

Language Assessment Literacy of Korean EFL Teachers: An Investigation of Their Training Experiences and Needs

Sun Joo Chung *

Gachon University

Yunjung Nam

Georgia State University

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The purpose of this study is to investigate secondary EFL teachers' previous training experiences and their needs for training with respect to language assessment literacy in Korea. Data were collected from a questionnaire distributed to 51 secondary EFL teachers in Korea, and follow-up interviews were conducted to further examine Korean secondary EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding language assessment training. The survey questions were based on a similar study of foreign language teacher assessment literacy done by Vogt and Tsagari (2014) that sought to examine participants' previous experiences with receiving training regarding language assessment, as well as their perceived needs for additional training in that field. The results of the survey show a lack of training in language assessment literacy and a strong need for training in practical areas of language assessment and performance tests. Analysis of the follow-up interviews emphasizes EFL teachers' discontent with their in-service training in language assessment and their strategies for compensating for their lack of practical assessment skills. The findings show a common understanding of the need for training in language assessment among secondary EFL teachers to maintain and enhance the quality of their language assessment practices.

[language assessment literacy/EFL teacher training/classroom assessment/

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* First author, Corresponding author: Sun Joo Chung

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Sun Joo Chung
Graduate School of Education
Gachon University
1342 Seongnamdaero, Sujeong-gu,
Seongnam-si, Gyeonggi-do 13120
Tel: 031-750-5506
Email: sjchung@gachon.ac.kr

Yunjung Nam
Department of Applied Linguistics
Georgia State University
25 Park Place, 15th Floor, Atlanta,
GA, USA, 30303
Tel: +1-404-368-4563
Email: ynam3@student.gsu.edu

I. INTRODUCTION

Classroom EFL teachers play multiple roles, not only as instructors, but also as assessors. In fact, their roles as assessors are particularly important due to the increased usage of tests and assessments for the purposes of accountability (e.g., Brindley, 2008; Malone, 2008; McNamara & Roever, 2006), so being fluent in effective and current pedagogical trends and having knowledge in language assessment are important skills that EFL teachers should have. With the increasing importance of students' assessment results on education, teachers' abilities to effectively utilize evidence from assessment can improve understanding about their teaching, which can lead to positive wash-back (Hughes, 1989) and improved teaching efforts and practices in language classrooms.

With the growing importance of assessment in an educated society (Taylor, 2009), classroom EFL teachers' knowledge, awareness and fluency in language assessment, or *language assessment literacy*, has become an important issue in language teaching and assessment. Despite the importance of assessment in education, many EFL teachers face challenges regarding classroom assessment because they manage almost every stage of test development, administration, and the evaluation process. In order to understand the state of Korean EFL teachers' assessment literacy, this study aims to investigate Korean EFL teachers' training experiences in language assessment literacy and their perceived training needs in relation to specific areas of language assessment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Language Assessment Literacy

Language assessment literacy (LAL) is a dynamic concept, and with the development and growing influences of testing and assessment around the world (Taylor, 2009), there is little doubt that teachers' competencies in assessment literacy are essential. For EFL teachers, being *assessment literate* requires knowledge about not only common assessment practices, but also language-related competencies (Inbar-Lourie, 2008). Such language-related competencies include elements such as understanding the nature of language and having the ability to provide correct feedback on learning language. That is, both comprehensive knowledge and practical skills are necessary to effectively assess students' performance.

For language teachers, it is important to understand the concept and related constructs of language assessment literacy. To stress the importance of LAL among language educators and researchers, a special issue of *Language Testing* in 2013 was dedicated to research on LAL. In this issue, Taylor (2013) recognized the multidimensionality of assessment literacy and proposed eight dimensions of LAL: 1) knowledge of theory, 2) scores and decision

making, 3) technical skills, 4) principles and concepts, 5) language pedagogy, 6) personal beliefs/attitudes, 7) local practices, and 8) sociocultural values. More recently, Y. S. Lee (2017) developed the constructs of LAL to provide a more comprehensive framework of the language assessment literacy necessary for classroom language teachers. This framework furthered the eight dimensions offered by Taylor by including factors such as understanding of communicative language ability, elements of social dimensions of language assessment, and teachers' abilities to provide feedback and communicate with educational stakeholders about assessment results.

In the context of EFL classrooms, assessment has become increasingly important in classroom practice, and a teacher's ability to handle a variety of teaching and assessment practices is significant in making informed instructional decisions; using assessment results to communicate with students, parents, and other educational stakeholders; and developing assessment methods. The assessment literacy of educators, specifically classroom teachers, who use tests and their scores on a regular basis, has become an important issue in language teaching and assessment. Furthermore, within the field of language assessment, there has been increasing awareness of the professionalization of teachers in language assessment, which can be seen from the growing number of guidelines and standards (e.g., AERA, APA, & NCME, 1999; ALTE, 1994; EALTA, 2006; ILTA, 2000). With the increasing importance of teachers' professionalism in language assessment, the concept of LAL has been used and researched in recent years to provide deeper insight regarding how language teachers emphasize knowledge and professional development in assessment-related matters (Inbar-Lourie, 2008; Malone, 2008; McNamara & Roever, 2006; Rea-Dickins, 2008).

Due to varying educational contexts and their mandates, understanding the LAL among classroom language teachers in a regional or localized context is important because assessment practices, assessment purpose, assessment format, and the use of assessment results can vary in different educational contexts. One major study that investigated LAL among foreign language teachers in a localized context is that of Vogt and Tzagari (2014), who investigated European foreign language teachers' LAL. Vogt and Tzagari used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the level of LAL of foreign language teachers across Europe. The purpose of their research was to examine foreign language teachers' perceived level of required and received training, plus strategies that foreign language teachers implemented to compensate for areas they felt they lacked. The research also investigated local needs related to LAL. Their study adopted the survey used by Hasselgreen, Carlsen and Helness (2004), which examined the assessment training needs of teachers in Europe. An important finding from Hasselgreen et al. was that despite the training that they had received on language testing and assessment, the teachers still felt that the previous training did not fully prepare them to perform assessment-related activities. Similar to the findings from Hasselgreen et al.,

Vogt and Tzagari found that teachers wanted more training in the field of language testing and assessment despite their previous training experiences in the field. Through teacher interviews, these researchers found that teachers had little to no experience in language teaching and assessment-related training during pre-service education. Many foreign language teachers, instead, had to learn as in-service teachers on the job and through relevant reference books.

2. Korean Secondary EFL Teachers' Language Assessment Literacy

In Korea, research shows that there is a strong negative washback of assessment on EFL teaching, and assessment plays a major role in directing teaching approaches to secondary education (I. C. Choi, 2008; S. K. Kwon, M. Lee, & D. Shin, 2017). In particular, the College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT), the Korean college entrance exam, is considered extremely high-stakes in Korean society, and many parents and students resort to private education and spend enormous amounts of money on private education in order for their children to achieve high scores. This reliance on private education in Korea has been heavily criticized within the country due to negative washback and the disruption of public education. In efforts to lower the negative influence of CSAT on Korean education, the Ministry has introduced new EFL assessment policies such as adopting the criterion-referenced scoring method, scheduled to begin in 2018. Another assessment policy involves the implementation of learning-oriented assessment in secondary EFL education, which emphasizes the use of performance assessment and other alternative assessment methods in classroom evaluation. According to I. C. Choi (2008), due to the overwhelming negative washback effects of EFL tests on teaching methods and the excessive emphasis placed on preparation for the CSAT, it is important that stakeholders (i.e., students, teachers, and other test score users) understand the foundation, theory, and practical considerations of the changing assessment methods and approaches within the Korean educational context.

Considering the modifications in Korean EFL secondary assessment and the implementation of new assessment practices, understanding the current state of EFL classroom teachers' LAL is highly important because of the impact of EFL testing on teaching in Korea. Furthermore, knowing what EFL teachers know and need for further improvements regarding language assessment can help in the development of in-service training sessions. Such sessions can be designed to meet teachers' needs and demands and to assist them in enhancing their language assessment practices in order to provide students with high-quality EFL education.

In South Korea, assessment literacy, as a part of teachers' professional development or level of professionalism, has been studied by researchers with foci on different levels of school teachers in different subjects (B. M. Jeon &

J. Oh, 2006; D. Kang, 2016; J. Lee, 2003; C. Park, 2013). Most of the previous studies on assessment literacy among EFL teachers in South Korea were conducted in early 2000s, by the national research institute, KICE (Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation). KICE published reports on improving teachers' professional competence in student evaluation and offered successive reports to help teachers develop and increase their awareness of assessment literacy. For example, S. Kim et al. (2005) provided a self-diagnostic tool for teachers using the standards I. J. Lee et al. (2004) developed to gain an understanding of teachers' competence in student assessment. They also offered examples of student assessment for subjects including language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, and English. Then, M. Nam et al. (2006) provided examples in other subject areas, such as physical education, music, and arts, and validated and revised the self-diagnostic tool. Other related studies investigated teachers' competence in student assessment (S. K. Shin, 2007), teacher assessment literacy (S. Kim, 2007), and competency in educational assessment (K. M. Sim, 2008). These previous studies examined assessment literacy of teachers regardless of subject matter, and found that teachers lacked focus and professionalism in assessment required for individual subjects.

However, there seems to be a lack of research related to LAL among EFL teachers in Korea. Although there have been some studies that investigated LAL that were focused on EFL teachers' competence, they dealt with one specific element of language assessment literacy within a rather narrow scope. For example, a study by D. Shin (2008) specifically investigated ethical dimensions in the field of English language assessment, by examining a research program in which English educators from different levels and institutions participated. In another study, Y. S. Yi (2015) examined multiple-choice items in high school English tests with regard to adequacy, and attempted to link the results to suggestions for promoting in-service teachers' assessment literacy through training programs. These two studies provided implications for the importance of LAL development; however, may not be able to show the status of LAL among classroom EFL teachers for a wider range of criteria.

3. Korean Secondary In-Service EFL Teacher Training

In relation to secondary EFL teachers' professional development, much importance can be placed on the quality and scope of in-service teacher training. Because the quality of EFL education in schools is heavily dependent on the quality of teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992), in-service EFL teacher training plays a crucial role in providing teachers with effective knowledge and skills to improve their classroom techniques. In addition to voluntary training opportunities, secondary school teachers receive an intensive training to qualify for the Level 1 teacher

certificate after 3 years of teaching experience. Much of the Level 1 training focuses on development of teaching competency which emphasizes two major areas: 1) teacher professionalism, which includes teaching responsibility and self-regulated capacity and 2) class management, which includes leadership and decision-making skills, communication, and crisis and conflict management. S. J. Oh (2010) surveyed secondary EFL teachers participating in such training and found that approximately a third of the participants identified assessment as an area in which they would like practical training that can help them in their classrooms. Furthermore, Y. Kim (2008) found that secondary EFL teachers that participated in Level 1 training were not highly satisfied with the curriculum of the training sessions and the training materials and felt that the training did not directly help them improve their job performance. Similarly, other researchers who investigated EFL teachers' level of satisfaction regarding in-service training found that many teachers felt that training did not reflect actual classroom environments and did not provide practical training (K. Chang, 2007; J. W. Kim & K. J. Ahn, 2011; H. Ryu, 2007).

In a study that investigated secondary EFL teacher training, C. K. Min and S. G. Park (2013) made suggestions to improve the quality of teacher training. They claimed that in order to adapt to the changing teaching environment, EFL teacher training should provide teachers with opportunities for professional development and break from the traditional concept of institution-driven training to teacher-driven professional development. A way to do this would be to provide training sessions that meet the teachers needs and interests and for teachers to participate in developing programs that meet their demands.

In sum, the review of literature shows that there is a paucity of research studies on language assessment literacy in Korea with respect to secondary EFL teachers, and there seems to be a lack of studies focusing on the current state of and training needs for Korean EFL teachers. This study, therefore, investigated the LAL training level and perceived training needs of secondary EFL teachers in Korea, adopting the approach used by Vogt and Tzagari (2014). The following research questions are addressed:

- 1) What is the previous training experience of secondary EFL classroom teachers related to language assessment literacy?
- 2) What are the perceived training needs of secondary EFL classroom teachers related to language assessment literacy?

III. METHOD

The study adapted a language assessment literacy questionnaire based on Vogt and Tzagari (2014), due to its coverage of areas of language assessment literacy. Their questionnaire includes dimensions of language assessment literacy provided by Taylor (2013) that relate

to practical skills for test development and measurement theories. These are elements that Taylor recognized as assessment knowledge and skills relevant to classroom language teachers. Some revisions were made from the questionnaire used by Vogt and Tzagari to reflect the current state of secondary English education in Korea after consultation with classroom EFL teachers. For example, Vogt and Tzagari's questionnaire was also adapted from Hasselgreen et al. (2004), and both Hasselgreen et al. and Vogt and Tzagari used terms such as "none," "basic," and "advanced" to refer to the amount of training received or needed. These classifications could be interpreted subjectively. In order to reduce any potential for a subjective interpretation, such aspects were revised to better reflect the in-service teacher training programs provided to secondary school teachers in Korea. In Korea, where hourly-based in-service training programs are offered to teachers, 'basic training' requires 'less than 10 hours of training,' and 'advanced training' requires '10 or more hours of training.' Hence, these differences were reflected in the revised questionnaire. Also, names of local tests and assessment practices from the original questionnaire were revised to meet the Korean secondary educational context.

The paper-based questionnaire was disseminated at in-service teacher training sessions and schools. Next, follow-up interviews were conducted to better understand English teachers' needs and experiences with regard to language assessment.

1. Language Assessment Literacy Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- 1) General background information about participants
- 2) Questions about training in language assessment literacy
 - A. Classroom-based language assessment
 - B. Purpose of testing
 - C. Conceptual understanding of language assessment literacy

Similar to Vogt and Tzagari (2014), the second section of the questionnaire, which focused on training in language assessment literacy, asked two types of questions: first, about respondents' previous training experiences in areas related to language assessment, and second, their perceived needs for training in assessment. The analysis was done with a consideration of current government policy toward English education, as well as assessment and regulations required by the Ministry of Education of Korea and the Office of Education in major cities or provinces.

2. Participants

A total of 51 secondary school English teachers completed the questionnaire. They were all working as middle or high school teachers in Korea at the time of the distri-

bution of the questionnaire. The participants were mostly from Seoul and Busan metropolitan city. Table 1 provides information on participant demographics.

TABLE 1
Questionnaire Participant Demographics

Variables	<i>n</i> (%) or <i>M</i> (SD)
Gender	
Female	34 (67%)
Male	17 (33%)
Teaching experience (years)	10.4 (2.1)
Highest degree obtained	
Bachelor's degree	35 (70%)
Master's degree	15 (30%)
Current school level	
Middle school	19 (37%)
High school	32 (63%)
Previous training experience in LAL	
Yes	21 (21%)
No	30 (59%)

The participants for the follow-up interviews (*n* = 5) were volunteers who were recruited from the questionnaire phase. The questionnaire contained a question where participants could indicate if they would volunteer to be interviewed. Table 2 shows the background information of the five interviewees.

TABLE 2
Interviewee Background Information

	Education (Highest degree)	Experience (Years)	Gender	School level
Interviewee A	Bachelor's	7	Female	Middle school
Interviewee B	Bachelor's	7	Female	High school
Interviewee C	Master's	9	Male	High school
Interviewee D	Bachelor's	9	Male	High school
Interviewee E	Bachelor's	6	Female	Middle school

3. Follow-up Interviews

After the analysis of the paper-based questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted via email or telephone to receive additional comments regarding the questionnaire and to further understand the current state of language assessment literacy among secondary school English teachers. E-mail interviews were used as an option to invite participants who were geographically dispersed, or to accommodate interviewees who were not able to schedule telephone interviews. Email communication is asynchronous, and this characteristic of email means that it is self-transcribing (Mann & Stewart, 2002; Meho, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher and participants share the

transcription of the data. All email interview participants were asked not to distribute the content of the interviews. Telephone interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants, and transcribed. Participants in the telephone interviews reviewed the transcripts and were asked to comment on any information in the transcript that they found ambiguous.

For the initial coding of the interview data, themes and patterns were analyzed. An inductive approach was used to allow for more socially-located responses from interviews (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013) and patterns emerged from the data using the interview questions as guidelines (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2010) through recursive reading of the transcripts with frequent reference to the interview questions and scope by the two researchers. As the process proceeded, additional themes emerged: the quality of language assessment in-service training, compensatory strategies regarding language assessment literacy, and the discrepancy between training and practice. The two researchers developed a coding scheme based on the recursive reading and they coded the transcripts, with inter-coder reliability calculated at .80. The disagreement in the coding was resolved through negotiation.

The findings from the follow-up interviews were used to obtain a deeper understanding regarding participants' responses from the questionnaire in discussing the results. The semi-structured interview questions are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
Semi-structured Interview Questions

Questions	
1	Did you learn about language testing and assessment during your pre-service or in-service teacher training?
2	What type of training did you receive regarding language testing and assessment during your pre-service or in-service teacher training?
3	How satisfied are you with the training that you received during your pre-service or in-service training?
4	What kind of language testing and assessment training would you like to receive? Why?
5	Do you have any additional comments or ideas about language testing and assessment training?

IV. RESULTS

The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire was .89, which revealed a strong internal consistency. The overall results of the language assessment literacy questionnaire show a significant lack of training in most areas of language assessment, and a great need for basic and advanced training in language assessment.

TABLE 4
Participants' Responses to Previous Training Experiences and Their Perceived Needs
for Training in Classroom-Based Assessment

	Previous training experiences			Perceived needs for training		
	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Achievement test development	23 (45)	22 (43)	5 (10)	10 (20)	32 (63)	9 (18)
Performance test development	22 (43)	22 (43)	6 (12)	4 (8)	29 (57)	18 (35)
Using ready-made tests from textbook packages or from other sources	36 (71)	12 (24)	1 (2)	12 (24)	31 (61)	8 (16)
Giving feedback to students based on information from tests/assessments	36 (71)	11 (22)	3 (6)	7 (14)	32 (63)	12 (24)
Using self- or peer-assessment	32 (63)	16 (31)	2	5 (10)	35 (69)	11 (22)
Using informal, continuous, non-test type of assessment	31 (61)	15 (29)	4 (8)	11 (22)	34 (67)	6 (12)
Preparing for National Scholastic Ability Test and College Scholastic Ability Test	32 (63)	15 (29)	3 (6)	10 (20)	28 (55)	13 (25)

More specifically, the results of the questionnaire show that secondary EFL teachers lacked training in many areas related to classroom assessment and that there is a strong need for training in such areas (see Table 4). The top two areas of classroom assessment in which Korean EFL teachers have not received training are 'giving feedback to students based on information from tests/assessments' and 'using ready-made testing materials from textbook or other sources'. 'Achievement test development' and 'performance test development' were two areas in which more than half of the respondents claimed to have received basic or advanced training. These results correspond with the Ministry of Education's current efforts to balance the use of achievement and performance tests. However, the responses for the other areas of classroom assessment show that in-service EFL teachers lack training in assessment skills most related to in-class student and teacher interaction, such as providing feedback to students, using self- or peer-assessment, and using informal, continuous assessment.

Most of the participants in the study expressed a need for training in all areas of classroom-based assessment, even including areas in which more than 50% of the participants responded that they had received training. For example, 'performance test development' was an area in which 55% of the participants received training, but still, 92% responded that they needed either basic or advanced training. Findings from the follow-up interviews support this need for more training in performance test development and other areas of classroom assessment. Interviewees C and E's comments about difficulties that they face

when developing performance tests and other types of classroom assessment show how teachers need more practical advice and training in how to use various assessment methods in their classrooms:

I sometimes get frustrated when I have to work on creating performance test questions and rubrics due to the lack of guidelines and regulations from the Ministry. I understand the benefits of using performance test, but it is very difficult when I have to actually develop it for my students. I want to accurately assess my students because the scores can affect their college entrance process. (Interviewee C)

Even though I read assessment manuals provided during the trainings, I have difficulty applying them in my classroom assessment. I wish the trainings would provide more practical application ideas and examples. That is why I try not to use too many open-ended questions. (Interviewee E)

Similar to the findings from participants' training experience and the need for training in classroom-based assessment, most participants responded that they had not received training in areas related to purpose of assessment (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

Participants' Responses to Previous Training Experiences and Their Perceived Needs for Training in Purpose of Assessment

	Previous training experiences			Perceived needs for training		
	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Giving grades	32 (63)	13 (25)	5 (10)	10 (20)	31 (61)	10 (20)
Finding out what needs to be taught/learned	32 (63)	15 (29)	3 (6)	5 (10)	33 (65)	13 (25)
Placing students onto courses, programs, etc.	36 (71)	11 (22)	2 (4)	11 (22)	33 (65)	7 (14)
Awarding subject completion or advancement	44 (86)	5 (10)	1 (2)	13 (25)	31 (61)	7 (14)

TABLE 6

Participants' Responses to Previous Training Experience and Their Perceived Need for Training in Related Theories and Concepts in Language Assessment

	Previous training experiences			Perceived needs for training		
	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training	Not at all	Basic training	Advanced training
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Testing receptive skills	23 (45)	16 (31)	10 (20)	4 (8)	32 (63)	14 (27)
Testing productive skills	20 (39)	17 (33)	13 (25)	2 (4)	29 (57)	19 (37)
Testing microlinguistic aspects	31 (61)	10 (20)	9 (18)	3 (6)	34 (67)	13 (25)
Testing integrated language skills	31 (61)	12 (24)	7 (14)	3 (6)	23 (45)	25 (49)
Establishing reliability of tests/assessments	31 (61)	16 (31)	3 (6)	5 (10)	28 (55)	18 (35)
Establishing validity of tests/assessments	31 (61)	15 (29)	4 (8)	4 (8)	30 (59)	17 (33)
Using statistics to study the quality of tests/assessments	42 (82)	6 (12)	2 (4)	7 (14)	34 (67)	10 (20)

It is important to note that areas in this category of questions relate to teachers making inferences from student test scores, or using test scores to inform their teaching. These are skills that can be directly linked to a teacher's ability to prepare students to take high-stakes entrance exams and assist the students on how they can interpret their scores to make the most informed decisions. Participants' responses about their experiences receiving training in purpose of testing correspond to their training needs, as a majority of responses show that participants want to receive basic or advanced training in all areas related to the purpose of assessment. In particular, 90% of the participants said that they want training in 'finding out what needs to be taught/learned,' which is the fundamental reason for conducting tests, especially in classroom assessment. This is particularly important in classroom assessment, as it does more than simply test learning. What

teachers find from classroom assessment results can send clear messages to teachers and students about what should be learned, how it should be taught, and what teachers and students can do to reach their respective goals.

In the final section of the questionnaire, participants were inquired about their training experiences and perceived needs in areas related to theories and concepts in language assessment. The questions in this section relate to concepts relevant to language test development and quality control through statistical analysis and interpretation of fundamental concepts. Table 6 shows participants' training background in theories and concepts in language assessment and their perceived training needs.

More than 50% of the participants responded that they had received training in testing receptive and productive skills, which can be considered to be more traditional concepts and areas in language test development. However,

more than 60% of the participants expressed their lack of training in more sophisticated and integrated skills of language testing and conceptual understanding of theories in language testing, such as knowledge about reliability, validity, and statistical analysis. Most respondents strongly expressed their needs for training in theories and concepts in language assessment. In 'testing productive skills', approximately 94% of the participants said that they needed training (basic or advanced), which demonstrates among teachers a strong need for training relevant to performance assessment. This corresponds to the responses regarding their perceived lack of training and strong training needs related to areas in alternative or performance assessment.

The overall results from the follow-up interviews correspond with and support the findings from the questionnaire - namely, that teachers perceive their language assessment literacy to be low. Moreover, they stated a strong demand for training in language assessment literacy to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education because they felt uncertain about their assessment practices.

A common topic that arose from the follow-up interviews that were not directly studied by the language assessment literacy questionnaire was interviewees' evaluations of the quality of the in-service teacher training sessions and lack of depth and breadth with regard to information they received during these sessions. Two interviewees reported as follows:

Unless each individual teacher puts an effort to learn more about assessment, most assessment-related teacher training sessions are limited to covering only traditional aspects of assessment. Most of the information that we receive from the training is too broad and abstract that I cannot understand how I can apply them in my own assessment. Sometimes I feel the training sessions are a waste of time. (Interviewee A)

I sometimes regret attending training sessions as they fail to provide the necessary information regarding language assessment. Some of the content they cover are too basic and seem like information that you might find in a reference book. (Interviewee E)

Another important finding from the interviews was in regard to teachers' perceptions of the discrepancy between what they are taught in the in-service training sessions and what they are expected to do as classroom teachers. One interviewee noted:

There are not many language assessment professionals who can provide teachers with a clear guideline and understanding of the regulations set by the Ministry of Education or the Office of Education. This is frustrating and I sometimes do not want to attend the training sessions that do not provide practical knowledge teachers can use. (Interviewee B)

The opinions provided by the interviewees advance the findings from the questionnaire, in that teachers' needs about developing their level of language assessment litera-

cy are not being met through government-mandated training sessions. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews highlighted the level of frustration about and distrust of the type of training and print manuals with regard to EFL assessment.

The interview results also revealed compensatory strategies that teachers use to compensate for their perceived insufficient expertise and training in language assessment. Some teachers even added that the most helpful advice regarding assessment came not from training sessions but from senior teachers. Below is an excerpt from the interview with interviewee A:

Even though the Korean education places much emphasis on assessment, as an inexperienced teacher, the assessment-related information that I can apply came not from assessment training sessions but rather from the experienced teachers who kindly answered questions from new teachers. I am sure that my experience is a shared one by most EFL secondary teachers in Korea.

Another compensatory strategy used by teachers was modeling question items based on previous tests that were produced by senior teachers with the goal of developing their own tests. Interviewee D said:

When I am not sure how to create items for tests, I just model the items from previous tests to make sure I do not make mistakes. This was the strategy that I used most frequently as a new teacher because I was worried to try out new and creative item types. Even now, I want to use new testing methods, but I don't think I can do a good job.

The findings from the follow-up interviews show that even though teachers do receive some method of training or training manuals on language assessment as tools to help them adapt to new assessment policies or methods, the training sessions did not sufficiently provide them with knowledge and practical skills that they need as classroom teachers. Furthermore, the quality of in-service training and accommodation regarding language assessment may be insufficient for teachers to utilize in meeting the assessment mandates set by the Ministry of Education. Some teachers had to learn on the job from experienced teachers or model similar items from previous tests to compensate for their unsatisfactory knowledge or expertise in language assessment. The results from the interviews show a sharp contrast between the high level of importance placed on assessment in Korean education and teachers' low perception of the quality of in-service assessment training.

V. DISCUSSION

EFL teachers in the current study expressed a strong need for training in almost all areas of language assessment literacy that were presented in the questionnaire, with most responding that they have not received much training in those areas. According to the findings from

the study, areas that the highest percentage of teachers indicated as having received training in are: 1) testing receptive skills, 2) testing productive skills, 3) achievement test development, and 4) performance test development. The areas of language assessment that teachers want training in relate to developing performance tests, using and analyzing test scores, and promoting interaction in classroom through assessment-related activities. These areas correspond with EFL teachers' abilities to interpret test scores and information from tests to provide feedback to their students, to conduct practical analysis of tests to enhance their classroom teaching, and to develop tests to assess various language skills. Similar to the findings from the questionnaire, teachers that participated in the interviews said that there was a large gap between what was covered in the teacher training sessions and what was either expected or performed in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers explicitly expressed their strong needs for training in practical skills that they can directly use in their classrooms and improved alignment between what is provided in the trainings to what they can directly implement in their classroom assessment practices.

The results from the questionnaire and interviews strongly suggest that teachers want practical training in innovative assessment strategies that they may use in classroom assessment, as mandated by the Ministry of Education. Based on the findings of the current study, many secondary EFL teachers in Korea have received training in developing traditional forms of assessment, but lack training in developing alternative or process-oriented types of assessment. There should be an emphasis on these areas of language assessment, which are becoming increasingly important in Korean classroom assessment due to the revised government mandates (Y. Kim et al., 2017).

The results of this study can underscore the importance of practical language assessment training and understanding. That is, the current training may not meet the practical needs of classroom teachers. The Korean Ministry of Education's efforts to emphasize alternative assessment and lessen the influence of traditional standardized assessment might not be well reflected in the content of current teacher training, or meet the needs of teachers in classrooms. The Korean Ministry of Education's emphasis on process-oriented performance assessment should be supported with sufficient training in implementing practical informal assessment methods that classroom teachers can use to provide valid and reliable assessment for improving the quality of their teaching. There should be supplementary action and research to promote the practical training of teachers to match the necessary language assessment knowledge and skills required by the assessment mandates.

VI. CONCLUSION

The present study examined Korean secondary EFL teachers' previous training experiences and their perceived

needs for more training in language assessment literacy. In order to examine their training experiences and needs in language assessment literacy, a questionnaire and follow-up interviews were conducted. The results of the study showed a lack of training in language assessment literacy and strong needs for training in areas related to performance tests and practical skills to interpret and analyze test scores. Findings from the interviews further demonstrated that EFL teachers are not satisfied with the current in-service teacher training content as it lacks practicality and applicability. In an educational context that is shifting its focus from traditional assessment to informal and performance assessment, it is crucial to provide teachers with practical training in providing feedback, which can help improve the quality of education that students receive.

The findings from the study can help improve EFL teacher training content to better assist teachers in their language assessment practices. It was found that many teachers' perceived needs for training do not match their previous training experiences and mandated assessment practices with regard to LAL. For example, the Ministry of Education recommends that 40% of the final grade come from performance assessment that emphasizes the learning process (Y. Kim et al., 2017). However, only 55% of the participants were identified as having received training in that area and approximately 92% of the participants said that they need basic (57%) or advanced (35%) training in performance assessment, which shows that the training the EFL teachers receive can be insufficient for teachers to appropriately use performance assessment techniques in their classrooms.

Based on the suggestions made by previous studies that investigated EFL teachers' experiences and satisfaction regarding their in-service training (K. Chang, 2007; J. W. Kim & K. J. Ahn, 2011; Y. Kim, 2008; S. J. Oh, 2010), the results from the current study can be used to align the needs for training expressed by EFL teachers to the current in-service EFL teacher training programs. Enhanced alignment between the needs of teachers and in-service teacher training curriculum can improve the level of satisfaction of teacher training and the quality of their assessment practices.

Some limitations of the study could include the number of participants in the survey. However, considering the homogeneity of Korean secondary teachers of English and their in-service training programs and curriculum, the findings from this study could be reflective of the current state of language assessment training. Another limitation could be the coverage of LAL constructs that were represented in the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in the current study did not include constructs of social dimensions, communicative language ability, assessment validation, and scoring and interpreting performance assessment. Future studies that include the aforementioned constructs can be conducted to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the language assessment literacy level and training needs of classroom EFL teachers.

In spite of the limitations of the study, it is worthwhile

to note the gap between the lack of training that many EFL teachers in Korea receive and their strong perceived need to improve their skills in language assessment. This gap can be narrowed by examining the current curriculum for in-service English teacher training programs, analyzing the mandates set by the Ministry of Education, and taking into account the current real-world classroom assessment practices occurring in Korea. Findings from this study can inform teacher training program developers and language teacher educators on the importance of educating teachers on up-to-date practical assessment techniques to enhance the quality of education.

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