	7	3,85
project (written work)	9	4,95
Hands on which depends on students' performance with pre-defined criteria	4	2,19
Oral questions or tests	14	7,69
Others	4	2,19
No answer	1	0,55
Total	182	100

-Multiple Choice Question

In this question, teachers were asked to select the assessment types they usually focus on in the classroom from a variety of traditional and alternative assessment methods. According to the answers obtained, writing paragraphs was the most used type of assessment (17.03%), followed by multi-choice questions (14.29%) and true false (13.74%). When it comes to oral assessments, about half of respondents (9.34%) said they encouraged oral discussion in the classroom, while 7.69% said they used oral questions and tests to assess their students. Furthermore, only 2.19% said they used hands-on assessment to assess their students' skills, which might be due to lack of time. Additionally, only 4.95% of teachers stated that they used written projects and 3.85% oral project presentations; this might also be due to the lack of cooperation from students. Finally, 4 teachers said that they used other forms of assessment including situations of integration (Both written/ oral). This guides us to the indication that the majority of teachers were still relying on the traditional (pencil & paper) assessment more than the alternative ones.

17. What are the sources of your assessment tasks?

Table 2.21. *Sources of Assessment used by Middle School Teachers*

Options	N	%
Teacher developed	30	41,67
Published	19	26,39
Textbooks	17	23,61
Others	6	8,33
Total	72	100

-Multiple Choice Question

This question aimed to find out what sources teachers rely on for the assessment tasks they used in the classroom. From the results, it appears that the overwhelming majority of teachers (41,67%) preferred to use assessment tasks of their own design, while 26,39% of them used published material and 23,61% used resources from textbooks. Furthermore, 8,33% of participants stated that they used other sources for their assessment tasks. This can be explained by the fact that teacher-made assessments tend to be more authentic and can be designed to fit the educational context and learners' individual needs.

18. Please respond to the following statements by “Yes” or “No”

In question 18, teachers were asked to approve or deny the application of a set of assessment skills in their classrooms. It is composed of 15 statements divided into seven different categories in the following order:

a+b : constructing and planning assessment.

c+ d+ e: analysing and interpreting assessment results.

f:assessment for learning.

g+h : using performance assessment.

i+ j+k : student involvement.

l: communicating assessment results.

m+ n+ o: assessment ethics.

- **Constructing and Planning Assessment**

The first category included two statements concerned with the use of guidelines to plan assessment (a) and the construction of written tests based on instructional objectives and students' abilities (b). The results are represented in the following table:

Table 2.22. *Middle School Teachers' Planning and Construction of Assessments*

Options		Yes	No	No Answer	Total
a. I use assessment guidelines to plan assessment	N	26	3	6	35
	%	74.29	8.57	17.14	100
b. I construct my own written tests based on instructional objectives and students abilities	N	32	0	3	35
	%	91.43	0	8.57	100

The results indicate that while a considerable number of teachers represented in a percentage of 74.28% use guidelines to plan for assessment, only 8.57% of them did not exercise such a skill. The rest (17.14%) preferred not to answer. In the second statement, all the participants who answered (91.43%) did construct their own written tests taking into account instructional goals and students' abilities. Yet, only three teachers (8.57%) did not respond. This may suggest that most of the teachers are confident of their skills in planning and constructing assessments.

- **Analysing and Interpreting Assessment Results**

In this category, the statements c, d, and e are concerned with the skill of analysing and interpreting assessment results and planning the instructional follow-up accordingly.

Table 2.23. *Middle School Teachers Analysis and Interpretation of Assessment Results*

Options		Yes	No	No Answer	Total
c. I use assessment results to plan teaching	N	29	3	3	35
	%	82.86	8.57	8.57	100
d. I use assessment results in developing remedial work for low achieving students	N	30	1	4	35
	%	85.71	2.86	11.43	100
e. I use assessment results in making enrichment plans for high achieving students	N	21	11	3	35
	%	60	31.43	8.57	100

Based on the results shown above, 82.86% of the participants considered using assessment results to plan for teaching. Meanwhile, a percentage of (8.57%) represents both the teachers who defied this practice and the ones who did not give a response. Regarding statement d, the vast majority of teachers (85.71%) declared that they depended on assessment results to plan for reinforcement activities to support students. Only one teacher did not favour developing remedial work while four other teachers did not consider answering the question. For the last statement, over half of the teachers (60%) seemed to support making enrichment plans based on the results they got from assessments while only 31.43% denied practising the skill in their classrooms.

Overall, the results are clear evidence of the great importance teachers give to assessment information, considering it the basis for planning further instructional follow-up activities. They are also an evidence of their ability to analyse and interpret the results of assessment accurately.

- **Assessment for Learning**

Statement f aimed to find out whether the teachers provide their students about their performance as some sort of assessment for learning.

Table 2.24. *Middle School Teachers' Use of Assessment for Learning*

Options		Yes	No	No answer	Total
f. I provide feedback to each student about their performance	N	26	7	2	35
	%	74.29	20	5.71	100

The results as shown in table 2.25. Indicate that the majority of teachers (74.29%) consider providing feedback to students about their performance. This suggests that these teachers might be confident enough in their competency in providing proper feedback to their students when needed.

- **Using Performance Assessment**

Statements **g** and **h** were intended to discover whether the teachers provided feedback to students and whether they used performance assessment tools in their classrooms namely scales/checklists and portfolios. Table 2.25 represents the results.

Table 2.25. *Middle School Teachers' Use of Performance Assessment*

Options		Yes	No	No answer	Total
g. I use rating scales/checklists while observing students' performance in class	N	23	10	2	35
	%	65.71	28.57	5.71	100
h. I use portfolios to assist students progress	N	20	10	5	35
	%	57.14	28.57	14.28	100

The results as shown in table 2.25. Indicate that a significant number of teachers (65.71%) reported their use of scales/checklists as a tool to observe students' performance. The percentage of (57.14%) represents the teachers who confirmed using portfolios to assist students' progress. As can be seen, not all the teachers considered using such performance-based tasks.

- **Student Involvement**

The fourth category includes three statements about students' involvement in the assessment process. Statements **I** and **j** examine whether the teachers engaged their students in self- and peer-assessment respectively while statement **k** is about whether they trained students to assess tasks done by other peers.

Table 2.26. *Middle School Teachers Student Involvement Practice*

Options		Yes	No	No answer	Total
i.I allow students to self-assess their work	N	24	9	2	35
	%	68.58	25.71	5.71	100
j. I allow students to assess each other's work	N	24	9	2	35
	%	68.58	25.71	5.71	100
k. I train students to assess tasks done by their peers	N	24	9	2	35
	%	68.58	25.71	5.71	100

As can be seen in the table above, the results obtained are the same for the three statements. On the one hand, a percentage of 68.58% represents the teachers who stated they engaged their students' in both self- and peer-assessment as well as those who train them to assess tasks done by their classmates. On the other hand, a quarter of the teachers (25.71%) reported that they neither involved students in self- and peer-assessment nor trained them to assess peers' work. Only two teachers did not provide any response to this category. The findings suggest that peer- and self-assessment are amongst the types of assessment used by a significant number of teachers.

- Communicating Assessment Results

Statement **I** on is about the confidentiality of assessment results of students. It mainly aims at exploring whether teachers do care about the privacy of students when communicating assessment results.

Table 2.27. *Middle School Teachers' Communication of Assessment Results Practices*

Options		Yes	No	No answer	Total
I. I keep the assessment of each student confidential	N	26	7	2	35
	%	74.29	20	5.71	100

The results obtained illustrate that in statement **I** the number of teachers who picked Yes (26) surpassed those who chose No (7) suggesting that most teachers strive to keep their students' results private and confidential.

- Assessment Ethics

Statements **m**, **n**, and **o** addressed some classroom practices related to assessment ethics. The teachers were required to determine whether they teach to the test to prepare students for tests (**m**), whether they use assessment as a kind of punishment (**n**), and whether they prevent cheating in assessment (**o**).

Table 2.28.*Middle School Teachers' Assessment Ethics Practices*

Options		Yes	No	No answer	Total
m. I teach to the test when preparing students for tests	N	23	7	5	35
	%	65.62	20	14.28	100
n. I use assessment as a way to punish students for their behaviour	N	6	27	2	35
	%	17.14	77.14	5.71	100
o. I prevent students from cheating in tests and in other assessment types	N	29	1	5	35
	%	82.86	2.86	14.28	100

The findings demonstrate that more than half of the teachers (23) concentrated on teaching only the content of the test when preparing students for tests while 7 other teachers did not. It is noteworthy that five participants did not provide an answer. As far as statement n is concerned, the teachers who opted for no outnumbered (77.14%) those who picked yes (17.14%). Yet, only two teachers did not give an answer. In statement o, the majority of the teachers answered with yes (82.86%), and only one answered with no (2.86%). The remaining (14.28%) decided not to respond. Thus, the results exhibit that most teachers were aware of some ethical issues related to assessment concerning preventing cheating and using assessment as a kind of punishment, but the opposite is also true regarding teaching to the test when preparing students for the test.

To sum up, the findings clearly reveal that the majority of teachers utilize almost all the skills in the proposed categories. In the first category, most teachers confirmed planning for assessment and constructing their own written tests. Moreover, the second category yielded impressive results where the teachers affirmed planning for follow-up instruction (e.g. remedial and enrichment activities) which can be done only through a proper interpretation and analysis of assessment data. The results also show that most teachers make use of performance assessments (such as portfolios and scales) as well as self- and peer-assessments. It is also noticed that the teachers are aware of the confidentiality of students and some of the issues related to assessment ethics.

Section VI: Further Suggestions

19. Please, add any other suggestion or comment as far as Middle School Teachers' Assessment Literacy is concerned.

Out of 35 participants, 19 teachers answered this question by either commenting or giving some suggestions. The following statements are samples of comments provided by teachers:

- “We can say that teachers should be familiar with the assessment literacy since it plays a crucial role in checking and evaluating the whole teaching and learning process. I think that we as foreign language teachers should have more opportunities to discuss and deepen our understanding of assessment especially within the CBA, that is a completely new challenging approach in our educational system.”
- “Assessment is a basic part in our teaching process but unfortunately, most of us as teachers are not well-trained with how to integrate assessment in our teaching.”

All in all, most teachers focus on the necessity of both assessment and assessment literacy in their profession for obtaining more desirable outcomes. Some of the comments put a great emphasis on the knowledge and skills teachers need to have in order to be considered assessment literates including being able to use different types of assessments (e.g. diagnostic, formative, summative, etc.) and to choose appropriate methods based on both their students' needs and the stated instructional goals. One of the teachers insisted on the ability to prepare remedial activities that address students' weaknesses. Other comments shed light on the importance of pre-service and in-service training on language assessment. One teacher suggested that middle school teachers should be given enough time (through meetings and conferences) to exchange their experiences and learn from them in order to deepen their knowledge of the appropriate uses and limitations of assessment data.

2.3. Discussion of the Results

The analysis of the questionnaire has depicted substantial conclusions about the teachers' perceptions and practices. The results indicate that most teachers are not totally satisfied with their LAL levels. This seems to be mainly due to the insufficient training provided to the teachers both during their in-service and pre-service periods. It is also noticed that their assessment practices are still based on traditional methods of teaching and are therefore, not always in line with the principles of the CBA.

To begin with, the results revealed that most of the questioned teachers have considerable years of experience in teaching English at the middle school level. This means that they should be familiar by now with the CBA implemented in the Algerian schools since 2003. Yet, most of the participants might not be adequately prepared to face the challenges of assessing students under this new approach due to the lack of pre- and in-service training they reported in this particular area. This is concordant with what previous research had found that not all the teachers are provided with in-service training, and those who do often judge it as insufficient, while pre-service teacher training remains mostly theoretical in Algeria (Bouchair & Benaidja, 2016). Thus, when asked about the need to train teachers to properly assess their students, the overwhelming majority agreed and considered greater efforts to be put towards providing aspiring teachers with proper practical training in the different aspects and impacts of language assessment.

In order to get in-depth perceptions about their assessment literacy levels, the teachers were asked about a number of specifically chosen areas of assessment standards. Their answers varied from an area to another. However, it was generally noticed that the majority of the participants are not actually confident in their knowledge and skills since they tended to describe them as "basic" in most of the areas (e.g., preparing sound tests and assessments, choosing the appropriate form of assessment, assessment ethics, etc). It might be possible that

some teachers simply do not consider these areas as particularly important and are satisfied with having just the basic knowledge they need for their everyday classroom practices. Yet, having basic knowledge and skills might not be enough for a teacher to be considered as an assessment literate.

As for the teachers' assessment practices in the classroom, the findings revealed that the majority of the questioned teachers prefer to use assessment tasks of their own design as the main source to evaluate their students. This might be due to the fact that they know their students and their needs best and thus prefer relying on tasks of their own design as they trust them more. This indicates that the teachers are fairly confident in their assessment design skills in contrast to the other areas of assessment mentioned before. Moreover, a high portion of them reported using assessment results to plan teaching, develop remedial activities for their students, and provide them with feedback about their performance to further support their learning. However, when asked about their understanding of assessment and their main goals when assessing students, most participants viewed assessment mainly as a tool to evaluate learning and reported using assessment mainly for diagnosing and evaluating students' previous learning. This seems to indicate that while the participants do use assessments to enhance and support learning, their main approach to assessment remains summative in nature.

Another interesting finding is that while the teachers reported using different formal and informal assessment tools to evaluate their students' performances in addition to official examinations, most of them seemed to rely mostly on traditional paper-and-pencil tests in the classroom. Despite its importance in developing students' communicative skills, the oral competency is seldom focused on when assessing students since most teachers only focus on written assessment tasks such as writing paragraphs, multi-choice questions, true false, fill in the gaps, etc. Projects are rarely used by the teachers despite the fact that the Middle school

English syllabus put a strong emphasis on its importance in supporting learners' autonomy. However, contrary to what was previously reported, a good number of participants declared involving their students in the assessment process by engaging them in self and peer-assessment activities. This indicated that teachers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of such assessment practices to support their students' learning.

In sum, the findings obtained from the questionnaire revealed that the majority of teachers have an average assessment literacy level. Additionally, the results exhibit that the teachers' assessment practices plainly rest on traditional tools (multiple-choice questions, true-false, fill in the blanks, etc.) despite their moderate use of performance-based assessment tools (portfolios and scales/checklists). This means that there is little application of the principles of the CBA, where the focus is on demonstrated performance and not merely on what the learners know about the language. This can be due to the fact that teachers encounter a lot of difficulties in applying this approach in the classroom as it is time and resources consuming. It might also be simply due to the fact that a lot of them are still not comfortable with the CBA and prefer relying on more traditional approaches.

2.4. Pedagogical Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

In light of the findings discussed above, some pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for further research are provided to help improve and support teachers' assessment literacy:

- Pre and in-service training should be organised more often to introduce and familiarize teachers with the important notions of assessment as well as to enhance the knowledge and skills of teachers in assessment.
- Organising conferences, workshops and study days is highly recommended to be organised with collaboration between experienced teachers and novice ones for the sake of improving their practices.

- Teachers should not rely blindly on traditional assessments; however, they should use a diversity of tasks including alternative ones. Thus, this will help students develop meaningful and applicable skills as well as advance their knowledge.
- It is preferable for syllabus designers to reduce the learning units in order to give the floor for performance assessment and to consolidate previously learned points.
- It is important that the teachers focus on oral and performance-assessments so students' competencies are properly assessed and supported.
- For future research, it is recommended to extend the sample of the study and to vary the instruments used (classroom observation, checklist and experiment).
- It is also recommended that future researchers investigate the impact of assessment literacy on students' achievements.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

A number of challenges have been encountered when conducting the present study, regarding the theoretical part, the lack of references for certain elements, especially those relating to the integration of the CBA and the second generation curriculum created some sort of hindrance. Additionally, the researchers had to rely on their own translation of the official documents available only in French and which are supposedly concerned with the Middle School English curriculum. As far as the practical part is concerned, some of the teachers involved in the sample were not fully cooperative. This caused a delay in collecting the data in due time. Moreover, middle school teachers were difficult to get in touch with because they were in the exams' period. Time was also a major constraint that impeded the implementation of a second tool, namely, a teacher interview.

Conclusion

The chapter was devoted to the fieldwork of the present study. It started with a description of the population and the sample as well as the research instrument. It was then followed by the analysis of the numeric data obtained from the questionnaire and a discussion of the findings. Last but not least, the chapter ended up with the limitations encountered in conducting the research, along with a number of pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for research in the years to come.

General Conclusion

Considering the importance of assessment in the teaching/learning process, the present study is an attempt to investigate the perceptions of middle school teachers of their assessment literacy. It also seeks out to examine their assessment practices in a competency-based curriculum. It is divided into two major parts, namely, theoretical and practical. The former is composed of two main sections concerned with the literature of assessment and language assessment literacy, as well as the competency-based curriculum used in the Algerian middle schools and the place assessment takes in such a curriculum. The practical part, on the other hand, was devoted to the analysis and the discussion of the results obtained.

The findings of the questionnaire showed that the teachers' levels of assessment literacy were unsatisfactory and most of them lacked of training in assessment and language assessment literacy. Yet, most of the participants agreed on the importance and efficacy of training on such a pivotal area, assessment. Moreover, the data collected suggest that the teachers seemed to have average levels of knowledge and skills of the principles of the competency-based assessment. Nonetheless, little was seen in the application of these principles in their actual classroom assessment practices. This may be due to several reasons, including the teachers' unpreparedness to fully deal with the competency-based language teaching and assessment.

Acceptable progress has been made in the past few years to improve EFL teaching in Algeria. However, as highlighted in the present study, a lot still needs to be done to ensure that teachers meet the requirements of the new curriculum, encompassing, analyzing and assessing students' progress properly. In particular, major efforts need to be spared to provide teachers with adequate and proper training in the different assessment methods as well as provide them with the resources and opportunities to develop their assessment competency. Finally, future research in this area can explore further aspects that have not been tackled in the present study about assessment literacy and its effect on teaching/learning.

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Appendix

The Middle School teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

This questionnaire is part of a research work entitled “Investigating Middle School teachers' Assessment Literacy”. It aims at investigating the teachers' understanding of assessment literacy and their classroom practices.

You are kindly requested to answer the following questionnaire. Please tick the appropriate box (es) or make full statements when necessary. We assure you a total confidentiality.

Thank you in advance for your valuable time, insights and cooperation.

Section I: Background Information

1. What academic qualification do you have?

- a. ITE Certificate
- b. ITE Certificate + Bachelor Degree (Licence from UFC)
- c. Bachelor Degree (four-year licence)
- d. Bachelor Degree (LMD Licence)
- e. Bachelor Degree (ENS Certificate)
- f. Master Degree

2. How many years have you spent teaching English at the middle school level?

..... years.

3. Did you take any pre-service course/lectures on language assessment?

-Yes

-No

If yes, please give more details

.....

.....

4. Have you taken any in-service course/workshops/study days(with inspectors) on language assessment in general?

- Yes

- No

If yes, please give details

.....

.....

...

5. Have you taken any in-service course/workshops/study days (with inspectors) on language assessment in a curriculum that is competency-based?

- Yes

- No

If yes, please give details

.....

.....

Section II: Middle School Teachers Assessment Literacy

6. How would you rate your knowledge of the CBA?

a. Far above Average

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

e. Far below average

7. How would you rate your knowledge of assessment terminology?

a. Far above Average

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

e. Far below average

8. How would you rate your assessment skills?

a. Far above Average

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

e. Far below average

9. How would you rate your knowledge of the principles of assessment in a curriculum that is competency-based?

a. Far above Average

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

e. Far below average

10. How would you rate your assessment skills in a curriculum that is competency-based?

a. Far above Average

b. Above average

c. Average

d. Below average

e. Far below average

11. How would you describe your understanding of assessment?

.....

.....

12. How would you describe your knowledge/skills in the following areas?

	No knowledge	Minimal knowledge	Basic knowledge	Adequate knowledge	Superior knowledge
Principles of language assessment:					
• Validity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Reliability	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Practicality	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Authenticity	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Washback	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Preparing sound tests and assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Establishing the principles of language assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Giving feedback to Students based on assessment information	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Interpreting assessment scores to facilitate instructional decision- making	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Communicating assessment results (to the students, their parents ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Choosing the appropriate form of assessment based on clearly stated instructional goals	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Designing (creating) your own tests based on instructional objectives and students needs	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Involving students in assessment via					
• self-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• peer-assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Grading					
• Formal (exams and tests)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
• Informal: class participation, students daily performance, oral questioning	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Analysing assessment results (e.g. Computing and interpreting dispersion measures including mean, standard deviation for instance	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Assessment Ethics	<input type="checkbox"/>				

13. Do you think that in-service teachers should receive training in language assessment?

- Yes

- No

Section III: Teachers' Assessment Practices

14. What goal(s) do you usually assess your students for?

a. Grading (giving scores)

b. Evaluating previous learning

c. Diagnosing

d. Improving instruction

e. Preparing for a coming lesson

f. Enhancing learning

g. Other(s).....

15. In addition to the end-of-term examination, what other measures do you usually use?

- a) tests
- b) written quizzes
- c) oral questioning
- d) homework performance
- e) in-class assignments
- f) project work
- g) responses of students in class
- h) oral tests
- i) other(s)

16. What types of assessment do you usually focus on?

- a. multiple choice question
- b. true/false
- c. fill-in the gaps
- d. writing paragraphs
- e. short answers
- f. oral discussion
- g. project presentation
- h. project (written work)
- i. hands on which depend on students' performance with pre-defined criteria.
- j. oral questions or tests.
- k. Other(s).....

17. What are the sources of your assessment tasks?

- a. teacher developed
- b. published
- c. Textbooks

d. Other(s).....

18. Please respond to the following statements by “Yes” or “No”

Statement	Yes	No
I use assessment guidelines to plan assessment		
I construct my own written tests based on instructional objectives and students abilities		
I use assessment results to plan teaching		
I teach to the test when preparing students for tests		
I use rating scales/checklists while observing students’ performance in class		
I use assessment as a way to punish students for their behaviour		
I prevent students from cheating in tests and in other assessment types		
I use assessment results in developing remedial work for low achieving students		
I use assessment results in in making in enrichment plans for high achieving students		
I allow students to self-assess their work		
I allow students to assess each other’s work		
I train students to assess tasks done by their peers		
I keep the assessment of each student confidential		
I use portfolios to assist students progress		
I provide feedback to each student about their performance		

Section VI: Further Suggestions

19. Please, add any other suggestion or comment in general or in particular as far as Middle School teachers' Assessment Literacy is concerned?

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.....

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Résumé

L'enseignement et l'apprentissage efficaces des langues dépendent d'un certain nombre d'éléments fondamentaux, dont l'un est la littératie des enseignants en matière d'évaluation. Des niveaux adéquats de littératie en évaluation constituent une base solide pour des pratiques d'évaluation appropriées en classe. Cela favorisera évidemment les achèvements académiques de l'enseignant et de l'élève. L'étude en cours tente d'évaluer la préparation des enseignants du collège et leur perception de leur littératie en évaluation, ainsi que d'étudier leurs pratiques d'évaluation dans un programme axé sur les compétences. Pour atteindre les objectifs de l'étude, le paradigme quantitatif a été opté pour. En conséquence, les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un questionnaire administré à trente-cinq enseignants du collège sélectionnés au hasard à Jijel. Les résultats indiquent que la majorité des enseignants ont un niveau moyen de littératie en évaluation et ont signalé la nécessité de recevoir une formation continue en évaluation linguistique. En outre, les pratiques d'évaluation des enseignants sont partiellement compatibles avec les principes de l'Enseignement des langues basé sur les compétences. Alors que la plupart des enseignants ont déclaré qu'ils utilisent l'évaluation pour améliorer et soutenir l'apprentissage en utilisant différents outils formels et informels et en impliquant les élèves dans le processus d'évaluation en les engageant dans des activités d'auto-évaluation et d'évaluation par les pairs, ils s'appuient toujours principalement sur les procédures d'évaluation traditionnelles en classe. Sur la base des résultats obtenus, quelques recommandations et suggestions pédagogiques sont fournies.

Mots clés : évaluation, littératie en évaluation, les pratiques d'évaluation, approche basée sur les compétences, collège, perceptions.

ملخص

يعتمد تعلم وتعليم اللغة الفعال على عدد من العناصر الأساسية إحداهما مدى كفاءة المعلمين في تقييم التلاميذ. إذ تمثل مستويات كفاءة التقييم العالية قاعدة صلبة للممارسات المستخدمة في أقسام اللغة الانجليزية. و من المرجح أنها ستعزز بشكل كبير الانجازات الأكاديمية للمعلم و للتلميذ على حد سواء. تحاول هذه الدراسة استكشاف مدى استعداد و تصورات أساتذة التعليم المتوسط حول مستويات كفاءتهم في التقييم، كما أنها تحاول استقصاء ممارسات التقييم الخاصة بهم في منهج دراسي قائم على المقاربة بالكفاءات.

من أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم الاعتماد على منهج البحث الكمي من خلال جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان تم توزيعه على خمسة و ثلاثين أستاذ تعليم متوسط في جبل. و قد بينت نتائج الدراسة أن غالبية الأساتذة لديهم مستوى تقييم متوسط و قد أعربوا عن ضرورة تلقي التدريب فيما يخص عملية التقييم في مجال تعليم اللغات. كما كشفت النتائج أن ممارسات التقييم المعتمدة من طرف الأساتذة تتوافق جزئيا مع مبادئ تدريس اللغة القائم على الكفاءة. وبالرغم من أن معظم الأساتذة أفادوا باستخدام طرق تقييم مختلفة من أجل دعم و تعزيز التعلم من بينها إشراك التلاميذ في أنشطة التقييم الذاتي و تقييم الأقران، إلا أنهم لا يزالون يعتمدون في الغالب على إجراءات تقييم تقليدية. بناء على النتائج المتحصل عليها، تم تقديم بعض التوصيات والاقتراحات البيداغوجية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقييم، كفاء التقييم، ممارسات التقييم، منهج تدريس اللغة القائم على الكفاءة، ، التعليم المتوسط، تصورات.