English Language Assessment: Pre-service Teachers' Self-Reported Views

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Both assessment and the teacher's role as one of the main assessors of student learning are central components of the English teaching and learning process. This quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional study seeks to explore pre-service teachers' perceived views, skills, and frequent practices towards English language assessment. The sample comprised 257 Chilean pre-service teachers, whose assessment perspectives were collected through three subscales. To analyze the data, mean scores and standard deviations were calculated. Additionally, a t-test was applied to identify statistical differences among participants' responses, and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to identify inter-related variables. Findings revealed participants' views included that more training on assessment was necessary and that the purpose of assessment was monitoring the students' learning progress. Regarding skills, participants expressed more confidence in formulating true or false items, assigning grades fairly, and providing written feedback. Furthermore, the participants' most frequent assessment practices dealt with designing evaluations and providing feedback, rather than analyzing and communicating parametric results. The importance of this study lies in the understanding of how pre-service teachers perceived the assessment process and reflected upon their strengths, weaknesses, and assessment practices. Similar studies are encouraged to integrate the views, skills, and practices of in-service teachers of English.

Keywords: language assessment literacy, language assessment, assessment skills, assessment practices, assessment self-perceived views

INTRODUCTION

Assessment is a vital aspect of our daily lives, present in formal and informal settings. In the case of the latter, it is an axis in the context of teaching English as a foreign language across the different educational levels, from nursery school to college. In fact, it is the multidimensional nature of assessment that makes it a key element within English language instruction given that its scope ranges from evaluating teaching methods and analyzing learners' performance to reporting grades to school stakeholders properly (Alkharusi, 2021).

Assessment is also crucial for international language proficiency testing systems, such as TOEFL or Cambridge. How can assessment be defined, then? A simple definition to be considered is that language assessment implies collecting data and evidence to make inferences about an individual's language knowledge, skills or attitudes (Green, 2021). The author remarks that the evidence is collected from tasks that involve the use of language, while inferences are related to the interpretation of performance. These interpretations are based on the beliefs about language nature and its importance in the life of an individual being assessed (Green, 2021), and are used to inform decisions of different magnitude about the people being assessed, which the author refers as assessees (Green, 2021). Similar views on language assessment emphasize it as a process whose benefits stretch beyond learners. The results of any assessment allows to arrive at interpretations of learners' linguistic skills and to make decisions that may have a positive impact for learners, teachers, educational establishments and other stakeholders (Alonzo & Teng, 2023; Bachman & Damböck, 2018).

On this account, assessment remains a primary responsibility for teachers. Truth be told, Rahmawati et al. (2019) claims that not only does assessment aim at obtaining evidence regarding students' learning achievement but also serves as valuable feedback concerning teachers' performance; in other words, the extent to which assessment mirrors teaching. To ensure assessment quality and effectiveness, teachers must comply with principles, namely practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity, and washback, which contribute as useful guidelines for the evaluation and design of assessment procedures (Brown, 2004; Razavipour et al., 2018; Yahiji et al., 2019). Teachers also need to keep up learning about assessment with a view to making informed decisions as well as updating their general level of assessment literacy despite the absence of adequate undergraduate instruction on the matter in several teaching contexts around the globe.

The present study arises from such a dilemma and seeks to identify how pre-service teachers perceive assessment, their views on their own skills, and practices. To carry out this endeavor, the following research question has been proposed:

- What are pre-service teachers of English perceived views, skills, and frequent practices regarding assessment?

And to answer this question, two research objectives (RO) have been formulated:

- RO1: Examine participants' perceived views about assessment

● RO2: Inquire about perceived assessment skills and frequent practices of pre-service teachers of English

Literature Review

Language Assessment Literacy

Inquiring about how pre-service teachers conceive assessment allows them an opportunity to reflect upon different aspects of their teaching and, consequently, supports their language assessment literacy (LAL). A classical definition of LAL is presented as follows:

> The knowledge, skills, and abilities required to design, develop, maintain or evaluate, large-scale standardized and/or classroom-based tests, familiarity with test processes, and awareness of principles and concepts that guide and underpin practice, including ethics and codes of practice. (Fulcher, 2012, p. 125).

Fulcher's definition (2012) of LAL greatly emphasizes test item design and the teachers' ability to construct items based on assessment principles. This conceptualization of LAL may be generic, though still considered as a useful starting point for future research (Tsagari & Vogt, 2017, as cited in Tsagari, 2020). Nevertheless, more updated and complementary views on LAL have also been shared:

> In essence, LAL represents the different levels of knowledge, skills, and principles required to engage in language assessment, either from a development perspective (i.e., designing and evaluating language assessments) or from a knowledge perspective, that is, understanding and using scores from assessments to make decisions about people's language ability. (Giraldo, 2020, p. 190).

Giraldo's definition is more integral as it not only accounts for the emphasis placed on test design but also the use of the assessment results to make better judgments about students' skills.

Teachers' Views on Assessment Literacy, Skills, and Practice

Research on teachers' perceptions about assessment and assessment literacy has contributed with contrasting findings. On the one hand, Chit and Knit (2020) explored Asian primary and secondary education teachers' self-perceived assessment skills by gender, school type, and service. A questionnaire was used to collect the data, and descriptive statistics to analyze the results. Results revealed that teachers' performance assessment skills were higher than their grading skills. Additionally, female teachers had a higher self-perception about their assessment skills than male teachers. The researchers also argued that public school teachers possessed better performance assessment and grading skills than private school teachers. Regarding self-perceived assessment skills by service, teachers above 30 years of service showed the highest mean scores.

On the other hand, Jawhar and Subahi (2020) examined Saudi higher education English Language and Basic Science teachers' level of assessment literacy. The Saudi teachers answered the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI), developed by Mertler

and Campbell (2005) and a demographic questionnaire. Results indicated that teachers lacked assessment literacy knowledge and, therefore, it was concluded that teachers required further training to assess students' learning effectively. Likewise, Muhammad et al. (2019) also explored the level of literacy assessment of Iraqi English language teachers using CALI's seven standards of teacher assessment. Their findings revealed that the teachers' level of assessment literacy was low, and that their lowest score was related to the standard of recognizing unethical, illegal, and inappropriate methods of assessment and uses of assessment information.

Concerning the Chilean setting for English language assessment, Díaz Larenas et al. (2022) aimed at inquiring about in-service teachers' assessment literacy by means of identifying their perceived language assessment views, skills, and frequent practices. This sample comprised 315 in-service teachers who completed the Classroom Assessment Practices and Skills (CAPS) scale. Through descriptive statistics and exploratory factor analysis, findings demonstrated that in-service teachers' perceived views conceived assessment as a resource for the learning process rather than grading itself; consequently, monitoring student learning is deemed as a core element in L2 instruction. Similarly, in-service teachers' self-reported assessment skills and frequent practices were primarily related to the design and feedback of assessment instruments. Despite this, most in-service teachers claimed that their insufficient training on assessment, exams, and measurement of learning hindered their skills and practices associated with the analysis and communication of parametric results. This research methodology has been replicated in the current study, which aimed at examining pre-service teachers' self-reported views, skills, and practices regarding English Language assessment.

All in all, it might be inferred that teachers' assessment literacy levels have a positive impact on their reflective teaching; that is, if assessment literacy is enhanced, so will be the teachers' reflection on their own views, skills, and practice. In that regard, Giraldo (2021) proposes different techniques to raise awareness of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) at a procedural level. Among such techniques, the author suggests using assessment instruments designed by real teachers, emphasizing the importance of test specifications, having students conduct small-scale projects, generating alternative assessment procedures, and evaluating using different instruments (Giraldo & Murcia, 2019).

METHOD

The design of the present study is quantitative, non-experimental, and cross-sectional research that seeks to identify pre-service teachers' perceived views, skills, and practices regarding assessment, by quantifying and analyzing numerical data, and replicating the methodology of the study by Díaz Larenas et al. (2022). The sample of this research consisted of 257 participants, of which 69.3% were female pre-service teachers and 30,7% were male pre-service teachers.

Regarding the participants' age, 51.1% ranged from 20 to 22 years old, and 48.9% between 23 to 24 years old. All the participants are studying a five-year EFL teacher

education program to become teachers of English in Chile. Their program covers three main components: English language, pedagogy, and practicum. These participants are in their fourth year and come from three Chilean universities with similar plans of study. They have had three semesters of practicum experiences in local schools and have a level of English that roughly moves from B2 to C1. They only have one course in general assessment in their curriculum.

The data collection instrument used was the Classroom Assessment Practices and Skills (CAPS) scale adapted from Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003), which was formulated in Spanish. The instrument was validated by ten experienced scholars, who reviewed its content and form. It was piloted in a small sample of 10 pre-service teachers, who are not part of the study sample, to obtain their feedback on the scale. The scale was administered and submitted online and was responded anonymously and voluntarily by those who granted their consent. It comprised three subscales and its overall Cronbach alpha was of 0.71. The first subscale included 19 items and inquired about the pre-service teachers' demographic information and their perceived views about assessment. The second subscale measured the participants' self-perceived level of assessment skills and included 29 items. The third subscale focused on the frequency of assessment practices, and it was composed of 29 items.

To analyze the data obtained, descriptive statistics were used. Mean scores were calculated to provide a central tendency measure of the participants' perceived views, skills, and practices. Standard deviation described how spread scores were from the mean. Also, exploratory factor analysis was carried out to categorize a large number of items into fewer factors. In addition, a t-test was performed to examine if there were significant differences between the participants' answers. Finally, a bivariate analysis was developed to determine any statistical association between specific factors such as gender and age.

FINDINGS

The findings of this study were organized into two parts. The first one is related to the pre-service teachers' self-reported views about assessment, for which descriptive statistics were used. Then, the different instrument items were reduced to two factors through exploratory factor analysis. Additionally, a bivariate analysis was conducted to identify significant differences in the pre-service teachers' results considering their gender, age range, and participation in assessment courses. The second part of the analysis delved into the participants' self-perceived views of assessment skills and frequent practices, for which mean scores and standard deviation were calculated and item statements were classified into factors, as in the first part of this analysis.

Pre-service Teachers' Perceived Views of Assessment

The analysis of results revealed that pre-service teachers' perceived views about assessment presented a generally high level of agreement about needing more training regarding assessments, exams, and measurement of learning, illustrated by a high mean score (4,32 points out of 5) and a small standard deviation (0,99 points). As depicted in Table 1, participants also considered that providing personalized feedback was more

important than grading (M=4,22; SD= 0,99); and agreed that the purpose of classroom assessment was monitoring the progress of students' learning. On the other hand, the items in which pre-service teachers agreed the least were that the purpose of classroom assessment was grading (M=1,89, SD=0,98), as well as that the students should consider grades as rewards for their good work (M=2,4; SD=1,08), and that the purpose of classroom assessment was to prepare students for standardized tests (M=2,47; SD=1,20).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of pre-service teachers' perceived views of assessment

18. Need more training on assessment, exams, and measurement of learning.	4,32	0,999	257
14. Providing personalized feedback about students' learning is more important than grading.	4,22	0,992	257
12. The purpose of classroom assessment is to monitor the progress of students' learning.	4,21	0,917	257
3. It is important to create a diagnostic exam before teaching a topic or skill.	4,15	1,092	257
7. Exams help me to focus on skills/knowledge that my students require.	3,94	0,946	257
2. The purpose of assessment is to determine if students have mastered learning outcomes.	3,75	1,022	257
6. The purpose of classroom assessment is to determine the effectiveness of my teaching.	3,58	1,084	257
10. The purpose of classroom assessment is to make students responsible for their own learning.	3,56	0,921	257
8. The purpose of classroom assessment is to prepare students for standardized tests.	2,47	1,205	257
9. Students should consider grades as rewards for their good work.	2,4	1,082	257
4. The purpose of classroom assessment is grading.	1,89	0,986	257

Note. 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Regarding research objective one, participants' perceived views incline to formative, rather than summative ways of language assessment. They disagree with views which focus on how learners perform in standardized exams. As for research objective two, participants perceive they are not prepared to undertake assessment practices that involve the analysis and communication of data and scores; however, they do feel prepared to design assessment instruments and provide feedback when needed.

Additionally, exploratory factor analysis was performed with a method of extraction of maximum likelihood and, an Oblimin extraction method, in which the following factors were identified:

● Factor 1: Assessment as a resource for the learning process
● Factor 2: Assessment for performance on standardized testing

As portrayed on Table 2, the first factor identified was assessment as a resource for the learning process. This factor comprised items that interpreted assessment as a resource to measure, monitor, and promote learning as well as teaching. Such items considered notions of assessment as a means for learning. This implies that learning has properties

that transcend assessment, and provides assessment with more instrumental properties for the educational process.

The second factor assessment for performance on standardized testing, included items that viewed assessment as oriented to the proper performance on standardized tests. Hence, it considered the educational process as one that concluded in testing and led students to high grades as a reward.

Table 2
Factorial Analysis of pre-service teachers' opinions about assessment

Factor	Items	Factorial load
Factor 1: Assessment as a resource for the learning process Mean: 3,749 SD: 0,587 Cronbach's Alpha: 0,79	12. The purpose of classroom assessment is to monitor the progress of students' learning.	0,753
	7. Exams help me to focus on the skills/knowledge my students require.	0,657
	3. It is important to create a diagnostic exam before teaching a topic or skill.	0,642
	14. Providing personalized feedback about students' learning is more important than grading.	0,606
	6. The purpose of classroom assessment is to determine the effectiveness of my teaching.	0,546
	2. The purpose of classroom assessment is to determine if students have mastered learning outcomes.	0,529
	10. The purpose of classroom assessment is to make students responsible for their own learning.	0,426
	16. Students should consider grades as feedback to improve.	0,347
	17. The purpose of classroom assessment is to motivate students.	0,344
	13. Students' efforts should be considered when grading.	0,235
Factor 2: Assessment for performance on standardized testing Mean: 2,252 SD: 0,821 Cronbach's Alpha: 0,62	8. The purpose of classroom assessment is to prepare students for standardized tests.	0,647
	4. The purpose of classroom assessment is grading.	0,628
	9. Students should consider grades as rewards for their good work.	0,577

KMO test= 0,80; Bartlett's test: 0,00; Total explained variance: 42,1%

Note. 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree

Additionally, the sample for this exploratory factor analysis was very adequate based on the result of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test. The value of the Bartlett's test indicated that the variance of the sample was homogeneous, though the total explained variation of the data sets presented a weak association to the factors identified. Also, the Cronbach's Alpha value encountered in Factor 1: Assessment as a resource for the learning process indicated that subscale items were related, and therefore, the subscale was reliable and consistent.

Furthermore, aiming at finding possible differences in the participants' responses, a bivariate analysis was carried out according to gender, age, and level of assessment instruction. Firstly, when analyzing gender, no significant differences were observed in any of the two factors identified earlier, however, as shown in Table 3, a slight

difference in the factor 2: assessment for performance on standardized testing was found, in which male pre-service teachers presented a higher level of agreement, in contrast to female pre-service teachers.

Table 3
T-test of opinions about assessment per participants' gender

Gender		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Assessment as a resource for the learning process	Female	180	3,74	0,61	0,762
	Male	82	3,76	0,54	
Assessment for the performance on standardized testing	Female	187	2,21	0,83	0,221
	Male	82	2,35	0,80	

Secondly, regarding age range, no statistically significant differences were found in factor 1: assessment as a resource for the learning process, even though a small difference was observed in the score of the youngest pre-service teachers. Significant differences were observed in factor 2: assessment for performance on standardized **testing**, as depicted in Table 4, in which pre-service teachers who were 23 years old or older presented higher scores than 20- to 22-year-old pre-service teachers.

Table 4
T-test of opinions about assessment per pre-service teachers' age range

Age		N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t
Assessment as a resource for the learning process	20-22 years old	117	3,78	0,47	0,255
	23+ years old	117	3,69	0,69	
Assessment for performance on standardized testing	20-22 years old	121	2,14	0,73	0,004
	23+ years old	119	2,44	0,86	

Thirdly, considering the participants' engagement in assessment courses, pre-service teachers that had taken part in a course focused on assessment, tests, and measurement of students' learning, presented higher scores in the factor associated with assessment as a resource for the learning process, in comparison to those who had not taken such a course, as illustrated in Table 5:

Table 5
T-test about pre-service teachers' participation in assessment courses

Assessment as a resource for the learning process		N	Mean	SD	t
	I participated in a course about assessment, tests, and measurement of students' learning.	175	3,69	0,63	0,015
	I did not participate in a course about assessment, tests, and measurement of students' learning.	90	3,86	0,47	

In sum, most pre-service teachers had taken part in assessment-related courses and their perceptions were oriented towards factor 1: assessment as a resource for the learning process rather than factor 2: assessment for performance on standardized testing. Despite this result, participants reported that further training on assessment was needed.

Self-reported Assessment Skills and Frequency of Assessment Practices

As far as self-reported assessment skills are concerned in this study, pre-service teachers stated they felt more confident about formulating true or false items, assigning grades to every student in a fair manner, and providing written feedback when delivering grades, as shown in Table 6. On the contrary, the skills the participants felt less trained for were calculating variance (standard deviation) when designing tests, calculating central tendency indicators (mean, median, and mode) for tests designed by the teacher, and developing systematic procedures for grading.

Table 6
Descriptive statistics of assessment skills and frequency of pre-service teachers' assessment practices

	Level of assessment skill			Frequency of assessment practices		
	N	Mean	Standard. Deviation	N	Mean	Standard. Deviation
27. Formulates true or false items.	272	3,66	1,135	267	3,10	1,408
24. Assigns grades fairly to every student.	272	3,66	1,142	266	3,58	1,426
28. Provides written feedback when delivering grades.	272	3,57	1,213	267	3,12	1,442
21. Grades answers to open questions fairly and consistently.	272	3,57	1,135	269	3,17	1,428
19. Makes sure the test includes all the contents taught in class.	272	3,36	1,185	269	3,28	1,441
25. Uses the results of evaluations to assess class improvement.	272	3,35	1,159	266	3,32	1,393
10. Evaluates using a portfolio.	271	2,57	1,265	269	2,06	1,271
18. Develops systematic procedures for grading.	271	2,54	1,231	267	2,45	1,349
5. Calculates central tendency indicators (mean, median, or mode) for tests made by the teacher.	272	2,50	1,286	269	2,13	1,236
29. Calculates variance (standard deviation) when designing a test.	269	2,24	1,239	267	2,00	1,178

Note. Level of skill: 1= Without skill 2= Slightly skilled 3= Relatively skilled 4= Skilled 5= Very skilled   Frequency: 1=Never 2=Sometimes 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very often

To make judgments regarding the participants' assessment skills in the classroom, an exploratory factor analysis was used, which included a procedure of extraction of maximum likelihood and rotation with the Oblimin method. Two main factors were considered:

● Factor 1: Design and feedback of assessment instruments

● Factor 2: Analysis and communication of parametric results

In general, as observed in Table 7, pre-service teachers did not feel very confident about their assessment skills and presented a low mean score in both factors identified (factor 1, M=3,29; factor 2, M=2,58). Regardless, their answers indicated they perceived themselves as better trained to design and provide feedback on assessment instruments, and less trained regarding the analysis and communication of parametric results.

Table 7
Self- perceived level of assessment skills in the classroom

Factor	Items	Factor loading
Factor 1: Design and feedback of assessment instruments Mean: 3,29 SD: 0,799 Cronbach's Alpha: 0,95	21. Grades answers to open questions fairly and consistently.	0,816
	13. Uses assessment results to plan a lesson.	0,797
	25. Uses assessment results to evaluate the improvement of the class.	0,793
	24. Assigns grades fairly to every student.	0,778
	12. Determines why students make specific mistakes.	0,771
	19. Makes sure the test includes all the content taught in class.	0,760
	11. Uses the assessment results to make specific decisions about students.	0,748
	14. Communicates the results of evaluations.	0,587
	27. Formulates true or false items.	0,521
	26. Balances test items according to instructional objectives.	0,637
	3. Formulate tests items for higher cognitive skills.	0,514
	2. Formulate open questions.	0,536
	1. Formulate multiple-choice questions.	0,379
Factor 2: Analysis and communication of parametric results Mean: 2,58 SD: 0,844 Cronbach's Alpha: 0,83	18. Develops systematic procedures for grading.	0,696
	10. Evaluates using a portfolio.	0,693
	7. Corrects a test based on the results of the analysis of activities.	0,687
	6. Carries out analysis of activities (difficulty or discrimination) for tests made by the teacher.	0,652
	4. Explains the scores of standardized tests to others.	0,623
	29. Calculates variance (standard deviation) when designing tests.	0,611
	5. Calculates central tendency indicators (mean, median or mode) for tests made by the teacher.	0,540

KMO test=0,937; Bartlett's test: 0,00; Total explained variance: 52,3%

In addition, the KMO test result indicated that the sampling was highly adequate for the exploratory factor analysis. The subscale items presented a high level of correlation

according to the Cronbach's Alpha values for both factors. Bartlett's test result indicated that the variance of the sample was homogeneous, while the total explained variance could be slightly associated to the two factors of the analysis.

Considering the perceived frequency of assessment practices presented in Table 6, pre-service teachers pointed out that the most frequent were assigning grades fairly to every student, using evaluation results to assess class improvement, and making sure the test included all the content taught in class. Conversely, the least frequent practices used were calculating variance (standard deviation) when designing tests, evaluating using portfolios, and calculating central tendency indicators (mean, median, and mode) for tests made by the teacher. Hence, the results were very similar to the scores related to assessment skills. Considering the two factors identified earlier, as observed in Table 8, findings indicated that pre-service teachers reported more frequent assessment practices that involved factor 1: design and feedback of assessment instruments, rather than the instances regarding factor 2: analysis and communication of parametric results.

Table 8
Descriptive statistics of the frequency of pre-service teachers' assessment practices in the classroom

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Frequency of design and feedback of assessment instruments	263	3,02	1,03
Frequency of analysis and communication of parametric results	265	2,19	0,94

*Note.*Frequency:1=Never 2=Sometimes 3=Occasionally 4=Often 5=Very often

Therefore, pre-service teachers' perceived assessment skills and practices converged on the focus of design and feedback of assessment instruments. This was consistent with the skills participants expressed feeling more strongly at, such as formulating true or false statements and providing written feedback when delivering grades. Nevertheless, the analysis and communication of parametric results remained an important weakness, which agreed with their lack of skill when calculating central tendency indicators and variance.

DISCUSSION

To answer the research question of this study: *What are pre-service teachers of English perceived views, skills, and practices about assessment?* the discussion of findings was organized into three sections. The first two sections focus on the research objectives (RO) of this study and provide a summary of results complemented by a theoretical review. The last section deals with implications for pre-service teachers' training based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

RO1: Examine Participants' Perceived Views about Assessment

Through the analysis of the participants' answers, the top three pre-service teachers of English perceived views regarding assessments were related to the consensus of:

1. The need for further training on assessment. This first perceived view about assessment presented the highest mean score (4.32), and it is a view that is not uncommon in the context of English language teaching. For instance, Jawhar and Subahi (2020), who examined Saudi higher education teachers' level of assessment literacy by using the Classroom Assessment Literacy Inventory (CALI) developed by Mertler and Campbell (2005), concluded that teachers required more training to assess students more effectively because their study revealed teachers lacked the necessary knowledge regarding assessment. A similar case is described by Muhammad et al. (2019), who investigated the Iraqi teachers' level of assessment literacy through CALI, based on seven standards of assessment and realized that teachers also had a low level of assessment literacy.

2. Providing feedback is more important than grading. Such a perceived view regarding assessment presented the second highest mean score (4.22). Therefore, it reflected how pre-service teachers value the provision of feedback about an evaluation over just assigning a specific grade. In fact, grading as the purpose of assessment was the item that reported the lowest mean score (1.89) in subscale 01. Though teachers giving feedback to students is a common procedure, this practice could be developed further among teachers themselves. For example, Giraldo (2021) suggests a technique to raise awareness of Language Assessment Literacy (LAL), in which both pre-service and in-service teachers could promote alternative assessment procedures, such as generating instances of peer feedback among teachers, and by doing so, they could share their work, collaborate, and provide comments about their assessment instruments and improve them.

3. The purpose of assessment is to monitor students' learning progress. The importance of this self-reported view is reflected by the third-highest mean score (4.21). This result was consistent with the pre-service teachers' low mean score in items related to considering either grading (1.89) or preparing students for standardized assessment (2.47) as the purpose of assessment. Also, this perceived view is supported by the relatively high mean score (3,749) reported in the exploratory factor analysis, specifically in the factor assessment as a resource for the learning process. Moreover, these participants' perceived view of assessment as oriented towards monitoring the learning process can be complemented further with the definition of assessment provided by Green (2021). All the measurement and gathering of *evidence* about *assessees*' knowledge and skills, ultimately, leads to making *inferences* to inform decisions of different magnitudes, such as improving specific aspects of students' language learning development. Likewise, Bachman and Damböck, (2018) share this interpretation as they regard a language assessment as a key source of feedback for learning improvement.

RO2: Inquire about Perceived Assessment Skills and Frequent Practices of Pre-service Teachers of English

Regarding the second research objective, the assessment skills pre-service teachers expressed having a better mastery of, are evidenced through a high mean score. On the one hand, participants' strongest skills were formulating true or false items (3.66),

assigning grades fairly to every student (3.66), and providing written feedback when delivering grades (3.57). On the contrary, the skills participants stated to have the least dominion were calculating variance (2,24) when designing tests and calculating central tendency indicators such as the mean, median, and mode (2,50). Additionally, such a contrast in the teachers' skills agrees with the results of the factor analysis, which indicated that the pre-service teachers' skills were oriented towards the factor design and feedback of assessment instruments, rather than the factor analysis and communication of parametric results.

On the other hand, the participants' most frequent assessment practices presented a similar scenario. In particular, the most common practices based on the participants' mean scores were assigning grades fairly to every student (3.58), using evaluation results to assess class improvement (3.32), and ensuring the test included all the content taught in class (3.28). Conversely, the least frequent practices of pre-service teachers were calculating variance (2,0), evaluating using a portfolio (2,06), and calculating central tendency indicators (2,13).

Therefore, it can be generalized that both the pre-service teachers' strongest self-reported skills and frequent practices are associated with the factor design and feedback of assessment instruments, while their least frequent practices and weakest perceived skills are related to the factor analysis and communication of parametric results. Muhammad et al. (2019), who researched the level of assessment literacy of Iraqi teachers of English, obtained similar results regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the participants. For instance, teachers' greatest strengths were related to using assessment results for decision making and developing appropriate methods of assessment; while their weaknesses dealt with recognizing unethical or illegal assessment practices, and communicating assessment results. However, Muhammad et al. (2019) concluded that the teachers' level of assessment literacy was not satisfactory and, therefore, teachers were not well prepared to assess their students' performance properly. Though the scope of this study is not the same, as its purpose is only to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions, skills, and practices related to assessment, and not to measure their level of assessment literacy, the results of Muhammad et al. (2019) could be taken as a warning of what aspects pre-service teachers may need to draw their attention to and work earnestly to improve. In this endeavor, it could be proposed that to support teachers' assessment skills and practices, they should develop further their reflective teaching by enhancing their level of assessment literacy (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018), which in turn, might help them develop a high level of self-perception about their assessment skills (Chit & Knit, 2020).

Implications for Pre-service Teachers' Training

Pre-service teachers' self-perceived views included the need for further training on assessment, the importance of providing personalized feedback about students' learning, and monitoring students' learning as the purpose of assessment. One important implication of these EFL teacher education programs is the lack of language assessment courses in their curriculum, which are restricted to one course that only addresses very generic aspects of assessment that do not approach the specificity of assessing a foreign

language that is, at least, formed by four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. These self-reported views were consistent with the exploratory factor analysis. The factor assessment as a resource for the learning process presented a higher mean score (3.749) than the factor assessment for performance on standardized testing (2,252). Hence, the agreement between the participants' perceived views and the results of the exploratory factor analysis may indicate that pre-service teachers' training on assessment supports the views of Bachman and Damböck (2018), which emphasize the importance of language assessment as a process. Moreover, the participants' strongest self-perceived skills (namely, formulating true or false questions items, assigning grades fairly, and providing written feedback) were related to the factor design and feedback of assessment instruments. Likewise, pre-service teachers reported that their most frequent perceived assessment practices (assigning grades fairly, using evaluation results to assess class improvement, and making sure the test included all the content taught) were associated with the same factor. As a result, pre-service teachers' perceived views, skills, and practices indicate that they may have been trained to engage in language assessment from a development perspective (Giraldo, 2020), focusing on the design and evaluation of language, rather than a knowledge perspective (Giraldo, 2020), which deals with the understanding and use of scores of assessments.

However, the participants' self-reported view of the need for further training might be related to the items with the lowest mean scores in the subscales of perceived assessment skills and practices. For instance, pre-service teachers' responses indicated that they perceived themselves as less skilled when calculating variance, central tendency indicators (mean, median, and mode), and developing systematic procedures for grading. The same scenario was found as the participants' least frequent practices also had to do with the calculation of variance, the use of portfolios, and the calculation of central tendency indicators. Consequently, the participants' weakest skills and least frequent practices had to do with the factor analysis and communication of parametric results. This factor reflected a relevant deficiency, which can be considered to enhance the pre-service teachers' language assessment literacy (LAL) further. If participants are unable to perform proper calculations of central tendency indicators or variance, it might also mean that they probably cannot interpret or understand the results. Nonetheless, pre-service teachers could turn this perceived weakness into a strength. Granted that participants received more training on assessment, such as a postgraduate course on descriptive statistics, they would have an opportunity to manage the proper calculation and interpretation of statistical data from their own classroom, and in turn, this would lead them to make informed decisions about their learners' progress and improve their teaching practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has sought to inquire about pre-service teachers' self-reported views, skills, and frequent practices towards assessment. Findings revealed that regarding perceived views, participants considered that further training on assessment was still needed. Pre-service teachers also placed a strong emphasis on the importance of providing feedback and agreed on the view of monitoring students' language learning as

the purpose of assessment. These perceptions were strongly associated with the factor assessment as a resource for the learning process. In addition, participants perceived assessment skills and practices were both oriented towards the factor design and feedback of assessment instruments, which highlighted their need to improve on aspects related to the factor analysis and communication of parametric results.

Moreover, understanding how pre-service teachers perceive assessment offers valuable data for research. On the one hand, their self-reported views may indicate the theoretical foundations of their undergraduate training, which could be contrasted with contemporary views of assessment. On the other hand, the participants' perceived views of assessment skills and frequent practices contribute to raising awareness of pre-service teachers' strengths and, more importantly, their weaknesses. By doing so, pre-service teachers will be able to improve their knowledge of assessment, enhance their assessment literacy, and assess their students' learning more effectively.

LIMITATIONS

Conducting this research study presented a few setbacks, some of which had to do with the current global health crisis due to the Covid 19 pandemic. For instance, because of the virus threat and the lockdown restrictions, the number of participants decreased over time, and so did their availability to meet the researchers in a face-to-face modality. Other pre-service teachers presented difficulty accessing the internet caused by a poor-quality signal, especially pre-service teachers who were from rural areas, which posed a problem for them to deliver their scales online. Another relevant limitation that may have affected the participants' self-perceived views about their skills and practices is that their last semester was developed in an online modality, an unforeseen setting to which they may have not been used to and had to adapt too abruptly for. This could have played a major role in considering themselves in need of more training regarding assessment given that such a process is commonly developed through dynamic interaction and sharing a common space, which is the case of students carrying out their internship at schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This quantitative, non-experimental cross-sectional study strongly suggests that assessment self-reported views, skills, and practices of pre-service teachers of English should periodically be considered to plan, design, and update assessment courses at the higher education level. By doing this, pre-service teachers will have an opportunity to improve their weaknesses such as the analysis and communication of parametric results. In that regard, it could be recommended that pre-service teachers find a practical purpose in the classroom to integrate the statistical knowledge they seek to develop as part of the assessment process, for example, through data-driven decision-making (Schelling & DaVia Rubenstein, 2021). The use of technological tools such as online calculators and statistical websites might assist them in this endeavor.

Furthermore, it is advisable to carry out a follow-up process with the participants of this study, if possible, to determine if over time their perceptions change or remain the same, and to see if their assessment strengths, weaknesses, and practices are modified and

honed due to the teaching experience gained. Also, research on pre-service teachers' beliefs could be complemented and contrasted by researching in-service teachers' views, skills, and practices on assessment. It would be an appealing subject to investigate how pre-service and in-service teachers agree or disagree on a particular view, and the role that teaching experience developed over the years may play.

Several subjects would prove beneficial when exploring pre-service teachers' perceptions. For instance, pre-service teachers' views on ethical issues in classroom assessment (Liu et al., 2016) would help determine their personal stance and how they would deal with different situations involving conflict between established ethical guidelines and assessment principles. Under the same token, investigating pre-service teachers' perceptions focusing specifically on summative assessment (Hilden et al., 2022) would provide valuable information on the participants' views, competencies, and common summative assessment practices they value most. Likewise, pre-service teachers' views on the positive and negative effects of online assessment in the EFL classroom (Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021) are worth considering more than ever before, especially, when contrasting the results of similar research conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic (Mirza, 2021).

Finally, the pre-service teachers' perceived views, skills, and frequent practices regarding assessment could be improved by promoting reflective teaching. Reflective teaching is enhanced by increasing assessment literacy (Ashraf & Zolfaghari, 2018), which in the context of language teaching, could be promoted at a procedural level by generating instances of alternative assessment and feedback among teachers (Giraldo, 2021) and using different assessment instruments (Giraldo & Murcia, 2019) such as class observations, interviews, portfolio analysis, and content analysis.

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