Language assessment literacy
What are the ingredients?

The 4th CBLA SIG Symposium Programme
University of Cyprus

Ofra Inbar-Lourie
Tel-Aviv University
Outline of the talk

• Assessment Literacy & Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)
• Focus on teachers’ assessment literacy
• The relationship between Assessment Literacy and LAL: Illustrated via research on language teacher candidates
• The content of LAL courses: The ingredients
Assessment Literacy

The attainment of “a toolbox” of competencies, some practical some theoretical, on why, when and how to go about constructing a variety of assessment procedures (Boyles, 2005; Hoyt, 2005)
Reasons for current interest

• The role of language evaluation in impacting decision-making in various areas (e.g., civil, vocational, educational) needs to be accentuated and critically discussed (Inbar-Lourie, 2008)
• Wide use of assessment procedures, internal and external by different stakeholders (e.g. Pill & Harding, 2013)
• Educational systems: for accountability purposes; international tests (PISA)
• Reaching out? (Taylor, 2009)
Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

- Professional knowledge in the language testing/assessment domain
- The knowledge-base that typifies language testing as a discipline
- Acknowledged as essential for decision-making on language-related issues
**Language Assessment Literacy**

**Assessment Literacy**: the `WHY` (the theoretical framework) & the `HOW` (tools, analysis, issues of validity and reliability, reporting, ethicality). Does not relate to specific content.

**Language Assessment Literacy**: the content as a major variable - `WHAT` is being assessed

**Multi-layered**: knowledge in general education assessment and language-related issues (Inbar-Lourie 2008; Taylor, 2009)
Significance of assessment literacy among teachers due to their increasingly central role in the assessment process (internal/external assessment functions; formative assessment, Davison & Leung, 2009; Wiliam, 2011)
Teacher Assessment Literacy Framework


- Provide the *basis for research tools on teachers’ assessment* (Plake, Impara, Fager, 1993; Stiggins, 2002): *The Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory* (Mertler, 2003, adapted from the *Teacher Assessment Literacy Questionnaire* Plake, Impara & Mertler, 1993)
Fundamental Assessment Principles
(McMillan, 2000)

- The potential tensions which impact decision-making in assessment, i.e., formative and summative assessment, criterion and norm-referenced approaches, traditional and alternative assessment formats, external standardized testing versus classroom tests
- The formative role of assessment in instruction
- Using multiple means for assessing
- Fairness
- Ethicality
- Valid, efficient and feasible assessment practices (McMillan, 2000)
Applies to general assessment literacy. What about language assessment literacy?
“My subject and verb have agreed to disagree.”
Subject..... Verb... Feedback...Is this “Proper” language? Should the mistake be corrected?

The dual role of the language teacher: Teaching and assessment decision-making

How to teach the language to diverse learner groups, devise suitable assessment schemes, teach, assess, arrive at language teaching decisions, assess...
Teachers’ expertise in LAL

• Knowledge gained via assorted language assessment courses or professional workshops (Brown & Bailey, 2008; O’Loughlin, 2006).
• How is this knowledge defined? How does it develop?

How are theories of language testing communicated to the prospective language teachers about to join the community of language testers?
Assessment literacy: DISSEMINATION
Teacher Education Programs

• **Different models:** Courses in assessment (required or elective)

• **Curriculum courses or educational studies** that integrate assessment issues or foundations

• **Elective** courses in assessment

(DeLuca and McEwen 2007)
Teachers’ Self Efficacy in assessment

- Teacher candidates express low assessment self-efficacy
- Knowledge obtained mostly in the practicum experience (DeLuca and Klinger, 2010; Volante and Fazio, 2007)

**NEED FOR**

- Specific courses in classroom assessment and evaluation
- A better understanding of teachers’ acquisition of assessment literacy
Language testing courses: Questions/dilemmas

• What should language assessment courses for teachers include?
The LAL of the prospective teachers will be constructed to a great extent in accordance with the course contents depending on the instructor & course content.

• Who decides on the content?

• Who should teach the courses?
Language testing/assessment courses: Objectives

“...to enable students to develop (a) a sound understanding of key concepts in second language assessment; (b) their ability to critically evaluate existing assessment documents, and (c) their capacity to design or adapt assessment instruments for their particular teaching contexts” (O’Loughlin, 2006, p. 73).
How does LAL develop in these courses?

• What is the nature of the teacher candidates’ knowledge-base?

• What is the relationship between LAL and general assessment knowledge?

• Research (Inbar-Lourie 2011): Gaining insights into the development of the LAL of language teacher candidates in different course formats (N=67)
Findings (questionnaires)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The student teachers are aware of and in agreement with formative assessment principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Express more confidence in general assessment knowledge than in language related assessment skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

• A feeling of Enlightenment: Empowered - from non-knower TABULA RASA to KNOWER... yet still non-knower...
• Have internalized general classroom assessment theory and practices.
• However, uncertain as to how to connect the language aspect to assessment.
• Greater familiarity with and greater confidence in LAL by graduates of language-specific courses

Overall: Fear, lack of confidence in implementing assessment procedures, translating theory to practice. Yearn for prescriptive knowledge - part of being a novice teacher –more of the HOW.
LAL & Assessment Literacy?

• There seems to be evidence for the existence of two separate systems: an assessment literacy knowledge base and an emerging, less solidified Language-based one.

• How does the knowledge development occur?

• Will the integration, rather than the present separation, mark the transition from novice to expert?
LAL

Assessment Literacy
The nature of LAL

• A unique complex entity
• Comprises of specific language-related components which underlie reasons for use, trait and method, in accordance with contemporary general assessment theories and practices
The LAL Continuum:
A cluster of Intersected Continua (Inbar-Lourie, 2013)

Different levels of expertise and knowledge in

- **Assessment**
- **Language issues**
- **Language assessment**
- **The context**

Threshold level required: A basic understanding of the situated approach towards language testing and awareness of the consequential validity of the actions taken (p. 307).
So what are the ingredients?
1. Understanding of the social role of assessment and the responsibility of the language tester. Understanding of the political & social forces involved, test power and consequences.
The Power of Tests

A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE USES OF LANGUAGE TESTS

Elana Shohamy
We've scored poorly in math, reading, and especially in science. Do you know what this means?

It means we need to stop always taking tests and start actually learning.
SO, YOU WERE EDUCATED IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM—WHAT DOES THAT QUALIFY YOU TO DO?

IS THAT A MULTIPLE CHOICE, TRUE-FALSE OR FILL-IN-THE-BLANK QUESTION?
2. Knowledge on how to write administer and analyze tests report test results and ensure test quality
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** The Place of Test Prep in Your Classroom .......................... 4

**Chapter 1 Teaching Test-Wise Skills** .................................................. 8

**Chapter 2 Vocabulary: Building Word Power** ...................................... 14
  - Synonyms and Antonyms .................................................. 22
  - Multiple Meaning Words .............................................. 28
  - Words in Paragraphs .................................................... 34

**Chapter 3 Reading Comprehension** .................................................. 30

**Chapter 4 Language Arts Mechanics** ................................................. 59
  - Identifying Mistakes .................................................... 62
  - Filling in the Blank ..................................................... 64
  - Punctuation .............................................................. 66
  - Replacing Phrases ...................................................... 72
  - TerraNova/MAT .......................................................... 78

**Chapter 5 Language Arts Expression** .................................................. 85
  - Filling in the Blank ..................................................... 90
  - Identifying Mistakes .................................................... 92
  - Word and Phrase Replacement ....................................... 94
  - Subject and Predicate ................................................ 96
  - Combining Sentences .................................................. 98
  - Choosing Topic Sentences ........................................... 102
  - Editing ................................................................. 108

**Chapter 6 Spelling** ........................................................................ 113

**Answer** ......................................................................................... 124
3. Understanding of large scale test data
Figure 1.0 — How Do Home School Students Score?

- **Home School K–12**
  - National Average Scores: [87, 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, 85, 87]
- **Public School K–12**
  - National Average Scores: [50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50, 50]

**Achievement Test Subject Areas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Home School</th>
<th>Public School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Reading</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Language</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Math</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Skills</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Battery</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Battery</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Data collected for standardized academic achievement exams for the 1994–95 academic year.
- *For more details about the non-equal interval nature of a single percentile scale which has distortion especially near the ends of the scale see the complete study by Brian C.S. Styles of Peak One—Home Is Where the Heart Is, 1992. Lexington, KY: National Home Education Research Institute, www.homeri.org.
4. Proficiency in Language Classroom Assessment

The planning, administering, grading and analyzing of valid reliable classroom-based assessment tools that match teaching objectives and are intertwined with the learning process; to extract meaning for formative and summative purposes; provide feedback; ascertain the quality of the assessment tools used.
### Where is your thinking??

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WITHIN the text</th>
<th>BEYOND the text</th>
<th>ABOUT the text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the problem in the story?</td>
<td>Why do you think ___ really wanted ___?</td>
<td>What are some of the different kinds of text in this book?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about how this story ended.</td>
<td>What do you think ___ was thinking?</td>
<td>Why do you think the author ___?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was the problem solved?</td>
<td>Why was ___ important?</td>
<td>Why do you think this picture was used?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened when ___ happened?</td>
<td>What kind of person do you think ___ was?</td>
<td>What did the author do to make ___ interesting?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happened after ___?</td>
<td>What was the most important idea?</td>
<td>How did the author show you what kind of person ___ was?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the mystery in this story?</td>
<td>What new information did you learn?</td>
<td>In addition to the main text, how did the author give you more information about ___?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was the surprise at the end?</td>
<td>How are ___ and ___ different? The same?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creating Comic Books in the Classroom

make mistakes
5. Mastering language acquisition and learning theories and relating to them in the assessment process
Language Varieties

Using the learners’ L1

ASSESSMENT INFO

BICS & CALP in CBI

Content Demand

Language Demand

BICS

CALP
6. Matching assessment with language teaching approaches

Knowledge about current language teaching approaches and pedagogies
Effective Reading Instruction
7. Awareness of the dilemmas that underlie assessment: formative vs. summative; internal external; validity and reliability issues particularly with reference to authentic language use
And last but certainly not least...

8. LAL is individualized, the product of the knowledge, experience, perceptions and beliefs that LANGUAGE TEACHERS bring to the teaching and assessment process (Scarino, 2013)
GRADER TYPES

OPTIMIST

THESE ANSWERS ARE HALF RIGHT!

PESSIMIST

THESE ANSWERS ARE HALF WRONG!

REALIST

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING, MY TEACHING HAS HAD NO IMPACT.
And of course digital assessment ....
LAL encompasses the ability to critically appraise and interpret the discourse that characterizes various forces in internal and external assessment (Johnson & Kress, 2003; Leung and Rea-Dickins, 2007) with special reference to the content area: language teaching.
To sum up: LAL

The language-assessment connection

• Represents an interface between language and assessment
• Separate domain or field of study distinct from assessment literacy, same but different
• Ingredients: Modular - core and optional according to goals, context, needs (Brindley, 2001)