

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background of the study, research problems, scope and limitation, research significance, and definition of the key term.

1.1 Research Background

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the ability of teachers to conduct effective language assessments plays a vital role in enhancing classroom instruction and improving student outcomes. Assessment is not only used to measure learners' achievements but also to provide constructive feedback, inform instructional decisions, and tailor teaching strategies to students' needs. Therefore, mastery of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) which encompasses the knowledge, skills, and principles necessary to design, implement, and interpret language assessments is an essential competency for both novice and experienced EFL teachers. Taylor (2013) argues that LAL is not merely a technical skill but a comprehensive understanding that integrates pedagogical, theoretical, and contextual elements in language teaching.

Despite its importance, many EFL teachers regardless of their teaching experience often face challenges in implementing effective classroom-based language assessment (CBLA), particularly when assessing productive skills such as speaking and writing. A study by Ahmed (2018) found that teachers frequently lack the necessary skills to assess oral proficiency accurately. Likewise, Lian et al. (2015) emphasized the urgent need for continuous professional development to enhance teachers' assessment capabilities in line with evolving curricula and diverse

learner needs. These findings highlight the significance of Professional Development (PD) in supporting teachers' growth and strengthening their LAL throughout their careers.

Several international studies have identified a strong relationship between teaching experience, LAL, and participation in professional development. Zhang and Zhang (2019), in a study conducted in China, reported that experienced teachers demonstrated higher levels of LAL and engaged more frequently in PD activities than novice teachers. Similar findings were reported by Al-Hamdan and Al-Hamdan (2020) in Saudi Arabia, where limited access to PD programs was seen as a major barrier for novice teachers to develop their LAL. In addition, Li et al. (2021) highlighted that factors such as educational background, years of teaching experience, and access to training significantly influence a teacher's level of LAL.

In the Indonesian EFL context, attention to LAL and teacher professional development remains limited, both in pre-service and in-service training programs. Most training initiatives tend to focus on general pedagogical skills, often overlooking the critical role of language assessment in classroom learning. Moreover, novice teachers often enter the profession with minimal hands-on experience in assessment practices, while experienced teachers may rely on outdated methods without regular updates on current assessment approaches aligned with the national curriculum. This situation signals the need for a deeper investigation into the differences and similarities between novice and experienced EFL educators in terms of their LAL and professional development experiences.

Although numerous studies have explored LAL and PD separately, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding direct comparative studies between novice and experienced EFL teachers, particularly in relation to classroom-based language assessment. Understanding these differences is essential, as novice teachers may require more foundational training and structured support, whereas experienced teachers may benefit from updated strategies and best practices. A comparative approach can help identify the specific learning needs of teachers at different career stages and inform the development of more targeted and effective professional development programs.

In light of the issues mentioned above, this study seeks to conduct a comparative analysis of language assessment literacy and professional development between novice and experienced EFL educators in various classroom settings. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of English language education, particularly by providing insights for the development of professional training programs that are tailored to the actual needs of Indonesian EFL teachers.

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background of the study, the research problems of this qualitative study are formulated as follows:

1. How do novice and experienced EFL teachers perceive and implement language assessment literacy within classroom contexts?

2. How do novice and experienced EFL teachers experience and engage in professional development activities that support classroom-based assessment and language teaching practices?

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore and understand how novice and experienced EFL teachers perceive and practice language assessment literacy and professional development within classroom contexts. Specifically, it seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To explore novice and experienced EFL teachers' perceptions and practices of language assessment literacy in classroom contexts.
2. To investigate novice and experienced EFL teachers' experiences and engagement in professional development activities related to classroom assessment and teaching.

1.4 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this qualitative study is confined to exploring the perceptions and practices of novice and experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers concerning language assessment literacy (LAL) and professional development (PD) within classroom contexts. The focus of the research is not on measuring the level of teachers' LAL quantitatively, but rather on gaining an in-depth understanding of how teachers interpret, apply, and reflect upon assessment literacy and professional learning in their everyday teaching practices. The study specifically examines how teachers at different stages of their careers novice and

experienced conceptualize and enact assessment in classroom-based settings, as well as how their professional development experiences shape these practices. The research is situated within the context of Indonesian EFL classrooms, where both groups of teachers may face distinct challenges and opportunities in developing and implementing effective assessment strategies.

The limitation of this study lies in its qualitative nature and scope of participants. The data were collected from a limited number of EFL teachers selected through purposive sampling, which means the findings cannot be generalized to all teachers or educational contexts. Additionally, since the data rely heavily on self-reported interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, the results reflect participants' subjective experiences and may be influenced by their individual interpretations and situational factors. Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights that can inform teacher education programs and policy discussions regarding classroom-based assessment practices and ongoing professional learning.

1.5 Research Significance

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance for the field of English language education, particularly in understanding how novice and experienced EFL teachers perceive and practice language assessment literacy (LAL) and engage in professional development (PD) within classroom contexts. By exploring teachers' personal experiences, beliefs, and practices, the research provides a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between teachers' professional growth, classroom assessment, and instructional effectiveness.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of research on language assessment literacy by presenting qualitative evidence from the Indonesian EFL context a setting that remains underrepresented in global LAL scholarship. The findings are expected to enrich existing frameworks of teacher assessment literacy by highlighting the contextual, experiential, and developmental aspects that shape teachers' understanding and implementation of assessment in the classroom. Moreover, the study offers insights into how professional development activities can influence teachers' assessment literacy over time, which may inform future theoretical models connecting LAL and PD in teacher education research.

Practically, the study provides implications for teacher educators, policymakers, and institutions responsible for designing teacher training and professional development programs. Understanding the needs, challenges, and perceptions of both novice and experienced teachers can help stakeholders develop more responsive and context-sensitive professional development initiatives. The results may serve as a reference for EFL teacher training curricula to include more structured and continuous exposure to assessment practices, reflective teaching, and collaboration among teachers at different career stages.

Additionally, this research may benefit practicing teachers by encouraging self-reflection and awareness of their own assessment literacy and professional growth. By identifying the gaps between theory and classroom practice, teachers can better align their assessment approaches with students' learning needs and the objectives of curriculum reform. In the long term, the insights gained from this study can contribute to improving the quality of language teaching and assessment

practices in Indonesian schools, thereby promoting a more effective and equitable language learning environment.

1.6 Definition of Key Term

To ensure conceptual clarity and a shared understanding throughout this study, several key terms are defined as they are used within the context of the research. These definitions are not intended as universal or exhaustive meanings, but rather as operational definitions that reflect how each concept is applied in this particular study.

1. Language Assessment Literacy (LAL)

Language Assessment Literacy refers to teachers' knowledge, skills, and principles required to design, implement, and interpret language assessments effectively. It encompasses an understanding of theoretical foundations of assessment such as validity, reliability, and fairness as well as practical and ethical dimensions related to classroom decision-making. In this study, LAL also includes teachers' reflective awareness of how assessment practices influence students' learning and engagement in EFL classrooms.

2. Classroom-Based Language Assessment (CBLA)

Classroom-Based Language Assessment refers to the ongoing, formative use of assessment activities integrated into classroom teaching and learning. CBLA aims to monitor students' progress, provide constructive feedback, and inform instructional decisions. In this research, CBLA is viewed as a manifestation of teachers' assessment literacy, as it reflects their ability to connect assessment with pedagogy and students' real learning needs.

3. **Novice EFL Teachers**

Novice EFL teachers are defined as teachers who are in the early stage of their teaching career, typically with fewer than five years of teaching experience. They often rely on structured lesson plans and predesigned assessment materials, while their assessment literacy and confidence in conducting classroom-based assessment are still developing. Within this study, novice teachers represent the formative phase of professional growth in assessment practice.

4. **Experienced EFL Teachers**

Experienced EFL teachers refer to teachers who have accumulated substantial teaching experience, typically more than five years, and who demonstrate greater autonomy and adaptability in instructional and assessment practices. They are generally more reflective and flexible in using classroom-based assessments and often engage in mentoring or professional learning communities. In this study, experienced teachers represent the mature stage of professional practice in language assessment and pedagogy.

5. **Professional Development (PD)**

Professional Development is defined as a continuous and structured process through which teachers enhance their knowledge, skills, and professional identity. PD may take various forms such as workshops, seminars, reflective teaching, peer collaboration, or action research. In this study, PD is examined as a key factor that supports teachers' growth in language assessment literacy and improves their classroom assessment practices over time.