EXPLORING THE FEMALE EFL TEACHER'S LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY (LAL):
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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Abstract

Most teachers in Indonesia assess their students through a common test such as mid-term test and final semester test. In terms of assessing English language, the students need to be assessed on 4 (four) skills which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The process of assessment could be very tricky if the teachers do not have sufficient Language Assessment Literacy (LAL). It is because the government, through *Kurikulum Merdeka*, promotes the learning process as essential as the learning products. Teachers need to know all their students' English learning journey, so they will not face confusion to determine the assessment scores in the end. In Indonesia, generally female EFL teachers have double roles as wife or mother at home and as a teacher in school. This study explores a female EFL teacher's experience with non-permanent teacher status in describing her LAL. This study will also investigate female teacher's challenges faced during the application of assessment in the EFL classroom. A narrative inquiry research with mixed-method data collection was employed to have in-depth understanding of the teacher's experience. The result showed the participant's LAL category was at a fair level. The reasons could be limited time factor, double roles, and limited information for getting seminar/workshop/training on the assessment. These findings are expected to be the initial basis for further studies on more EFL female teachers' professional development in language assessment.

Keywords : female efl teacher, language assessment literacy, narrative inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian government has applied Kurikulum Merdeka since 2022 which not only focuses on students' learning products, but also the learning process (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). The teacher needs to have competence in specifying the level of students' process and achievement by providing proper measuring tools in the language assessment (Wijayanti, 2019). Most teachers in Indonesia assess their students through a common test such as mid-term test and final semester test. Assessment is considered to be one of the more crucial steps in teaching and learning. Assessments are more than merely graded assignments or lists of questions (Brown, 2022). It is a reasonable effort to put into action an illustration of a concept, piece of knowledge, or area of the curriculum. Assessment is a lengthy procedure that contains data on students' learning development (Tosuncuoglu, 2018). It was also used to identify the individual strengths and weaknesses of each student. Additionally, assessment provides teachers and students with some feedback during the teaching and learning process. This kind of feedback from assessments makes the assumption that teachers as well as students will be capable of achieving better in the future. Thus, it is discovered that proficient teachers

possess the capacity to appropriately nurture their students in accordance with the guidelines provided by the curriculum, enabling them to thrive in the face of the worldwide progress in society (Mantra, Astawa, & Rustini, 2019).

In terms of assessing English language, the students need to be assessed on 4 (four) skills which are listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Trisanti (2019) conducted an observation among secondary EFL teachers in Central Java, stating that creating the assessment as a component of the teaching activities proved challenging for EFL teachers there. Some have to do with the challenges of creating effective language assessments in the classroom, particularly with regard to task design. It is possible to argue that the issue is related to the teacher's understanding of assessment. This phenomenon has proved that every language teacher should possess good Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), which is a crucial component of language teacher skill sets and is becoming more and more significant in the teaching of language (Weng & Shen, 2022). LAL allows teachers to create and implement efficient testing procedures, effectively analyze student test results, create successful lesson plans, and make informed academic choices. However, a lack of LAL among teachers can end up in inadequate language tests, misinterpretations of test findings, and unreasonable academic choices which could be harmful to students. Due to the importance of evaluation's implementation in the teaching and learning process, Rust (2002) lists various purposes for assessment such as when students receive compliments on their work, students are more motivated to learn. Assessment attempts to score students'

METHOD

Research Design and Participant

This study was presented in qualitative research with narrative inquiry design. This research design focuses on exploring the experiences of an individual. Narrative inquiry is an effective approach for gaining deeper understanding from people who share their actual experiences with a certain topic. It aids the researcher in describing the way experiences

performance with reliable assessments supporting teachers in giving students the appropriate grades. Giving both teachers and students feedback is another objective of assessment. The assessment feedback allows them to have a kind of reflection on what has already been done, and it is anticipated that this will lead to an improved learning result moving forward.

Previous studies conducted by Purwani, Paramartha, and Wahyuni (2022) and Puspawati (2019) concluded that the fair level of LAL among English teachers became the major reason for the poor assessment practices. Being both a wife or mother at home and a teacher at school is the norm for female teachers in Indonesia (Limbong, 2019). In order to advance their careers as professional educators, female teachers confront more obstacles. According to Maharjan (2021), family obligations have hindered the professional advancement of female teachers. This study will explore both professional and personal experiences from female teacher who often neglected to be discussed in previous existing studies. Therefore, the research questions are formulated into (1) What is the LAL category of female EFL teacher with double roles as a wife/mother at home and a professional teacher at school? and (2) How do a female EFL teacher with double roles (wife/mother and professional teacher) describe her experiences and challenges in LAL practice? A narrative inquiry with mixed-method data collection will be conducted to have in-depth understanding of this issue, so the researcher will be able to reach the purpose of the study in exploring the female EFL teacher's LAL.

can affect how people live both in their personal and professional lives (Mark, 2020). This study employed a purposive random sampling technique where the participants must fulfill a requirement that was appropriate for the research objective, problem, and purpose. As mentioned in the background, EFL teachers in Central Java were found not easy to arrange assessment as a component of the teaching activities. This study employed Mrs. S who confirmed to have the challenging experience as

it. She is a female EFL teacher in a secondary school in a small town in Central Java Province, Indonesia. She has been teaching English for five years in secondary school with her qualification as Bachelor in English Education. Mrs. S is also a wife and a mother of two children at home. She conveyed her opinion on this study that might help her build self-awareness of his professional work, particularly in LAL. Furthermore, she is happy to share the experiences in managing her time between family and work. Cresswell (2007) stated that this kind of interaction between investigator and the subject when conducting narrative inquiry study is a practical way to guarantee the authenticity of the information gathered.

Research Instrument

The instrument used for collecting the data was a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of 30 (thirty) multiple choice questions related to the teacher's LAL which was adopted from Purwani et al. (2022). The questionnaire items' purpose was to know the category of teacher's LAL level. The questionnaire questions consisted of 7 (seven) dimensions of teacher's assessment literacy which were choosing, developing, administering, using-decision, using-grading, communicating, and recognizing ethics (Plake et al., 2005). The dimensions' descriptions were explained in details below:

Table 1.
Dimensions of Teacher's Assesment Literacy, adopted from Plake et al. (2005)

No.	Dimension	Description
1	Choosing	Choose assessment strategy that aligns with the learning goals.
2	Developing	Develop assessment strategy that is appropriate for the learning goals.
3	Administering	Providing tests, assigning grades, and analyzing test results, both from outside sources and from teacher-made assessment techniques.
4	Using-decision	Establishing choices about curriculum creation, teacher planning, student learning achievements, and school construction based on assessment results.
5	Using-grading	Creating reliable student ranking systems
6	Communicating	Sharing with stakeholders about the results of the assessment
7	Recognizing ethics	Awareness of evaluation techniques and improper, unlawful, unethical, and inappropriate use of evaluation data.

Another instrument was a semi-structured interview that was conducted online by Zoom with 6 (six) questions related to teachers' experience in describing her assessment literacy. The purpose of the interview was to confirm all the questionnaire questions and dig deeper into the teacher's experience in facing challenges as a female ELF teacher, particularly in the field of assessment.

Data Collection

The data was collected in 2 (two) rounds, which was questionnaire as the quantitative data and semi-structured interview as the qualitative data. The mixed-method was applied to comprehend the topic and its surroundings as completely as possible. The questionnaire was given a day before the interview through Google Form link, and the interview lasted around 30 (thirty) minutes by Zoom. The online video mode interview was conducted due to the participant's lack of time and for researcher's efficiency in collecting data. The demographic questions were added into the questionnaire such as name, school, and the English teaching experience. In this qualitative study, the researcher applied pseudonyms to the participant called Mrs. S. The purpose of the questionnaire was to collect information on the teacher's background and categorize her LAL level. The second round of the data collection was an interview, aimed at understanding how she presumed the importance of LAL for EFL

teachers. Furthermore, it revealed the challenges faced by Mrs. S as a wife and mother at home and a professional EFL teacher in school and how she dealt with the challenges in doing assessment.

Data Analysis

In developing the trustworthiness of the results, all data collected were analyzed into 2 (two) cycles. The first cycle allowed the researcher to integrate the results of the questionnaire and interview. The categorization of LAL level based on questionnaire answered by Miss S was below explained:

Table 2.
Teacher Assessment Literacy Category, adopted from Purwani et al. (2022)

Score	Category
22.5 ≤ X ≤ 30	Very Good
17.5 ≤ X < 22.5	Good
12.5 ≤ X < 17.5	Fair
7.5 ≤ X < 12.5	Poor
0 ≤ X < 7.5	Very Poor

The quality level was described in 5 (five) categories which are very good, good, fair, poor, and very poor. The category result was described in descriptive qualitative. The second cycle was the final analysis that allowed a share result with Mrs. S as the cross validation. It was done to ensure this study would have advantages to the participant herself as well as to the teacher readers, other researchers, and stakeholders.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Female EFL Teacher's LAL Category

The objective of this research was to explore the female EFL teacher's experience in describing her LAL. The study employed the semi-structured interview and a LAL teacher questionnaire adopted from Purwani et al. (2022) which was in a total of 30 (thirty) close-ended questions. It was a self-rating questionnaire that allowed the teacher to do self-assessment on her LAL. The questionnaire

was distributed to the participant in Google Form format. At the high school students level, Marhaeni et al. (2020) and Luthfiyyah et al. (2020) have conducted studies on LAL of English teachers which come with the result of moderate level. These previous studies showed similar findings on the present study. The result of present study can be seen on the table below:

Table 3.
Dimensions of Teacher's Assessment Literacy, adopted from Plake et al. (2005)

No.	Dimensions	Correct Answer	Wrong Answer
1	Choosing	1	3
2	Developing	2	2
3	Administering	1	3
4	Using-decision	3	2
5	Using-grading	1	3
6	Communicating	3	2
7	Recognizing ethics	2	2
Total		13	17

Based on the table above, Mrs. S answered 13 questions correctly and 17 questions wrongly. Based on teacher assessment literacy category (Purwani et al., 2022), it was said that 12.5 ≤ X < 17.5 = fair. Therefore, Mrs. S was identified to have LAL in the fair category. Furthermore, the score of 13 was very close to the minimum interval of fair LAL level (12.5), which can be concluded that the LAL of Mrs. S still needed to be improved more. In order to properly use language assessment in their teaching, teachers must be competent in the language assessment literacy (Hakim, 2015)

Weng & Shen (2022) mentioned three layers of LAL conceptualizations. The lowest level of the concept is reserved for assessment methods that involve the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for language assessments. Assessment processes, principles, and concepts are classified as intermediate-level principles of assessment. The context such as historical, social, political, and philosophical circumstances of language assessment, represent the leading layer of the concept. Based on the interview, Mrs. S showed the inadequate finding of her LAL

conceptualizations. The result might serve as a beginning point for her further language teacher' professional development in language assessment. However, she added that teachers may not always adhere to best practices or develop high-quality assessment activities, even when they are aware of assessment procedures. The statement got the researcher to agree as in line with a study conducted by Hakim (2015) to 30 (thirty) female language teachers with various degrees from five different countries.

Female EFL Teacher's Experiences and Challenges in LAL Practice

There are key elements that affect teachers' LAL which were individual and environmental elements (Weng & Shen, 2022). The individual element included teachers' language backgrounds, years of teaching, academic degrees, training experiences, and fields of study. In relation to environmental elements, it consisted of assessment traditions in various nations, national and local educational environments and rules, policies at schools, institutions demands, and facilities offered by institutions. Despite her background of education and EFL teaching experience, Mrs. S stated that she never attended seminar/workshop/training related to assessment during her teaching period. It was due to the limited information and opportunities given to her. It was also because she has been teaching at a state high school in a small town with the status of non-permanent teacher (honorary teacher) for five years. Teachers enhance their teaching skills and comprehend exactly how to utilize the test to assist their students maximize their level of proficiency in the target language by utilizing the concepts of language assessment in creating an effective assessment. Furthermore, teachers can raise their qualifications by enrolling in post-graduate programs, taking short courses, or participating in in-service training (Aria et al. (2021); Govender, 2015). Surprisingly, Mrs. S admitted never thinking about language assessment practices as details as the questionnaire provided by the researcher. Thus, she really appreciated being involved in this study.

In the interview phase, Mrs. S believed assessment could determine how students understand the material in learning. In this case, actually the teacher, professionally like her, must at least learn to understand the assessment by attending some training or workshops related to the assessment. She somehow regretted never attending any seminar/workshop/training on assessment. A teacher should be concerned with assessment literacy because it relates to the students' quality. Giraldo (2018) argued although have been discussed, two important challenges in language assessment literacy remain unresolved. They include what language assessment literacy actually is and how different parties (students and teachers) view it. Never attending any training in assessment did not make Mrs. S just surrendered regarding her assessment journey to her students. She took effort on gathering information from senior teachers, especially in the English subject teachers. The teachers were considered to have more experience than Mrs. S who has been teaching for about 5 years. Support from coworkers has a strong positive correlation with job engagement and is a major predictor of teacher work engagement (Kaiyom et al., 2021). Therefore, the experience of learning from senior teachers related to the what and how assessment was indeed very important in helping Mrs. S carry out the assessment in the class.

Mrs. S described that understanding the assessment will make her assess students more precisely. Assessment was still seen as the most difficult aspect of education, yet teachers are quite incompetent at evaluating their students (Bahtiar & Purnawarman, 2020). Mrs. S analogized that teachers cannot judge students' competences just by looking at their physical appearance such as height or weight, there must be a more detailed assessment in English.

Mede & Atay (2017) stated language teachers in various educational systems needed various sorts of assessment training since LAL was extensively contextualized. Mrs. S recognized that by joining assessment training, teachers would gain a lot of knowledge and understanding of assessment. Through the

sufficient LAL, teachers could find out the problems and difficulties faced by students in understanding learning materials. In terms of English language assessment, there are aspects that must be assessed from listening, reading, speaking, and writing. As Mrs. S's teaching experience for five years, there had been challenges in carrying out class assessments due to the complexity of English skills assessed. Those might take a lot of time, Mrs. S highlighted on assessing students' speaking skills. In her schedule of teaching English at school, there was only 2 hours each week provided. Mrs. S argued that it was a very short time in the teaching process and continued with assessing students. In assessing speaking, generally the students were asked to come directly in front of class one by one. Unfortunately, according to Mrs. S, it was very time-consuming. Furthermore, there was quite a lot of material to continue to be taught afterwards, so there was no choice to just have the speaking assessment randomly. If not, the assessment process would affect the next materials delivering effectivity. However, Mrs. S tried to describe that she might be in the insufficient level of LAL that made her in such a time factor challenge. This was in line with statement of Ismael (2017) stated increasing assessment literacy entails understanding a wide range of assessment-related topics, including assessment layouts, methods, relevance, reliability, and accountability; the distinctions between assessments for English language learners and native speakers; students' rights to information about test questions and answer designs; the necessity of peer and self assessment; considering students' perspectives; testing for languages standards; and professional ethical standards. Mrs. S believed to find strategies regarding her assessment if only she could learn more about LAL.

Another challenge coming from Mrs. S's home responsibility as a wife and mother of two children. In order to advance their careers as professional educators, female teachers confront more challenges (Limbong, 2019).

Dhania et al. (2022) stated that it is believed that husbands who implement strict rules and make numerous demands harm the personal development attempts of female leaders. As a wife, Mrs. S was very grateful for having a husband that provided freedom to her in continuing her career as a teacher. Becoming a teacher was always her dream because it was a noble thing and would help her in teaching her children in the future. Being a mother took quite a lot of time for Mrs. S to take care of her family. She had to create good time management, so she would not be overwhelmed. She admitted to not being very competent in managing time well, particularly in terms of developing her teacher career. Mrs. S explained her problem such as when she planned to create teaching innovation or turned her materials into interactive with the utilization of ICT. Sometimes, she faced limited time to do it in school, then should make it at home. In addition, she also had to do an assessment on the students' test results. She sometimes felt a bit overwhelmed because correcting students' work was also quite time-consuming. However, she believed that teaching experiences played major roles in terms of managing time.

Although many overburdened and underpaid teachers delivered exams to students with simply a written grade or quantitative score to indicate their work completed, Brown (2004) argued that what happened before and after the test was crucial. The majority of teachers accomplish this in their daily habits, which was great. However, teachers must provide the students with the right feedback that might allow them to identify which area they were still struggling with. Additionally, it will be beneficial if the final test is not administered during the end of the class session. This will provide teachers an opportunity to provide assessment to the students. Therefore, Mrs. S believed to continue her teacher career and keep updating her professional development. Thus, she could apply a work-life balance as a wife and mother without harming her students' learning goals.

CONCLUSION

Writing test questions, scoring students' works, interpreting student scores, and using test results to inform decisions are all tasks that are under a teacher's obligation. However, the teacher may feel unprepared for certain classroom procedures. The researcher discovered that the teacher's lack of assessment expertise required to be improved through certain professional development such as assessment seminars/workshops/training. Unfortunately, the teacher may not always adhere to best practices or develop high-quality assessment activities, even when he/she is aware of assessment procedures (Hakim, 2015). Some challenges happen for a female EFL teacher with a fair level of LAL category in applying best practices of LAL. The present study revealed challenges in terms of limited time factor, double roles at home and school, and limited information for getting seminar/workshop/training on the assessment. Additionally, the results may be still biased because a language teacher may not be able to accurately measure her own LAL level and the present study relied mostly on self-reported data from a questionnaire and interview. Finally, these findings are expected to be the initial basis for further studies on more EFL female teachers' professional development in language assessment.

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