DEVELOPING LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT LITERACY OF FILIPINO PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS: REFLECTIONS FROM A LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT COURSE

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Abstract: Many educational and language scholars in the field have remarked the need to strengthen assessment and testing academic courses in the undergraduate teacher education programs, more specifically in highlighting the importance of language assessment literacy (LAL). With several findings indicating insufficient or impractical assessment components in many of these programs, academics and teachers alike agreed with the significance of developing pre-service teachers' LAL to reinforce their theoretical knowledge and practical skills of assessment which would enable them to effectively construct and administer language assessments. In order to contribute to the discussions on LAL, this qualitative case study reports on the reflections made by the pre-service teachers (PSTs) of English language education (*n*=13) on their learning process during a university-based academic course on language test development in the Philippine setting. Guided by an assessment literacy framework, this study aims to explore PSTs' LAL development and the contribution of the assessment course to this development. Findings revealed that the course produced extensive modifications in understanding the definition and principles of assessment, the various strategies and tools of assessment, and purposes and construction of language assessments. Additionally, the current research offers discussions into the influence of language assessment training on PSTs' LAL development.

As education has evolved over the years, it has become imperative for teachers to keep up by developing multiple literacies, such as media, academic, computer literacy, and many others. Given these emerging new literacies, scholars and academics alike have advocated for teachers to develop their assessment literacy (AL) (Stiggins, 1999; Taylor, 2009). This aligns with concerns with the inadequacy of teacher training programs in assessments, that has resulted to teachers becoming 'assessment illiterates' (Stiggins, 1991, p. 535), and committing 'professional suicide' (Popham, 2011, p. 82). In English language education, calls have been made to raise awareness and knowledge of effective language assessment practices among a variety of stakeholders; thereby, encouraging the promotion of language assessment literacy

(LAL) (Baker, 2016; Inbar-Lourie, 2008, 2013, 2017). Developing LAL not only among teachers but also among policy-makers and students (among others) would reinforce healthy discussions of assessment matters, and support sound decisions about assessment data grounded in effective language assessment principles and practice (Pill & Harding, 2013). As Inbar-Lourie (2008) posited, people who are language assessment literate have the capacity to critically reflect about the objectives and significance of the assessment, the appropriateness of testing tools, and the implications of assessment data.

Generally, LAL pertains to the ability of an individual to design language assessment tools and examine assessment results based on a set of competencies in using appropriate and effective methods of assessment (Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Pill & Harding, 2013; Stiggins, 1999). This ability requires practical skills in assessment construction and knowledge of principles in measurement and language structure (Davies, 2008). As the theoretical conceptualization of LAL has expanded, there has been a shift in its development toward a developmental perspective (Coombe et al., 2020). From its early models, LAL was initially conceptualized from a componential view which only consisted of knowledge and skills (e.g., Davies, 2008; Xu & Brown, 2016). Fulcher (2012), for example, argued that LAL should include theoretical and procedural knowledge, socio-historical understanding, and practical knowledge which was considered as the most important aspect among others.

With much development in teachers' AL, reports still show a relatively low level of teacher AL from Western (Tsagari & Vogt, 2017) and Asian countries (Lam, 2015; Zulaiha et al., 2020), including the Philippines (Hailaya, 2014). One probable cause can be traced to the quality of initial teacher education (ITE) programs (Oo et al., 2022; Verberg et al., 2016). Studies on ITE programs revealed that most programs have insufficient assessment components (Siegel & Wissehr, 2011), and limited emphasis on interpreting assessment data (Craven et al., 2014) which hinder the acquisition of assessment knowledge and development of practical skills among pre-service teachers (PSTs) (Oo, 2020). These findings have also been substantiated by PSTs who reported not having enough preparation to expand their knowledge and skills in assessment (McGee & Colby, 2014). In order to address these issues, education scholars argued that ITE programs should ensure a range of opportunities allowing the development of theoretical knowledge in assessment for PSTs to achieve the literacy they need for effective classroom teaching (McGee & Colby, 2014; Xu & Brown, 2016). To this end, this study aims to explore the teaching of a language assessment course of an ITE program in the Philippines, and its impact towards the LAL of Filipino PSTs.

For this exploration, the study examined a university-based academic course that looked into the teaching and construction of language assessment. This course presents the principles of language test construction and their application in test administration to PSTs majoring in English language education. The course content is divided into four main modules: 1) Principles of Assessment, which covers the discussion of the purpose, principles, and types of assessment; 2) Introduction to Test Construction, which comprises lectures on requirements, methods, and criteria for testing; 3) Testing Language Development, which tackles approaches and alternatives to language testing; and 4) Language Test Construction, which focuses on the preparation and writing of the language test items. As for the mode of delivery, the course applies a resource-based approach where online and offline digital and print resources are used in

synchronous and asynchronous classroom formats. Some examples of the course requirements include constructing of a 100-item integrated test and participating in various online discussion forums. These forums act as reflective journals that directly elicit PSTs significant learning in every module of the course to enhance their self-awareness of learning, and provide opportunities for them reading and reacting to their classmates' posts.

Through the informed accounts and reflections of the PSTs reflected in their participation during required online discussion forums, the study analyzed the different opportunities and practices provided by their programs in developing their practical and theoretical knowledge of assessment. This analysis enabled an understanding of whether the course provided sufficient and effective assessment components to develop a level of literacy appropriate for future English language teaching practitioners. Lastly, the findings of the study can provide instructional recommendations for the improvement of not just the assessment course but also the curriculum for English language PSTs.

Language Assessment Literacy

Over the last decades, there has been an increased attention in studying AL, particularly LAL (e.g., Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000; Taylor, 2009). Among these studies, there has been abundant research that focused on in-service teachers as discussed by Fulcher (2012) and Tsagari and Vogt (2017). For example, Levi and Inbar-Lourie (2020) examined a course on formative classroom assessment and its impact on the AL of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Hebrew teachers (n=16) in Israel. Based on the accounts, teachers were able to apply the general theoretical and practical understanding of assessment from the course to their language-learning domain to create and design assessment tools. Through this process, the authors argued how LAL should be viewed as a developmental process, and a process-oriented phenomenon, requiring an amalgamation of AL with language-related components and context-relevant variables. In addition, Watmani, et al. (2020) investigated EFL teachers' (n=200) literacy assessment to bring forth teacher education reforms in Iran. Similar to other studies that suggest a low level of AL among teachers, the results indicated that teachers were not significantly knowledgeable about AL principles and practices. They claimed that courses on assessment and testing the participants had taken might have underprepared them about basic principles of assessment, highlighting the importance of effective pre-service teaching programs. In contrast to the EFL settings, a review by Singh et al. (2022) indicated that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers showed relatively good mastery of AL which indicated a sound knowledge and clear understanding of appropriate assessment suited to their students' characteristics and skills. Studies also showed that ESL teachers were able to employ a variety of assessments through a diverse set of classroom activities from collaborative work to the use of games and role-plays (e.g., Mulyadi et al., 2021).

In recent years, there has been an increase in scholarly works that examined prospective teacher's AL (e.g., Siegel & Wissehr, 2011), and more precisely, LAL (e.g., Giraldo & Murcia, 2019). Many of these studies on PSTs have revealed various issues that may explain the low level of LAL among teachers in many countries. It was found that many teacher education institutions or ITE programs have inadequate or impractical assessment components resulting in

sub-quality assessment courses with insufficient theoretical and practical knowledge of classroom assessment (Popham, 2011). Moreover, current assessment courses in these programs have different and sometimes conflicting focus on assessment content leading to inadequate assessment preparation for PSTs that needed more than a general and broad view of assessment (Oo et al., 2022; Xu & Brown, 2016). Another issue is the misalignment of the content of most assessment courses to the academic and assessment context being catered by these PSTs (Hill et al., 2014). Giraldo and Murcia (2018) conducted an action research study inquiring the impact of a language assessment course based on the perceptions of PSTs (*n=30*) and language professionals (*n=5*). According to the participants, the language assessment course should include discussions on methodologies and significant purposes of language testing. There is also a strong support to amalgamate theory, practice, and assessment issues to ensure a variety of topics in the course. An interesting study by Restrepo Bolivar (2020) reported on the use of a learning journal to assess EFL student-teachers' (*n=23*) progress in their assessment and testing course. Findings revealed a substantial shift of student-teachers' understanding of language assessment, from its definition to its classroom-based applications. Through the learning journal, PSTs created evidence of their progress reflecting their LAL development.

Altogether, academics and teachers alike have agreed on the essentiality of developing language teachers' LAL to strengthen their theoretical background knowledge of assessment content and principles, enabling them to construct and administer appropriate language assessments in their classrooms. With the expanding scholarship of LAL, the current study aims to explore the implementation of discussion forums during asynchronous classroom sessions that may act as reflective journal writing in developing and monitoring PSTs' assessment knowledge in this course. The study also examines how asynchronous discussion forums can be an effective tool to develop PSTs' LAL in different language assessment course in a university. This is informed by studies that proved how reflective writing for PSTs promotes critical positioning of oneself as a teacher in the academic context (Kim, 2018), and evaluates one's practice for sound decision-making (Khanjani et al., 2018). Moreover, research on PSTs' LAL development in the Philippine context has been scant, an issue the current study aims to address.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized Siegel and Wissehr's (2011) theoretical framework for assessment literacy, which is anchored in transforming learning objectives to assessments that objectively represent student learning and achievement (Stiggins, 2002). This theoretical framework expands assessment literacy to encompass both theoretical understanding of assessment, and practical classroom knowledge of its implementation. This model proposes how teachers should be able to understand the interrelationship of three concepts of assessment: a) Assessment Principles –theoretical philosophies that inform and direct decision-makings in assessments; b) Knowledge of Assessment Tools – knowledge of assessment strategies, activities, and instruments, and c) Knowledge of Assessment Purposes – recognition of the purposes and range of classroom assessments, from self-reflection to monitoring of actual student achievement.

In this study, three constructs were reflected on the online discussion forums that PSTs were required to participate in throughout the semester. Through these discussion forums, the

participants were able to reflect on the assessment principles they learned during classroom discussions and modules as they constructed and selected assessment tools and test types in designing their own language tests, as required by the course.

Research Questions

As the primary objective of the study, it aimed to determine the extent to which a language assessment and testing course help in promoting LAL development among ESL pre-service teachers. Specifically, the study investigated the PSTs' participation in online discussion forums through their learning journal entries for the course. The current paper was guided by these questions:

1. How is the LAL of ESL PSTs developed during a language assessment course?

2. What components of the language assessment course generated impact on the development of LAL among language PSTs?

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach as its methodological framework. Grounded in the real-life situations that describe and explain the participants' experiences and knowledge, the findings of this case study offer a substantial and holistic account of the phenomenon of how PSTs develop their language assessment literacy within a university-based language assessment course. Using the PSTs' discussion forums, these case materials can reflect the case study's meaning-making and awareness of their actual experiential process.

Participants

During the course implementation, there were 13 students enrolled in the class with ages ranging from 18 to 22 years old. As an ethical consideration, all participants were asked to sign an informed consent form agreeing to voluntarily participate in the research process. Moreover, the informed consent form included the rationale of the study, the rights of the participants (i.e., right for privacy, anonymity, etc.), and the explicit statement that participation in the study will not alter or favor anyone's semestral grade for the course. The participants had already accomplished more than half of their curriculum and had been exposed to various language assessments in different courses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following Restrepo Bolivar's study (2020), data were collected from the semi-structured learning journals posted in discussion forums in which the participants responded to prompts given by the researcher after every learning module. Some example prompts included: *What do you know about assessment? What types of language assessments have you experienced during the span of your student life? How were these assessments able to help you learn and develop language? What significant learning has changed your views and perception of language assessment? How do one decide whether a language assessment is appropriate or not?*

To maintain practicality, participants' entries were only limited to 600-800 words per journal entry, approximately one to two pages long (letter size). Other expectations for the journals involved the use of English language, and comprehensible reflections of language assessment. Because of the face-to-face restrictions at the university, all submissions were done online. For each student, four learning journals were analyzed in the study. Teacher's feedback was provided throughout the course, though it was not included in the analysis.

For the analysis, the study made use of content analysis (Saldaña, 2009), which consisted of: a) identifying initial codes and categories, b) recoding and recategorizing, and c) defining themes from the codes. During the coding process, each entry was treated individually and coded manually; then, these codes were compared to other developed codes and categories in a constructed matrix. Pre-determined codes, derived from Siegel and Wissehr's (2011) theory were also applied. For example, PSTs' reflections on the extent to which the course helped shape and shift their assessment knowledge was coded as 'Changing Knowledge of Assessment' as informed by the theoretical framework. From polishing these initial codes, themes were identified to form broader and overarching ideas. To ensure accurate interpretation, a conference was held with the participants to share the preliminary findings of the study and invite their comments and suggestions. Afterwards, final decisions were made and approved by the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the data analysis, it was revealed that there are four distinct dimensions identified in the pre-service ESL teachers' LAL. Firstly, the participants' development of their LAL was evident in their evolving and changing perspectives on the definition and purpose of assessment. Secondly, the PSTs' discussions exemplified how they were able to construct their initial conceptualization of what makes a 'good' assessment. Thirdly, evidence of their LAL progress can be demonstrated in their deepened understanding and reflections on how teachers should be able to effectively assess language skills in the real-world contexts. Lastly, the fourth dimension constitutes their own realization of the realities in creating their own language test, and their abilities to adapt and compromise from their ideal views of assessment.

Evolving Definition and Purpose of Assessment

At the start of the course, PSTs' understanding of assessment definitions and purposes have been very limited and shallow. Some of them only knew that language assessments were just a staple component of any language subject, without realizing their true purpose and objective. Some of them only associated language assessments to skill-based performance tasks such as spelling and oral recitations (Extract 1). However, it is interesting to note how some of them already had a better understanding of what language assessment is (Extract 2). The improvement can be attributed to how the participants' previous course works were able to help in constructing a strong foundational knowledge of language learning, which also emphasized the importance of language assessment as part of the language teaching professions.

> Extract 1: *"Before I took my major courses in college, I knew back then that language assessment would always be oral recitations and spelling quizzes, which caused the students to fear using and to learn the language."*

> Extract 2: *"Before studying this unit, I view language assessments as varied, authentic, and skills-based. This was, of course, with the extreme help of my EDL courses that instilled in me how assessments, as part of the lesson plan, should be created. I have this certain kind of impression that language assessments should prompt the students to use the language effectively as a means of communication in various situations."*

As the course progressed, there was a shift to a deeper understanding on how these PSTs should perceive and define language assessment not only as a part of language learning but also a major component of their teaching profession. After completing the course discussions on the principles of assessment, the PSTs were able to conceptualize assessment as a far more complex construct than just traditional paper-and-pen examination. Through this discussion, they developed a more conscious disposition on how to create assessment, not just for the sake of assessing but also for the sake of actual language learning of their students (Extract 3). At this point, it is also interesting to point out how these PSTs were able to use their course readings (e.g., research papers, books) as a foundation for both their practical and theoretical knowledge on language assessment (Extract 4).

> Extract 3: *"My perspective about language assessments changed when I recognized the difference between assessment from evaluation and measurement. That assessment is the process of gathering information to monitor the student's progress and make educational decisions that would improve both the teachers' and the student's skills and knowledge."*

> Extract 4: *In particular, I was encouraged to see that the things I wanted to see in assessments such as validity, practicality, relevance, as well as the authenticity of the language and contents, among others, are also backed up by research and that there are practitioners who still care about creating such clearly goal-oriented assessments.*

It is evident from the entries that, at the onset of the course, the PSTs had only limited knowledge of language assessments. The majority of the participants, with a few exceptions, understood that assessment is an important process in the classroom, without really understanding its theoretical and practical significance in language learning. Moreover, they associated assessment with typical requirements and classroom tasks (e.g., quizzes, recitations) that they had experienced as students. Nevertheless, throughout the semester, their definition of assessment evolved from just being quizzes or oral recitations to a more complex perspective, recognizing its significance in students' language learning. They were able to articulate terms like *validity, practicality* and *authenticity* as important concepts of language assessment. In a way, they were able to understand how assessments can extend its effect not only in students' learning but also in teacher's pedagogical decisions and implementations.

Conceptualizing What Makes a Good Assessment

Part of the course involves helping students realize what makes a good assessment. With discussions that focus on conceptualizing the different characteristics and purpose of language assessments, it is interesting to note how the PSTs were able to concretize these concepts through their past experiences of accomplishing various language assessments when they were in high schools. Throughout the discussion forums of the PSTs, it is evident how their previous experiences as a student shaped the way they identify and define what a good assessment is. Having their previous language teachers as role models, the participants were able to associate the course discussions on assessment to the different language assessments they had firsthand experience with. As the course explored the important processes of language assessment, the participants were able to recognize these processes and related them to their past language tasks, realizing the true intentions and effectiveness of the tasks they were required to do when they were students. The participants were able to decipher effective classroom practices used by their previous teachers because of how the course provided them with practical knowledge on how to administer appropriate language assessments (Extract 5).

Extract 5: *"One language assessment test I remember… was my English periodic examination in seventh grade. The exam was divided into three parts, a multiple-choice type, a reading comprehension with a short-answer response, and an essay. The test types were all appropriate to measure our knowledge gained from the topics discussed for that quarter. The teacher also addressed the learning gaps of the whole class through item analysis after checking the papers. She reviewed the concepts most of us were wrong and changed some of her teaching strategies, such as from lecture-discussion, and added more collaborative activities in the discussion as well."*

Aside from associating their conceptualization of what makes a good assessment with their past experiences, it is also apparent how the course may have provided them additional information that altered the way they view language assessments. The PSTs were able to reflect on their current understanding, which allowed them to have a broader perception on the different factors that may affect the effectiveness of a language assessment. They were able to realize how language assessments, regardless of whether they were easy or not, underwent a rigorous process to ensure quality and appropriateness for the students (Extract 6).

Extract 6: *"Upon reflecting on these negative experiences and studying the basics of test construction, I have realized that the endeavor to design effective language assessment tests is an arduous task, especially since we, future teachers, also need to provide quality instruction and meaningful learning experiences to our students."*

The analysis suggested how the PSTs' conceptualization of *what* constitutes a good assessment is greatly influenced by how they personally experienced language assessments with their previous language teachers. Serving as a model for these PSTs, their experiences as students have provided various contexts and practical understanding of the different abstract concepts discussed in the course.

Understanding How a Teacher Effectively Assesses

Effectively implementing language assessment is not only about gaining a set of knowledge of its theoretical background but also developing the skills to put theory in practice. The PSTs' entries highlighted how the course helped them in recognizing different factors that may contribute to the proper implementation of these assessments. Some mentioned the importance of feedback and rubrics while others emphasized the importance of an assessment's format and structure, most specifically its instructions. Many also mentioned the need to consider the students' individual characteristics in constructing language assessments, such as proficiency level and cultural contexts (Extract 7).

> Extract 7: *"When choosing and using assessments and evaluating results, a teacher should also consider cultural contexts and potential biases. Making direct links to the student's prior experiences may also help assess their performance and know their difficulties."*

As PSTs exhibited their knowledge of *what* is a good language assessment, they were also able to express their understanding of *how* to create and implement a language assessment. Findings derived from the analysis suggested the participants' disposition to associate effective implementation of assessment with the degree of ethical considerations in the language assessment process. Particularly, participants mentioned the importance of rubrics and feedback in providing students with clear assessment criteria, which included the tasks and contents needed for them to accomplish. Moreover, providing feedback, removing bias using rubrics, ensuring understandable test structure, knowing students' proficiency level, and considering students' cultural contexts were considered as key factors in promoting fair and good language assessment practices. Based on the accounts of the PSTs, the changes on how they view language assessments are not only related to the abstract perspective of theories but also to appropriate and practical implementation. These changes align with other findings from studies such as Arias et al.'s (2012) study that engaged in-service teachers in critical tasks to reevaluate language assessments, and Restrepo and Jaramillo's (2017) study that showed PSTs' complex understanding of language assessment. These collective converging findings suggest how direct training and reflection on language assessment provides a more heightened awareness of what and how language assessment should be.

Experiencing the Realities of Creating Language Assessments

With the different course requirements (i.e., a 100-item integrated language test, table of specifications) accomplished by the PSTs during the semester, it is no surprise that they were able to articulate various experiences of struggles and issues in creating their own language assessments. Their learning entries have become an opportunity to reflect about these experiences and how to better cope in dealing with challenges in their future professional journey. One issue they pointed out is how they were able to complete the table of specifications of their language test. They had difficulties ensuring that the assessment would be aligned with the competencies of the subject curriculum. In aligning the test to the competencies of the subject, PSTs were also quick to point out how they have been critical in choosing what test type

to include in their language test (Extract 8). With the different information they have gotten from the course, they were trying to assess whether a test type can be effective and appropriate for assessing specific learning competencies. There is also evidence that PSTs had difficulty finding suitable resources for their language test (Extract 9).

> Extract 8: *"Choosing what type of tests needed to be incorporated was a different kind of challenge for me partly because I was weighing whether this type of test was practical, reliable, valid, and had a positive effect on the learners or not."*

> Extract 9: *"One of the challenges right off the bat was that we were apparently preparing a test for learning competencies that weren't in line with the materials we had available, so it was a matter of looking for other materials that would've helped us out, these were less widely available since they had to be self-learning modules, some of which weren't really up to par with our standards."*

Parts of the course requirements included the creation of a table of specifications and a 100-item language test. Through these tasks, the PSTs gained hands-on experiences in constructing their own teacher-made language assessments. This provided them with opportunities to experience the realities most teachers face in creating these types of assessment. For the participants, aligning the assessment with the competencies and finding the right resources were some of the significant issues that they needed to overcome while constructing the language test. Nonetheless, every learning experience they had during the semester proved beneficial in establishing their practical knowledge on assessment for their future teaching profession. One participant clearly expressed this when she wrote: "I used to think tests were just products; deliver them and you're done. Having had to do it now, I realize it's made up of even the smallest of things we have to consider. Looking back, having encountered these things will continue to serve as reminders I'd be carrying with me when I construct and carry out my language tests in the future." Beyond providing substantial insights into how PSTs view language assessment, the findings reflect how the course enabled critical reflection among PSTs on how they were able to experience and brainstorm language assessment construction through authentic tasks. As Inbar-Lourie (2008) asserts, these courses should emphasize activities for learning, negotiating, experiencing and researching instead of having a prescribed method for future teachers.

Discussion

With the scholarly call for more learner voices into the discussion of LAL (see Lee & Butler, 2020), the study utilized journal entries in the form of online discussion forums of ESL PSTs in a language assessment course. The study explored the development of their assessment knowledge and skills, and examined how the course enabled or hindered the development. The results indicated that, despite having limited specific training with assessment practice, the PSTs in this study had already been reflective about the information they acquired from various discussions throughout the course. They were able to assess their personal experiences with assessment as students, and articulate critical and constructive views of assessment practices. Guided by the framework of Seigel and Wissehr (2011), the study was able to describe and

examine the deepening process of the participating PSTs as they reflected on their own learning through a set of online discussion forums.

In terms of assessment principles, the posts made by the participants demonstrated an evolved and deepened perception of language assessment, moving beyond the notion of just a requirement needed for the teaching profession. In the discussion forums, the PSTs were able to integrate theoretical ideas they had acquired from the course as they deepened their understanding of what language assessments should be, similar with other findings of the literature (e.g., Giraldo & Murcia, 2019; Restrepo Bolivar, 2020; Siegel & Wissehr, 2011). The PSTs addressed that assessments should be learner-centered, motivationally driven, and goal-oriented, grounded in assessment theories and principles to actually improve pedagogical decisions in the classroom. As Babaii and Asadnia (2019) posit, language assessment courses seldom extend teachers' and student-teachers' knowledge of assessment to just a mere review of language assessment theories. In effectively developing LAL, the results from the current study suggest that these theories and principles should facilitas a reflective process that elicits theoretical shifts to a more authentic and practical understanding of how assessment can help both teachers and students inside the classroom. Language assessment courses should have a "focus in learning, negotiating, discussing, experiencing, and researching" (Inbar-Lourie, 2008, p. 396) that recognizes how developing LAL does not only constitute "knowledge base in its most contemporary representation, but also the processes which this literacy is developed" (Scarino, 2013, p. 316). As argued by different scholars (e.g., Fulcher, 2012; Inbar-Lourie, 2013), inclusion of LAL development in these courses provides a critical view on how sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions of assessment influence teaching and learning.

For the knowledge of assessment tools (e.g., designs, procedures, strategies), PSTs were able to conceptualize an understanding of what constitutes a good assessment by juxtaposing the knowledge they gained about assessment principles with their own personal experiences from their previous ESL teachers. The PSTs shared how the assessments they previously experienced shaped the way they view whether an assessment is effective. They shared stories of how their teachers were able to process their learning through various assessment practices. In the discussion forums, the PSTs were able to conceptualize language assessments as tools anchored in assessment philosophies and influenced by assessment practices in various sociocultural contexts (see review of Lam, 2015).

As Davies (2008) argued, a teacher's LAL should reflect their skills in test construction, knowledge of language theories, and principles on testing. This also echoes the importance of feedback for learners so that they can assess their strengths, and improve areas of weaknesses, as a lack of success may lead to demotivation (Nikolov, 2016). With teacher assessment practices embedded in both pedagogic and cultural contexts (Butler, 2019; Hill & McNamara, 2012), assessments can be constrained by various factors such as, institutional policies and curriculum expectations. In such educational contexts, it is necessary for LAL development to have *collaborative knowledge* (Baker, 2016) between teaching practitioners and prospective teachers where constant negotiation and communication of student needs are highly prioritized as part of the classroom practice. As suggested in the study of Giraldo & Murcia (2019), heightened awareness of one's knowledge of assessment tools can be achieved through

structured design tasks where PSTs are given writing guidelines for their test construction and are guided to recognize specific goals and strategies for design.

In terms of the knowledge of assessment purposes, the PSTs have exhibited a broad understanding of how and why a particular assessment is given at a certain period of time. They were also able to express how an assessment should be conducted to allow ethical considerations in the classroom, such as fairness and transparency, through the use of rubrics and constant feedback. In a way, these reflections from the PSTs were good manifestations of how they were able to bridge theoretical and abstract perspectives to the actual and practical implementation of language assessments in the classroom. In bridging theory-practice gap, scholars (e.g., Inbar-Lourie, 2013) assert the need to recognize the importance of understanding the PSTs' assessment knowledge and skills as part of the content of language assessment courses to facilitate the development of LAL. As reflected in the study, providing PSTs an avenue for self-reflection (e.g., journal entries, discussion forums) enables them to monitor their own knowledge and skills; therefore, enhancing their awareness and competence, which will help them assess their own students more effectively in the future.

The results of the study have implications for teacher education and research, specifically for the advancement of the assessment literacy framework. Understanding that assessment literacy is implicit (Loughran et al., 2004) and complex (Abell & Siegel, 2011), the analysis of the experiences of PSTs in developing their LAL, grounded in theoretical perspectives, would offer better and sensible solutions. Siegel and Wissehr (2011) argued that teachers depend on their knowledge of assessment and their views of learning in selecting and implementing their assessment of choice. The findings inform the theory that these views of learning are highly influenced by the teachers' own personal experiences of their own learning; therefore, they shape their notions of what constitutes a good or bad assessment. In this sense, there would be more effective development of LAL among PSTs if they were able to learn self-reflection practices (e.g., Zahid & Khanam, 2019). This can be seen with how the study examined the development of LAL through the PSTs' learning journal entries throughout the language assessment course. By engaging in reflective activities, PSTs are trained to evaluate their knowledge and skills through self-assessment, using self-reflective journals like the case materials of the study. In this case, they were able to perceive their own developmental process, assessing their own strengths and weaknesses (Karami & Rezaei, 2015). Similar to other studies (e.g., Restrepo Bolivar, 2020), this has been a key finding that enabled a different perspective in looking into assessment literacy of teachers and PSTs. Knowing how they understand the concepts of assessment, and how they integrate it into their language teaching can improve teacher education programs and to better prepare PSTs for entering the teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

The study reported on how a language assessment course contributed to the development of PSTs' LAL in the Philippine setting. The results of the study could illuminate the scope to which language assessment training, specifically of a university-based language assessment course, can play an important role in developing and forming PSTs' LAL. Based on the reflections of PSTs in the online discussion forums, the language assessment course has afforded

adequate information and discussions on assessment knowledge and principles providing PSTs an avenue for reflective process that allows the juxtaposition and integration of the obtained knowledge to their personal experiences in language assessment. From the reflections, the development of LAL can be reflected through the PSTs' negotiation of how significant language assessment is as a major component of the teaching-learning process. Through the language assessment course, they were able to redefine their notions of language assessment, describe what an effective language assessment is, utilize language assessment in the classroom, and acquire first-hand experience on assessment construction. Additionally, through the online discussion forums, the PSTs were given opportunities for self-reflection of what they have learned connecting to their current views of what the teaching profession should and could be. This process, therefore, created more awareness of their current knowledge and skills as they worked through the process of developing their own LAL.

The findings have implications with how teacher education courses should provide more opportunities for PSTs to examine their own assessment literacy in a reflective manner. Language assessment courses have the potential to help PSTs in improving both of their knowledge and practices of assessment. As one of the few attempts in investigating the development of LAL in the Philippines, the study contributed to the growing body of knowledge on assessment literacy, specifically among PSTs. With this, there is a need to conduct more studies of pre- or in-service teaching of different subject matter of knowledge (i.e., Sciences, Mathematics, Social Science), and teaching contexts (i.e., private or public institutions). Due to its limited sample size, the current research does not claim to generalize to other settings or contexts. Though limited in scope, the study contributes to enriching the scholarly understanding of the relationship between developing LAL and providing effective language assessment courses as preparation for the PSTs. Undoubtedly, fostering LAL among PSTs does not rely solely on equipping them with training on language assessment knowledge and skills, but also on guiding them throughout the process, allowing them to monitor and explore various facets of language assessments in the classroom.

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